



**TENSE ERRORS IN ENGLISH COMMITTED BY FET HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS
IN THE LOWER UMFOLOZI CIRCUIT: THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR
COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE**

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

FACULTY OF ARTS

at the

UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND

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DECLARATION

I, William Sipho Nkabinde, **ID N0:** 7111305535088, **Student N0:** 1992353, hereby declare that *Tense errors in English committed by high school learners FET phase of the Lower Umfolozi Circuit: their implications for communicative competence* has never been submitted previously, either in whole or in part for the award of any degree or diploma. It is my original work produced by me. All remarkable contributions to and quotations in this thesis from the work or works of other people have been acknowledged, cited and referenced accordingly.

Year: 2019

Signature:

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to:

- The late Mrs Minah Tomkulu MaDlamini Nkabinde (my mother); and
- The late Mrs Sarah Sikhonzile “Ndondo” MaSimelane Nkabinde (my wife).

These two great women contributed immensely to the shaping of the person that I am today and were an inspiration to my commencement with the PhD project whose completion they could not witness. Sadly, they both passed on in the same year, 2014, 30th of July and 10th of September, respectively.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to pass my sincere words of appreciation to all the persons who selflessly made invaluable contributions to the success of this thesis. Allow me to say my special thanks to the following few altruists who each made irreplaceable strides to ascertain a successful completion of the project:

- Prof M.V. Mpepo for his patience, resilience, encouragement, ever-elevating leadership and, by and large, his exceptional supervision;
- Dr B.X.S. Ntombela for his truly altruistic attitude coupled with his ever-priceless recommendations informed by his comprehensive insight into, and vast understanding of, the focus area of the study as well as the realm of research in general. *Mahlobo!*
- Dr M.O. Ayoola for his sagacity and self-sacrificing assistance he extended to ensure that there was no more delay to the completion of the study. “Baba”, I am short of words befitting your gesture. I pray and hope that your genuine reward will come from the Great One we serve;
- The Department of English (Unizulu) for the collective and individual support as well as endless inspiration they have always given to me;
- Mr P. Ocholla who helped analyse the collected data through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software. He continually made invaluable suggestions on the manner in which the said data were presented. *My hat off Sir!*
- Library Personnel who were never irritated by my persistent calls and knocks on their doors seeking help. They were, indeed, handy, always smiling and laughing as they helped me. *Phambili kinina bafowethu!*
- Research and Innovation (Unizulu) for their financial help that alleviated my study challenges, the staff kept wagging a ‘warning finger’ against me, stating that they did not fund “career students” (joking). Thank you! I think had it not been that finger, I wouldn’t be where I am now;
- Lower Umfolozi Circuit for the permission they rendered on behalf of the entire Department of Basic Education for the investigation to be conducted. In addition to that, I wish to extol the circuit for the instrumental information they released to me just to make the research not only successful, but valid and reliable too;
- Traditional leaders, the Chief and Izinduna, for letting me criss-cross their space where participating schools were;

- Principals of the five schools for their insight. It was not that they did not value the teaching time when they allowed me access to their schools' premises, but they envisaged the possible significance the research findings would bear on the entire teaching fraternity. A sincere salutation goes to you sons and daughters of the land!
- Parents of the respondents: I honestly thank them for letting their children participate in the research which, initially, they were hesitant and anxious about. I unequivocally appreciate their sense of maturity in this regard. *Ngiyabonga*;
- Actual respondents (learners): For their time and their minds. Their responses gave life to the research project and without them, there would be no project. Many thanks to all of you!
- My four special daughters: These are my angels whose presence has always been adequate to keep me diving and soldiering on. The blowing of their wings has constantly been abundant to keep me soaring. They are, Kwando (Nokwanda), Busi (Sibusisiwe), Malondi (Londiwe) and Ziphe (Ziphelel'izintombi zaMacusi);
- My family at large: There is no source of inspiration as great as the appreciation of, and ululation to, every 'little' achievement made by one of us in the family. I sincerely thank you for your unwavering support.

(MaCus' amahle angilutho ngaphandle kwenu. Ngibonga umfutho nokuvuseleleka engikuthola ekukikizeni nasekulilizeni kwenu ngasosonke isikhathi lapho omunye wethu ehlabene. Ngithi unwel'olude kinina, Macusi! Mphondle! Mafuya!)

ABSTRACT

The study was set to establish if the *explicit teaching* of English grammar could improve the *tense competence* of the high school learners (FET-PHASE) of the Lower Umfolozi Circuit. The aim was premised on the knowledge that there is interlink between the English tense competence and the English communicative competence as a whole. That is, the status of the learners' English tense competence was vital for the learners' acquisition and application of English language generally. Moreover, the study viewed *tense* as the heart of many errors committed by the members of the population and so it had a potential, if handled correctly, of providing a relevant solution. According to Rahman and Ali (2015), citing Bardovi-Harding (2000), English tense is one of the two major parts of grammar in the teaching of language and subsequently constitutes a major part in the language teaching syllabus. By adopting the *One-group Pre-test Post-test Design*, the study managed to, firstly, establish the English tense competence level of the learners before the insertion of the teaching manipulation (the dependable variable). Secondly, the said design enabled the study to experiment the explicit teaching approach on the population whose results verified the remarkable effectiveness of the approach. That is, the respondents' performance levels in the pre-test and the post-test respectively were not the same. The respondents' performance results of the post-test surpassed their performance results of the pre-test although both tests assessed the same respondents on the same subject, tense. Since, the performance results of each test represented the level of tense competence that the respondents had at the time of the writing of the corresponding test, the results proved that the respondents' tense competence level at the time of the writing of the post-test was higher than what it had been at the time of the writing of the pre-test. Therefore, the study results did not only show improvement in the learners' tense competence, but also evidenced the relevance and effectiveness of the explicit teaching of grammar approach to the high schools of the Lower Umfolozi Circuit. This was so because the higher tense competence shown by the respondents in the post-test, logically, came as a result of the explicit teaching intervention that was conducted by the researcher in-between the two tests. Subsequent to the above mentioned findings of the study, the study made a number of recommendations. With the implementation of the recommendations, the high school learners of the Lower Umfolozi Circuit would have an improved English tense competence would impact positively on their application of the English language in general.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the background of the study. Such background includes geographical, general life of the population, the application of the English language to and by the population, the leverage the language has had in the lives of the population as well as the various attempts that have been made in advancing the teaching and learning of English in particular as a second or additional language in South Africa.

1.2 Background

The power that English generally wields over the South African community as well as in the education environment in particular has always been a rationale for ensuring that learners from their early age have the best possible competence in the language. To this end, many attempts, some in the form of research, have been made to achieve this goal. Thus, it is unfortunate that despite these efforts the incompetence of learners in the use of English persists. Notably, research shows that the English communicative competence levels are so rudimentary such that even at the exit point of their schooling (Grades 10-12), learners still battle to communicate competently (Ndlovu, 1993: 23). This unfortunate reality leads to the far-reaching repercussions which include not only poor performance across their curricular subjects at school (Mashiye, 2011: 8) and high failure numbers in the early years at tertiary level (Ndlovu, 1993: 22), but also unemployment (Mgqwashu, 1999: 4).

It is notable that previous research projects (Mqadi, 1990; Ndlovu, 1993; Mulaudzi, 1994; Mgqwashu, 1999) have concerned themselves largely with the teaching and learning of the second language (L2) generally. This created a perception that the content to be taught has always been obvious to all school teachers or educators. The fact is that some teaching documents directed to educators have not been so clear as to name the areas of grammar to focus on, but they mention broad terms like “grammar”, “structures”, “grammatical rules” and so forth. As a result, other educators were left with no choice but to teach their discretionary grammar areas and sometimes at the expense of the most significant ones. In a case where the aforementioned situation existed, even the best of the teaching methods would not succeed. So, this has been a stark oversight of the age-old endeavours to expedite the teaching and learning of English language in particular. Subsequently, important components of the language such as *tense*, might have been circumvented which would mean detriment to grammar. For

example, the study by Motsoeneng (2003) focuses on the behaviour of the parties involved in the teaching-and-learning environment who are educators and learners. In his study, Motsoeneng (2003) disapproves of the application of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approach to the Black schools of Lower Umfolozi Circuit which is the same population for this study. Motsoeneng (2003) holds an opposite view about the success of the CLT Approach in the said population albeit the popularity of the approach at the time. The popularity was grounded on nothing but the approach's advocacy of the inductive teaching over the deductive one (Motsoeneng, 2003: 55). Moodley (1998: 120) buttresses the view that educators in the whole of KwaZulu-Natal province do not teach relevant English language features as he asserts that even the prescribed books have limited information in this regard. Moreover, the most written about teaching methodologies like the Grammar-Translation, the Direct, the Situational Language Teaching, the Audio-lingual as well as the CLT never specify language features that should form the core of the teaching content. Unlike in the current study, grammar in most of the earlier studies is referred to as just "grammar" or "structures" in general (Motsoeneng, 2003: 7-11). Consequently, the prolonged concentration and debate on "the best teaching method" has relegated the matter that has to be taught, the grammar components, to the periphery. The heated argument on how educators and learners are expected to conduct themselves during the teaching-and-learning time has resulted in a presumption that all educators are aware of the areas to be taught. Some sparse content seems to be there, and it is this sparseness that renders content non-existent. It is against this backdrop, therefore, that this study sought to fill the lacuna by being specific with regards to the area of focus for teaching.

1.2 Physical background of the population

The Lower Umfolozi Circuit is an area where the study was based in the Northern part of the province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). It is quite a wide area incorporating both rural and urban territories. It is within the uMhlathuze Municipality boundaries where the three small towns of KwaMbonambi, Empangeni and the fast-developing Richards Bay are situated. There is also a vast KwaMthethwa Reserve rural area under the governance of traditional leaders, 'Amakhosi' and 'Izinduna'. It is worth stating that the study was conducted during the restructuring of schools in the Department of Education (DoBE) in KwaZulu-Natal. Previously, the management of the basic education in the province was organised into broader centres called regions which were then further broken down into clusters called districts, circuits, wards and schools.

The Lower uMfolozi Circuit was under the Empangeni District and, like all other circuits, constituted eight wards which were a cluster of schools geographically close to one another. These wards were as follows: KwaMbonambi, Mhlana, Mbiya, Richards Bay, Ubuka, Ntambanana, Mthonjaneni and Ndlangubo. There were thirty-eight (38) FET-Phase schools in the Lower Umfolozi Circuit. Although the circuit had schools in the rural, township and urban areas, most of them (more than 90%) were in the rural areas where there were very limited teaching and learning resources. The government declared most of the schools in the area as “no-fee” schools. In addition, these schools operated on the government’s feeding scheme. However, there was development taking place in the area and the situation was changing. Most people in the area, including the learners and the educators, spoke isiZulu as their home language. A small number spoke either English or Afrikaans as their home language. Learning facilities, like libraries, were non-existent. Consequently, there was hardly an intensive learning taking place after the official teaching-and-learning hours. Arguably, therefore, learners’ exposure to the English language occurred only inside the classroom.

Most of the educators teaching in these schools did not live in the immediate vicinity of the schools. They commuted to and from the work place (schools) as they lived in the nearby towns of Empangeni, KwaMbonambi or Richards Bay. Many of them lived in the townships like Esikhawini, Ngwelezane and Nseleni. So, these educators, too, met with their learners only at school. They hardly spent more time at school than the officially prescribed working hours, since they usually shared cars for transportation purposes.

1.3 English status in South Africa

The language issue in South Africa has always been a bone of contention as it is the key in implementing different institutions’ or individual people’s aims. Such aims may be relating to education, politics, economy, including people’s welfare in general. The significant role of a language, particularly in South Africa, is evidenced by some major events in the history of the country. For instance, according to Mashiyi (2011: 4), citing Kamwangamalu (2000), it played an essential role when the Nationalist Party government promulgated the Bantu Education Act of 1953, whose aim was to implement its racial separatist policies. With the promulgation of the said Act of 1953, the government did not only protect White students’ interests, but also ascertained that Black students remained cognitively poorer from the kind of (impoverished and mediocre) education they received (Mashiyi, 2011: 4). This aim was executed with the officiation of English and Afrikaans as the only languages of instruction in schools. Whilst the

newly established educational environment favoured White students, the Black ones, on the other side, suffered because of it and they eventually revolted against it culminating in the (in)famous *SOWETO Uprisings of 1976*. The *SOWETO Uprisings* weakened Afrikaans as a competitor to English, and automatically allowed the latter a greater space in the education of the Republic of South Africa. This significant event in the South African history and education in particular, is referred to not because English was an issue, but to clarify the point of the manipulation of a language to advancing various interests, either developmental or otherwise. For instance, in South Africa the alleged manipulation has been so serious that the authorities that were in power, saw it fit that for their aim to be realised, the curriculum itself had to be skewed accordingly. The major aim of the curriculum born out of the Bantu Education Act of 1953 is clarified by De Waal (2005: 37), citing Fataar (2000: 7):

The rationale behind this restricted curriculum was to prepare the Blacks for inferior positions in the economy of South Africa.

Talking of English in South Africa, one has to acknowledge that besides being an official medium of teaching and learning, it is also an independent subject. Moreover, it is an additional language to many South African learners and therefore, its significant status, together with all related responsibilities in the entire country of South Africa, cannot be considered lightly. This study is therefore, interested in determining learners' English proficiency. Learners' language proficiency is related to its pedagogy. Just as the Nationalist Party government used, among other things, the curriculum to either keep the status quo or effect change, the African National Congress-led Government of National Unity (ANC/ GNU) did not wait long to introduce its new curriculum with new intentions after ascending to power in 1994.

1.3.1 Curriculum 2005

The curriculum that eventually emerged as Curriculum 2005 (C2005) had already been introduced as a school policy premised on the notion of "Outcomes-Based Education" (OBE) as early as 1997 (De Waal, 2004: 42; citing Jansen, 1999: 145). The said relation between OBE and C2005 is the reason De Waal (2004) interchangeably uses these two components and he explicitly justifies his treatment of them that way in this regard (De Waal, 2004: 44; citing C2005 Review Report, 2000:5). The elements of redress, equity, access and development underpinning C2005, affirm *change* or *reform* of society as the major responsibility of the newly introduced curriculum in a new political dispensation. The change of the curriculum

means change of the content of individual subjects and, arguably, it is likely to influence even the delivery approach. For example, as the curriculum before 1994 wanted to keep black South Africans in inferior positions (Fataar, 2000: 7), it would be untenable of the same system to advocate for an empowering teaching approach. Consequently, one remarkable distinction between the two curricular schemes in question was that the C2005 advocated for a learner-centred approach which aimed at equipping learners in skills such as critical thinking and innovativeness. De Waal (2004: 45) corroborates the foregoing assertion:

To realise its aims, C2005 employs methodologies used in the progressive pedagogy such as learner-centredness, teachers as facilitators and cooperative learning.

According to De Waal, (2004) it seems that C2005 did not speak directly to teaching content. The new curriculum focused on the desired end as well as the learner-centred teaching approach that it unequivocally favoured. De Waal (2004: 50) states that, “original C2005/ OBE encouraged teachers to combine knowledge from different learning areas, but it does not give enough guidance on what to teach, when to teach it and on what level to teach it.” Klu (2017: 8720) buttresses the point that OBE was void of content. Then, all what the without-content teaching did, was to frustrate teachers who had, nevertheless, embraced the notion and objective of the C2005/ OBE (De Waal, 2004: 49; citing C2005 Review Committee, 2000: 48). One can therefore, argue that the failure of the Curriculum 2005 (C2005) or Outcomes-Based Education in South Africa is a testimony of an invaluable role that teaching content holds for successful teaching. That is, C2005 had all its plans and envisaged outcomes clearly defined on paper, but it lacked one important component, content, hence the whole thing collapsed. The actual implementers, teachers, were found wanting when going to class, because they were without the content upon which the plan had to be grounded. Moreover, once they were in class teachers were not to be the main players. They were to take a back seat and operate only as facilitators. Instead, learners who were assumed to be cognitively poorer than the teacher were the ones expected to be more active. De Waal (2004: 43) summarises the C2005 account:

Curriculum 2005 would prove to be a success story in theory, but in practice the misalignment between policy development and policy implementation was brought to light.

Failed as it became, C2005 was the first and greatest stride made by the post-apartheid South African government in its endeavour to ameliorate the curriculum. The other factor that

facilitated the demise of the newly developed C2005 was its demand of a new role from educators as it wanted them to be the facilitators of learning and no longer the source like they used to be. C2005 favoured the learner-centred approach which did not urge educators to provide answers or solutions to problems for learners, but should create environment conducive to learners' finding solutions for themselves. It is worth stating that the educator training that the educators had undergone expected them to teach as though they were the repository of knowledge to their learners (De Waal, 2004: 43).

1.3.2 Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement

The second remarkable attempt done by the ANC-led government has been the issuing of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). The following are some of the specific aims of teaching an additional language which is English in this context:

Learning a First Additional Language (FAL) should enable learners to:

- acquire the language skills necessary to communicate accurately and appropriately taking into account audience, purpose and context;
- use their additional language for academic learning across the curriculum;
- listen, speak, read/ view and write/ present the language with confidence and enjoyment;
- express and justify, orally and in writing, their own ideas, views and emotions confidently in order to become independent and analytical thinkers;
- to access and manage information for learning across the curriculum and in a wide range of other contexts, and
- to use their additional language as a means of critical and creative thinking (DoBE, 2011: 11).

Regarding the content to be taught, CAPS states, among other things, that grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation will have to be taught in context (DoBE, 2011: 11). It further adds that “there is also a place for direct/ explicit teaching of the basics ... if learners are constantly making errors with a particular aspect of grammar” (CAPS, 2011: 12). It is interesting to note the foregoing point enshrined in the CAPS since the study explored just that. That is, it investigated whether this directive of “explicit teaching of grammar (tense)” was responded to positively or not. Manyike (2007: 110) asserts that many teachers in Black schools

conduct teaching in the learners' First Language (L1) despite the fact that English is officially the medium of instruction in these schools. Citing Chisholm (2004: 218), Manyike (2007: 110) provides a justification of the non-teaching of grammar as "mainly because most African language teachers themselves lacked proficiency in English and they still do." Mulaudzi (1994: 136) also affirms the notion of English teachers themselves being a problem to the aims of the curriculum: "... teachers' lack of knowledge of vocabulary and of tense create a problem for the students." Teachers' deficiency issue is attested to by several researchers among whom there is Mawasha (1986: 24; cited by Mulaudzi, 1994: 25) as well as Macdonald and Burroughs (1991; cited by Mulaudzi, 1994: 25). Therefore, it is unlikely that an incompetent teacher can produce a competent learner. Citing Clarke and Petersen (1986: 255), Mulaudzi (1994: 63) asserts that "there is a link between the mental lives of teachers and performance of learners."

One other factor that has stifled the enhancement of English as a First Additional Language (EFAL), particularly in rural schools, is what is mentioned in the CAPS:

...when learning a language, a learner should have a great deal of exposure to the target language and many opportunities to practise or produce the language (DoBE, 2011: 15).

The requirement mentioned above has always been difficult to heed, because of the physical conditions and lifestyle of the people of the community where the study was conducted. The exposure issue is cited by various scholars as one of the serious challenges particularly in rural schools. Mashiyi (2011: 47) states that in rural schools, English is hardly spoken, so it seems fallacious to hope for as adequate exposure is expected by the CAPS. The same sentiment is shared by Manyike (2007: 15; citing Chisholm, 2005: 238) where he argues that the way English language infrastructure is so limited in rural schools, it is improper to refer to it as second language (L2), but it should be called Foreign Language (FL).

Manyike (2007, *ibid*) says that this is so, because learners there do not access English, especially the spoken one, in their immediate environment. Instead, the only platform where learners are afforded an opportunity to speak, read, listen to and write in English is in the formal school context. The narrative so far regarding the teaching and learning status of English language, at least, from 1994 to date, indicates that there has not been discernible improvement.

Apparently, the way English language is, currently, fails to help learners execute responsibilities envisaged in aims mentioned above.

1.3.3 English as a Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT)

The disappointing responsiveness to the expectations of education stakeholders of South Africa is observed in the remarks by the Minister of National Basic Education, Angie Motshega, on matric results of 2009: “The LOLT, which is a second language for Black pupils, is viewed as a major factor behind poor matric results of Black learners in South Africa” (Mashiya, 2011:8; citing *Daily Dispatch*, 12 January 2010). The reference to the remarks by the Minister does not mean that this research study explores the effectiveness of English as a medium of instruction in schools. Instead, the study’s concern was on the learners’ English tense competence and, subsequently, the English language communicative competence in general since it (the study) also explored briefly the implications of the learners’ tense competence.

After twenty-three years from the dawn of democracy, English remains central to the South African education just as it was during the apartheid era. More so, many learners of the land are challenged still by the use of the said language. This is not to say that relevant stakeholders were sitting back doing absolutely nothing, but, as it was shown earlier, attempts were being made, yet the desired results were never attained. Considering how un-improving the situation was, the researcher speculated that perhaps the cause was, among other things, the teaching approaches adopted then. He thought that a totally different approach was necessary for the realisation of a true transformation of the teaching and learning of English to a South African learner. The approach favoured by the researcher focused straight on what C2005, the CAPS and many research studies had not done before. It is worth reiterating that C2005’s central point was the teaching method that was predicated on learner-centredness. Educators would decide on what would be the content of their lessons be. This conclusion, therefore, suggests a possibility of diverse teaching contents delivered on the learners of the same circuit and even the same school. The CAPS position is more interesting. The functions to be carried through the language once learned are laid out clearly and the approach to be used in the teaching of grammar is specified as the explicit teaching method. The question that may be posed is: “What grammar or which areas of grammar should be taught?” Grammar is broad and its various components pose different challenges to learners. This study unequivocally advocates for the teaching of, arguably, one of the most influential areas in the learning and application of English language. Moreover, it is one thing to enshrine rules in a curriculum, but implementing

them is another. As the CAPS (DoBE, 2011) states that there must be explicit teaching of grammar under certain conditions, it remains questionable whether the rule was complied with. Unfortunately, this study did not investigate whether the regulation was implemented or not because it was not its aim. The investigation was on the tense competence and the impact it wielded on the learners' communicative competence. From the onset, the researcher assumed that the learners of the Lower Umfolozi Circuit could not mark tense correctly, considering how poorly they expressed themselves in the senior grades including Grades 10, 11 and 12 (from the researcher' observation as a teacher of the circuit earlier). Research studies also focused on the teaching approaches and when they referred to the content, they spoke of broad concepts such as "grammar structures", "grammar rules" and so forth as shown earlier.

Besides the English competence status that the study focused on, English in South Africa has another status which is equally important to mention at this stage of the study. The way English has been entrenched in the South African affairs is discerned in the fact that, two decades into its political independence, South Africa still has English having an upper hand over other languages, including the indigenous ones. What is enshrined on the constitution of the Republic of South Africa that there are 11 equally official languages of the country is not a true reflection of what is practised. According to the constitution, all 11 South African languages carry equal status and South Africans can use any of these languages as and when they choose to do so.

However, the said equity status is, in reality, non-existent. Public schools in South Africa have English as the "sole" official medium of instruction (Mashiya, 2011: 8). Very few other schools still have Afrikaans as their only or co-existing (with English) teaching medium. So, the education system as a whole is monopolised by English. English is there at schools in a twofold form, as a means of conveying instruction and also as a subject. Information books are written in the language of instruction. In government as well, officials deliver their speeches in English. In government meetings, workshops and rallies, people are addressed in English, irrespective of whether the addressees are competent or not in the language. All government departments have English as the official governance language above the other "official" languages. Public job advertisements are issued, and subsequent interviews conducted, in English. This unilateral linguistic power has been maintained because, among other things, English is deemed a unifying language by some South African citizens (Motsoeneng, 2003). That is, the notion implies that English is used as a lingua franca for South Africans whose backgrounds are so diverse that they cannot effectively communicate with one another. This notion, however,

evokes the question: is English understood by all South African citizens so as to describe it a unifier?

Considering this immense responsibility assigned to this particular language, one would not be surprised if others in the community deemed it as a “progress language”, because it is the only means through which their aspirations can be carried. Unfortunately, in other instances the very language is the cause for the failure of South African citizens. Sometimes one pauses and ponders: “Is English truly a boon to a South African society and schools in particular?” Then, one comes to the realisation that not all South Africans are competent users of English. A huge number of them cannot participate in decision-making platforms pertaining the running of their own lives, not because they are silly or stupid, but just because they are incompetent in the language. The more gruesome part about this language issue is that even those South African children that have gone to school seem to have not benefited from so doing. Therefore, the unstable education foundation that poor English competence sets for many learners, can, arguably, only lead to mediocre eventuality. The possibly best solution to the said problem could be to start the whole education system afresh. However, such a massive process might adversely impact on the very learners the research intended to empower. Whatever decision taken to enhance the learners should be mindful of the fact that the development of a human cognitive being does not occur in solo. It is, under normal situations, always paralleled with, at least, the physical growth. So, the amendments done to the cognitive part should not frustrate the other dimensions of the entire life of the person concerned. For the reason that many lives are already established on the current education system, despite its shortfalls, one would recommend that any transformation or amendment to it be introduced gradually.

Nonetheless, one can unequivocally state that there still remains a section of learners that can hardly construct a single correct sentence in English after expending more than twelve years learning the language. It would be naive to assume that such learners would do well in their academic work carried out in the very same language they are battling with. Therefore, English language can be viewed as a source of many South Africans’ suffering, frustrations, failure, unemployment, poverty, et cetera. As a result, many of these people from this section have already given up hope that they will ever learn the language and, ultimately, witness the realisation of their dreams because they have grown up. The other group of people with a possibly gloomy future are the teenagers matriculating having not yet internalised basic grammar rules of English to enable them use it (English) correctly, effectively and confidently

in their career paths. Their situation is worse because they are still young and expecting to be successful in life. It is clear that the supremacy of English in South Africa is definitely not a redemption or benediction to some citizens of the country. In fact, it has split the nation, advantaging some and stranding others. The study concerned itself with the latter section of the people. In fact, the researcher found it unimaginable for any person, a South African in particular, to lead a successful life without English. The researcher thought that the young South African citizens, unlike the senior ones, could still be rescued from the possibly lifelong challenges. It suffices to say that English in South Africa and internationally, as indicated earlier, is deemed a multi-purpose 'key'.

Basically, the researcher believes that if the existing education system of the country cannot fix the problems of the country, the first step to be taken is to fix the system. That is the major factor that led the researcher to suggest that the schools' curriculum should ensure that all teaching subjects, English in particular, must have a clear teaching content. This is the reason *tense* is pointed out by the study as one of the important components of the suggested teaching content for English language. One factor, possibly, amongst many others that make *tense* central in the study is its location in a sentence which is in the verb. Since tense is marked in the verb, the study did not only refocus the reader on the verb, but also underscored it for the teaching and learning of English as a second language. According to Gurrey (1961: 138) a verb is the most significant constituency of a sentence.

With so much power invested in the English language, learners' education in the South African schools would be compromised until the verb problem was addressed. It is, therefore, hoped that the teaching of tense will address the problem and subsequently afford the learners the necessary competence for tense application in particular and the English communicative competence generally.

The researcher used various structures as the determinants or indicators of the tense competence level of the learners. The said structures were selected on the basis of their respective close relatedness to tense. They were not the findings of any test, pre-test or post-test. They were presented as the topics or themes of focus which enabled the researcher to set the tests. As such, they remained the same in both tests. The findings from the pre-test in particular revealed challenges occurring under the given themes and led to the formation of the *Category A* and *Category B* questions discussed later. Both the pre-test and post-test assessed

the respondents (the sampled learners) on tense. So, there was no better way they (respondents) could display their competence or incompetence unless they expressed themselves in the tense-related structures. The said focus areas or themes provided the researcher and respondents with a platform to set, and respond to, the relevant questions, respectively. By responding to the questions (pre-test & post-test), the respondents showed in a more refined way how much or little they each understood the tense application. Besides, their responses indicated where the respondents' challenges were and the extent of each challenge. Then the deficiencies revealed by the pre-test presented a platform for the explicit teaching approach to test its effectiveness as it was adopted in the teaching of them during the intervention.

So, the researcher capitalised on his own experience as a former educator in the high schools, his insight in the language as a specialist in it, the supervisor's input as well as the contribution of the departmental committee for research (of the university) to decide on the focus areas.

1.4 Focus areas of the study

The focus areas are discussed next. It is worth emphasising that these are not the findings at all, but the structures that were manipulated by the researcher in order to get the respondents displaying their tense knowledge. Without the researcher testing the respondents on the tense-related structures, it would be, arguably, infeasible to gather the relevant data for the research.

1.4.1 Distinction between Regular and Irregular Verbs

Since tense is marked in the verb or by the verb, it was significant for the study to assess the respondents' competence on these two major types of verbs especially because they mark tense differently. As a result, the researcher ensured that both the pre-test and post-test had a section of questions that secured their knowledge on this structure directly despite the fact that the structure also surfaced in various parts of the pre-test and post-test.

1.4.2 "Be" Verb: *was* and *were*

The *be* verb performs so various functions that the second speakers of English learning it may be easily confused by its application. For example, it comes as an auxiliary and linking verb in various constructions. Considering the changes applied to a verb phrase when, for instance, a construction changes voice (e.g. Active to Passive), the researcher decided that this structure was also pertinent to the aims of the research. The respondents had to demonstrate their tense competence on this area as well as this *be* verb was used with various main verbs which were

also in different forms. Although the research explored the *be* verb as a whole, it had special focus on its past tense forms, *was* and *were*.

1.4.3 Differentiating *Tense* from *Aspect*

Research shows that there is a slight divide between *tense* and *aspect*. In fact, the boundary between the two structures is so slim that even some linguists confuse them. Assessing the respondents on this area would be helpful to them since there was going to be a teaching intervention (and it occurred) by the researcher as well. The researcher really wanted this focus area to be there as his experience reminded him that his own teachers at school and himself as a teacher later treated both the structures as a tense.

So, the researcher wanted to put a stop to the vicious circle.

1.4.4 Subject-Verb Agreement

The researcher acknowledges that the subject-verb agreement issue is viewed, generally, as a concordant concern. The researcher did not dispute the reality that the subject-verb agreement matter is largely concord-related. However, it, arguably, overlaps with *tense* as well. Consequently, the researcher took this matter as one of the areas he would test the research respondents on. Later in the report, the researcher gives an extensive explanation for taking the subject-verb agreement as a *tense*-related structure. Despite the argument by some scholars that the subject-verb agreement matter exclusively marks the number of the subject, other scholars unequivocally corroborate to the contrary. That is, these linguists and grammarians assert that every English verb, except *be*, has two present tense forms which are the *base* and *s*-forms (Greenbaum & Gerald, 2002: 55), (Greenbaum, 1991: 49-50) and (Huddleston & Pullum, 2005: 31). The two forms in question are unambiguously and grammatically observed in the present tense propositions only. It is because of this aforementioned reality that the researcher holds, even now, the view that the matter is temporal. That is, it will not be observed in other tenses, the past and future.

1.4.5 Negation Constructions

The researcher deemed it necessary to have the *negation constructions* as one of the themes considering that the correct form of negation takes into cognisance the tense of the construction. Basing his thoughts on his experience and the knowledge of the structure, the researcher anticipated that this structure would pose a trick to the respondents hence he decided to include it as one of the testing themes. He understood that the fact that both the sentences with or

without the helping verbs had to be negated in the real-life situation, the respondents would need the relevant tense competence as these two types of sentences were negated differently. More so, the structure was found to be interrelated not only with tense, the Subject-Verb-Agreement theme as well.

1.4.6 Interrogation Constructions

This structure like the negation one was deemed by the researcher to be more intertwined with the subject-verb agreement theme than it was with other structures presented as the areas of focus in the research. The fact that most of the themes are related to *tense* and also interrelate with one another, enhances the interrelated influence and assists in the mastering of tense by the learners directly or indirectly. Above all, since the interrogation sentences have always to be constructed within a time space, the language user should therefore be tense competent. Because of the foregoing statement, the structure was included into the list of the research themes.

1.5. Statement of the problem

The study was inspired by the repeated and observed incompetence of many secondary school learners in expressing themselves in English. Actually, the errors made were of various types. Some were not only recurring, but also crystalising into a common pattern amongst the learners. Such formations were discerned when verbs had to conjugate in order to locate an event or situation correctly on the time continuum. For example, seemingly, it was strongly internalised by the learners that the only way to mark past tense was by attaching the suffix “-ed” to the base form of the verb. Looking at this practice from another angle, it could be perceived as a positive development signaling that learning was happening in the psyche of the learner, hence “-ed” was attached as past tense interrelation. However, the practice could be deemed glorious for as long as it was “temporary”. It would be considered an interlanguage, since one of the characteristics of interlanguage is its short-lived status. In this case, the researcher had been with different groups of learners in a school for over a five-year period because he was an educator there. Therefore, he managed to observe a given group of learners at a particular point of the five-year long time period. More so, if anything was to happen or be done to end the ‘temporary’ condition explained above, then that would probably be somewhere after matric, considering that the research was conducted on the highest grades of the DoBE which were the exit point. Unfortunately, matric was the highest grade of the DoBE, hence the problem needed urgent attention. It is notable that the expression errors observed by the

researcher then recurring amongst school learners were largely *tense*-related.

Most of them were elementary but causing great concern for they were committed at a higher level where one would not expect them. One cannot enumerate all the errors that were observed, at least, at this stage, but it all led to the researcher's assumption that the lack of *tense* competence was at the root of the problem. The situation was not only embarrassing – for learners at the exit point of a ten-year-long learning curve to be so expressively poor, and more so, soon the learners concerned would be enrolled with institutions of higher learning where all academic activities would be monopolised by English. At tertiary level, little attention was given to elementary aspects pertaining the learning and use of language. In fact, it was presumed that such things had long been grasped. These learners, therefore, when given academic work to perform at tertiary level, were thought to be on par with their counterparts from different backgrounds and as a result, be expected to perform equally to, or even outperform, them. Although the researcher had not investigated the possible impact of the learners' incompetence on their academic performance at tertiary level, he was convinced that their English communicative competence would have far-reaching repercussions in their respective academic careers. Ndlovu (1993) asserts the seriousness of the problem:

Black first year students from disadvantaged backgrounds, have very limited repertoire of language thinking skills on their arrival at the university of Durban-Westville (Ndlovu, 1993: 22).

All the respondents that became actual participants of the study were also Black learners. Their background, too, was similar to the one mentioned in the above quote. Another intriguing aspect of this problem was the fact that teaching was happening and had been so for years, yet the satisfactory results were not attained. The reasons for this could be many, but the researcher assumed that the teaching of *tense* or the lack of it would be one of the most influential factors. The researcher's voice in this study is not just reiterating what others have raised before, but it also calls for something different. That is, to direct every teaching endeavour to enhance “*tense*”, hence, *tense* became the central point of the research.

Although there might have been various factors responsible for the learners' incompetence in the English language, the researcher was convinced that *tense* was at its roots and its fixing would ameliorate the situation. As referred to previously, the other important factor that

demanding the conduct of the study was the realisation that most previous research studies, on the teaching or learning of a second language (L2), had focused on the teaching and learning of the language system as a whole, wide as it was. The claim in the foregoing sentence is corroborated by the fact that for a long period of time in the attempt of facilitating the learning of ESL, the methods adopted have been concerned more with the transmission of the subject matter from the educator to the learner. Such methods include, among others, the global Grammar-Translation Method from 1840s to 1940s, the Direct Method in the mid-twentieth century, the Situational Language Teaching Method, the Audio-lingual Method as well as the Communicative Language Teaching Approach (Motsoeneng, 2003: 7-10). The CLT Approach has been dominant ever since its inception in the 1960s. Closer to home one can mention the study by the same researcher (Motsoeneng, 2003) conducted in the same geographical area, in the Lower Umfolozi Circuit. The point made here is that earlier research has not given much attention to the individual grammatical items constituting the teaching content.

Referring to The Direct Method, Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1991: 10) assert that, “the course was too loosely structured, and learners were presented with grammatical items in a very haphazard fashion”. They did not focus on a particular linguistic component of a wider grammar system. The researcher had a problem with this kind of approach, since different components of an English sentence, for instance, raised unequal challenges to different learners. That is, of the three structurally known divisions of a sentence which are subject, verb and object, the verb has always been the most difficult to master by learners. The problem with dealing with the teaching or learning of a L2 as a whole, is that the researcher becomes overwhelmed by too many influential factors to explore. Moreover, the “second language teaching or learning” implies that teachers know what to teach going to the classrooms, but research proves that often teachers are found wanting regarding the teaching content unless it is specified (De Waal, 2004: 50; Motsoeneng, 2003: 71). De Waal (2004) and Klu (2017) are in agreement as seen earlier, that C2005 did not highlight specific components of the L2 as the core-content for teaching. Instead, it focused on the teaching approach and the envisaged type of product. Unfortunately, the missing content had to become the actual defeat of the whole scheme because there was no “enough guidance on what to teach”.

That is, the world-known teaching methodologies such as The Direct Method, Audio-lingual Method and the Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLT), committed the same ‘error’ of treating the target language as a ‘whole, single entity’ irrespective of various

components. Maybe if these methodologies had focused their attention on specific grammatical items, their contribution to the learning of English in particular would have been more remarkable. Their arbitrary treatment of grammar does not help the educators. Motsoeneng (2003: 8, 71) observes the arbitrariness where a teaching approach lacks solid ground, since it compromises the educators' ability to teach and thus creates unnecessary uncertainty. In simpler terms this means that educators need to be told the grammatical items to teach. It is not only inadequate to say 'teach grammar', but confusing too. Therefore, the study at hand was conducted to fill the gap that had, for so many years, been elusive to the researchers on the teaching and learning of a second language and English in particular. The study was unambiguous in advocating for the explicit teaching of "tense". While the study focused on the best teaching approach, it is unique in that it provides teaching content and not just that, but it is conscious of the fact that content is itself very wide. Consequently, the study selected a small but central area of this wide phenomenon called content. In this way the study suggests that it is aware that whilst the eventual aim of teaching grammar rules is to learn the whole target language, it is also convenient to begin treating it from a discrete-component's point of view leading to the larger discourse. Such approach is corroborated by Mulaudzi (1994: 136) as he asserts:

Another possible approach towards teaching and learning of a second language, English, is by introducing parts of speech to learners and show how they interlink into forming a cohesive language discourse.

Another interesting part of the problem was that, whilst some research might have been done on *tense*, it was conducted in other parts of the country where subjects or respondents had different cultures and spoke different languages. There seemed to have been none or, if any, conspicuously little of similar research conducted specifically on isiZulu-speaking group. Considering the influence that a first language (L1) has in the learning of the L2 (Manyike, 2007: 110), and the large number of ten million (SA-Venues, 2018) of fifty-seven million (Maluleke, 2018) South Africans speaking isiZulu as a L1, the exploration of the *tense* amongst the members of a homogeneous group (IsiZulu speakers) became only invaluable. That is, if the problem was as a result of a common influential factor, the First Language (FL) perhaps, a common solution was likely to be found.

1.6 Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to find out whether the teaching of *tense* could improve the learners'

competence in tense and subsequently, language communicative competence at large.

1.7 Objectives of the study

The study hoped to achieve the following objectives:

- To find out if the high school learners of the Lower Umfolozi Circuit could mark tense correctly;
- To establish whether the explicit teaching of tense to the high school learners of the Lower Umfolozi Circuit could improve their linguistic competence;
- To establish the implications of the learners' competence in their communicative proficiency.

The three major research steps mentioned above were carried out in the same order they are (i.e. pre-test, teaching intervention and post-test).

1.8 Research questions

In keeping focus on the research, the research project was guided by the research questions mentioned here below. The first two questions, (i) and (ii), may seem narrow such that one may even be tempted to answer them by a “yes” or “no” response. It is only the phrasing of them that seems to undermine their depth. On the other hand, the very phrasing of the questions was significant for keeping the researcher focused as they were short and precise. Moreover, they are significant for the confirmation or invalidation of the hypothesis. The “yes” and “no” responses to the said questions can only serve as indicators of the direction of an elaborative answer that should be. That is, they cannot respectively and sufficiently answer the questions. Either the “yes” or “no” answer, it would always need substantial support. Such support can only be derived from the findings of the empirical studies which include the current study itself. Therefore, there is no way one can satisfactorily answer the questions concerned by circumventing elaboration. For that reason, the researcher decided to keep the wording of the two questions as it is:

- (i) Is *tense* correctly marked by high school learners of the Lower Umfolozi Circuit?
- (ii) Can the explicit teaching of tense to the high school learners of the Lower Umfolozi Circuit improve their tense competence?
- (iii) What are the implications of the learners' tense competence in their language

communicative competence?

Practically, the endeavour to answer the aforementioned research questions and to ascertain that the aims and objectives of the study were realised, became so intertwined that the execution of one was, automatically, complementary to the other. Unsurprisingly, all these three important components of the study – aims, objectives and research questions – were successfully and simultaneously responded to, with the execution of the following:

- (i) Teaching of tense to the participating learners of the selected schools.
- (ii) Administration of two tense-related tests to the learners participating in the study, prior to, and post, teaching.
- (iii) Comparison of the results of the learners' performance from the pre-test and post-test.

1.9 Significance of the study

It is hoped that the study has contributed to the literature of the teaching and learning approaches of a Second Language (L2), be it the English or any other language. The study has broadened the space for further research by other scholars because in some instances it only made debate-triggering statements and left them unexhausted for relevance reasons. The prospects of the improvement of the South African citizens' lives in general, are highly possible. This conviction is supported by the realisation that educators and learners stand to be the immediate beneficiaries of the study as it focused on the improvement of the English communicative competence through the enhanced teaching approach. Considering the degree of leverage that English wields in the South African society and in the education realm in particular, one believed that South Africa's life generally would develop holistically. Thus Mgqwashu's declaration:

In South Africa, the competent use of English confers significant social advantages, and competent speakers of this language have greater opportunities ... (Mgqwashu, 1999: 4)

1.10 Delimitations of the study

The study highlighted the learners' tense (in)competence status by underscoring the errors they committed when applying tense. The next thing that the study focused on, was not only the

exploration of the implications of the tense errors or the tense (in)competence status of the learners, but the effective teaching approach that could remarkably improve the said appalling tense status of the learners. Consequently, the explicit teaching approach was selected for the hypothetical statement: “The explicit teaching of tense will improve the learners’ tense competence and, subsequently, their language communicative competence.”

Acknowledging the fact that (a) tense marking is performed on the Verb Phrase (VP) and (b) by other related structures, the study reached out to these relevant structures but only to an extent of clarifying tense. The foregoing statement explains why the structures like the *aspect*, *negation*, *interrogation* and the *subject-and-verb agreement* were part of the study, yet they were not explored extensively. Despite the study’s awareness of the possibility that there were many factors responsible for the poor or improved communicative competence of the learners, it remained unwavering on the tense and the explicit teaching approach. The steadfast attitude was further inspired by the remembrance of the statement by De Vos, et al. (2011: 224) that a massive amount of data might be too taxing for the researcher to process, analyse and interpret timeously. So, focusing on a fewer items or smaller area stood a chance of enhancing the quality of the research results. That is, it was not possible to treat all the factors possibly related to the learners’ language competence in a single study. However, the infeasibility of treating all the relevant factors at once should not undermine the selection of the tense and the explicit teaching approach for the study. That is, these two factors were selected for the study because of their immediacy and influence in the learners’ competence or incompetence, more than any other reason.

1.11 Assumption

The researcher assumed that the learners of the high schools at the Lower Umfolozi Circuit could not mark tense correctly.

1.12 Hypothesis

The explicit teaching of *tense* will improve the learners’ tense competence and, subsequently, their language communicative competence. That is, the explicit teaching of tense will not eradicate all grammatical challenges for learners, but will render enormous improvement in the learners’ language competence.

1.13 Methodology

The study adopted the quantitative approach which is also used interchangeably with the concept “positivism” (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2015: 23). This adoption was informed by the approach’s conviction that reality is stable and can be observed and described from an objective viewpoint, that is, without interfering with the phenomena being studied (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 23; Neuman, 2003: 75; in De Vos et al., 2011: 6). So, the researcher deemed this approach as the best way through which he could discover the tense status of the high school learners of the Lower Umfolozi Circuit. That is, the approach would allow him to “discover the existing status” as he assumed from the onset that a particular tense status (tense competence) was existing.

The researcher supplemented the said approach with the *One-group, Pre-test, Post-test Experimental Design* which facilitated the gathering of the data.

1.14 Definition of key terms

There were important concepts from the topic of the study which needed to be defined. These were *communicative competence*, *tense*, *error* and *FET phase*.

1.14.1. Communicative competence

Motsoeneng (2003), citing Hymes (1971 and 1974), defines communicative competence as follows:

The learner’s ability is not only to apply the grammatical rules of a language in order to construct grammatically correct sentences, but also to know when and where to use these sentences and with whom (Motsoeneng, 2003: 15).

This definition extends to encompass the appropriate use in the society at large. This definition, however, evokes more questions. For instance, it does not explain this societal appropriateness element in detail. One is left wondering whether such appropriateness can still be reached even if grammar expression is faulty or its (grammar) accuracy cannot be overlooked. Such thinking that communicative competence should not be confined to grammar per se is also upheld by Halliday (1975) as he argues that it should extend to as far as incorporating socio-semiotics. Again, as it is the case under Hymes’s definition, even here, one remains in the dark. It remains unclear whether it is only the combination of grammatical accuracy and socio-semiotics that can result in communicative competence or whether socio-semiotics with erroneous grammar

will do. This recurring inquiry regarding accuracy is important in that it should indicate the amount of value each definition attaches to grammar. Canale and Swain (1980) support the view that “communicative competence” is a multi-faceted phenomenon comprising the following:

- Grammatical competence (knowledge of grammar);
- Sociolinguistic competence (application of relevant language, for example the word choice, to the relevant audience and at the appropriate time);
- Discourse competence (ability to recognise and comprehend morphemes and phrases put together in a coherent manner in a given context); and
- Strategic competence (all other additional means rather than words employed by a communicator to ensure the conveyance of his message).

What is remarkable about the given definitions is that all of them acknowledge grammar as part of the ingredients constituting and enhancing communicative competence. The current study could not explore all the said constituents. It had interest in grammar, particularly tense, and its impact on the use of the language by high school learners from Lower Umfolozi Circuit.

1.14.2 Tense

Quirk and Greenbaum (1973: 40) define tense as “the correspondence between the form of verb and the concept of time.” For more clarity to the concept, tense, Comrie (1985: 14) adds the following:

As far as tense is concerned, then, the reference point is typically the present moment, and tense locates situations either at the same time as the present ... or prior to the present moment, or subsequent to the present moment.

1.14.3 Error

Van der Walt, Evans and Kilfoil (2009) distinguish between two concepts that are usually used interchangeably, *mistake* and *error*. They state that a mistake is a slight deviation (usually subconscious) from what is correct. Therefore, even native speakers of the language are not immune to mistakes. On the other hand, an error is a consistent ‘mistake’, indicating that the learner has not yet internalised or grasped the specific rule. So, an error is a deviation made due to the lack of knowledge. That is, a deviation from a grammatical rule, is a grammatical error. The study, though, did not deal with all grammatical errors in general, but tense errors in

particular. The “tense error”, therefore, is a deviation from the tense-marking rule shown which can be shown orally or in a written form. The current study utilised the latter method to detect whether the tense-marking rules were correctly applied or not. The errors referred to in the study were sometimes referred to as the “deficiencies” which meant “the state of not having enough of something” that was required (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 2015: 391).

1.14.4 FET Phase

Education in South Africa is divided into two ministries, Basic Education and Higher Education. Basic Education, which the study is about, comprises of Grades R to 12. The entry level is Grade R and the exit level is Grade 12. These grades are further consolidated into two main groups called ‘bands’ or ‘phases’. Grades R to 9 constitute the first band called General Education and Training (GET). For more convenience purposes GET can also be broken down into smaller divisions known as foundation (Grades 0 to 3), intermediate (Grades 4 to 6) and senior (Grades 7 to 9) phases. The second of the two main phases consists of Grades 10 to 12. It is called the Further Education and Training (FET) phase or band. According to the South African *National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12* (2012: 3), the FET is the final phase of schooling in basic education. The research focuses on this exit-point phase (Grades 10 to 12) of the DoBE.

1.14.5 Explicit Grammar Instruction

Although the extensive definition is given under the *Theoretical Framework* section, the “explicit grammar instruction” used in the current study means, “the form of explicit explanations of grammatical structures provided to learners orally or in writing” (Dang & Nguyen, 2012: 113).

1.14.6 Implicit Grammar Instruction

In the current study the “implicit grammar instruction” was adopted with the understanding that it meant, “the learners’ discovery of the grammatical rules through tasks and therefore does not involve giving grammatical explanations” (Dang & Nguyen, 2012: 113).

1.14.7 Learners’ English Competence

Linguistically, the concept “competence” refers to “a person’s internalised grammar of a language. . . a person’s ability to create and understand sentences, including sentences they have never heard before. . . a person’s knowledge of what are and what are not sentences of a

particular language” (Richards et al., 1985: 82).

The “learner’s English competence”, therefore, as used in the current study refers to the learners’ internalised grammar of the English language, his or her ability to create and understand English grammatical sentences and his or her knowledge of what are and what are not sentences of English language.”

1.15 Conclusion

Chapter 1 covered the background, statement of the problem, aims, objectives, and significance, of the study. It delineated the problem and contextualised the primary focus. It provided examples of the incorrect use of tenses and verbs to highlight the challenges experienced by learners. The next chapter looks at the understanding that different scholars have of the key concept of the research, viz.: *tense*.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature dealing with the views of different linguists and grammarians on the key variables of this research. Since the focus of the study is on the “tense errors”, tense stands as one of the most crucial variables or concepts to be defined. This chapter, therefore, renders an explication of what tense is, in which part of a sentence it is found and how it is marked. Besides the definition of tense, the chapter looks at what other scholars have done on the teaching of tense in particular and of a second language generally. That is, regarding the teaching of the second language (L2), it is when the chapter explores the teaching approaches that have been researched on previously. Before getting to the literature reflecting on different theories of teaching and learning of a second language, this chapter gives a thorough explication of the concept *tense* as conceived in this study. The rather lengthy explanation is informed by much confusion attached to the concept. This has been observed by the researcher from his own experience as a learner and a teacher of the second language, English. Even today some grammarians still use the same concept *tense* to refer to *aspect* as well. For example, Uchiyama (2006: 11 – 13) uses the term *tense* to refer to the aspect as well. Therefore, the explanation below does not only define the concept, but it also helps to point correctly at the variable for attention. It should be remembered that the main objective that this chapter should assist in achieving is to determine whether the explicit teaching of tense can improve the learners’ tense competence. *Tense*, actually is an independent variable whose manipulation (teaching) may effect change on the dependent variable, learners’ tense competence.

2.2 Tense

Greenbaum (1991: 49) defines tense as “a grammatical category referring to the time of the situation,” and according to this definition, tense and time are two different concepts. However, it should be noted that time is a phenomenon that is there whether *tense* is present or not. This definition leaves a thin divide (arguably, the divide is there) between the two concepts just like the one by Quirk and Greenbaum (1973: 40), “Tense refers to the correspondence between the form of verb and the concept of time.” The understanding by the researcher is that the form of verb is what marks or carries *tense*. Time is there to inform the verb of the relevant form to take in order to mark tense correctly. The clearer definitions regarding tense and its relation to time include the one by Kroeger (2005: 147) which reads as, “Tense specifies the situation’s

“location” in time. Time is a continuum wherein various events occur and different situations are placed. So, to indicate the specific slot in when an event occurred or the situation placed, the user of the language changes the verb forms accordingly. Downing and Locke (2006: 352 – 353) understand *tense* the same way as Kroeger (2005) for they all say that tense is indicated by relevant verb forms determined by time: “Tense is the grammatical expression of the location of events in time. It relates the event time to a point of reference.” The space between the two terminologies is more visible in this definition. Even Fleischman (1990: 15) concurs with the separation of tense from time as he puts it, “Tense is the grammaticalisation of the location in time. Tense is relational in that it involves at least two moments in time.” The aspect that cannot be disputed about tense and as per the given definitions is that it is very much intertwined with time, but still recognisable as a separate entity. Comrie’s (1985: 14) definition of tense is a bit unpacked yet it shows that he too sees the line dividing the two concepts, “As far as tense is concerned, then, the reference point is typically the present moment, and tense locates situations either at the same time as the present moment ... or prior to the present moment, or subsequent to the present moment ...”

It transpires from the definitions cited above that there are certain characteristics of tense that are common. All these definitions refer to the concept of *time* in their respective definition of tense. They also agree that tense is a *grammatical* formation or concept which is used to ‘place’ an event or a situation in ‘time’. Since the time factor is central to the understanding of tense, it is worth revisiting the tense-and-time relationship alluded to earlier. In this study these concepts are construed as separate and independent of each other. Quirk and Greenbaum (1973: 40) assert that time is not grammatical, but is a universal phenomenon consisting of three divisions often viewed as the *before-now*, *now* and *after-the-now*, commonly known as the *past*, *present* and *future*. Furthermore, Hall (2005: 22) argues that “time does not provide any landmarks in terms of which one can locate situations; events are typically grammaticalised in the verb by locating them in relation to the moment of speech.” Hall (2005: 21) attests that:

It is, however, not a foregone fact that all scholars distinguish tense and time. While grammarians such as Gabbay and Moravcsik (1980: 59) distinguish between tense and time, others, for example, De Klerk (1978) do not make this distinction.

Another notable thing from *tense* definitions of various linguists and grammarians is that they generally agree that the verb is the element or constituency in a sentence where tense is marked.

Confirming the observation, Greenbaum (1991: 49) asserts that “tense is indicated by the *form of the verb*.” His assertion is corroborated by Downing and Locke (2006: 353) in their argument that “tense is a grammatical category that is realised in English morphologically *on the verb*.” Similarly, Kroeger (2005: 14) is of the view that tense can be identified by “means of a verb”. Even Comrie (1985: 12) holds the view that there is no other constituent of a sentence where tense is marked other than in the verb phrase:

In most languages that have tense, tense is indicated on the verb, either by the verb morphology ... or by grammatical words adjacent to the verb ... auxiliaries ... (Comrie, 1985: 12).

The views expressed above are also attested to by Greenbaum and Gerald’s (2002: 55) argument that *the verb* is marked for *tense*. Notably, expounding what tense is and where it is indicated is one thing and marking it is another. The investigative enquiry in this study had to establish whether learners were able to mark tense or not. Thus, the study had to answer the question: “How is *tense* indicated?” Knowing *what* tense is, and *where* it is marked, may not be an assurance of learners’ competence in correct application of tense. Tense in English is marked inflectionally or morphologically on the verb (Downing & Locke, 2006: 353; Greenbaum, 1991: 49). Besides inflection or morphology, auxiliary verbs can also be used to mark tense (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973: 47). In fact, there seems to be several ways of indicating tense, especially the future:

... there are several possibilities for denoting future time ... future time is rendered by means of modal auxiliaries or semi-auxiliaries, or by simple present forms or progressive forms (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973: 47).

The possibilities mentioned include, according to Quirk and Greenbaum (1973: 47-49), [*shall* and *will*, *be going to* + infinitive, *simple present*, *present progressive*, *be to* + infinitive and *be about to* + infinitive]. Kroeger (2005: 148) further advocates the view that inflection and auxiliary verbs are, and should be, used to indicate tense:

Tense is used only for time reference which is marked grammatically, that is, by grammatical elements such as affixes, auxiliaries ...

Comrie (1985: 44) also backs this latter view as he states that tense is indicated on the verb, either by the verb “morphology or by grammatical words adjacent to the verb ... auxiliaries”.

He (1985: 6) argues that the difference between, *John was singing* and *John is singing*, in English, is one of tense and it is marked by the auxiliary verb. Even Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 41) corroborate the view:

Auxiliary verbs form a small subclass of verbs whose members are characteristically used to mark tense, aspect, mood and voice. These categories are also often marked in languages by inflection.

It appears to be fair to say tense is marked in more than one way as illustrated above. Therefore, all events occurring, and situations existing in the time divisions must be ‘placed’ accordingly by tense in any given narrative, since tense is a grammatical formation. Subsequently, the research was conducted on the premise that, as said earlier, there were three tenses in English and they were marked grammatically by inflecting the verbs accordingly.

2.3 Three tenses in English

There are three tenses in English: *Present Tense*, *Past Tense* and *Future Tense*.

2.3.1 Present Tense

This tense is sometimes called simple present or the non-past tense (Kroeger, 2005: 147-148). According to Greenbaum and Gerald (2002: 55) “for all verbs except ‘be’, there are two forms for the present: the *s-form* and the *base form*. However, it is worth stressing that these forms in the foregoing sentence, fundamentally, are not used for indicating present tense. Their function is to mark the subject-verb agreement also called concord. Probably because this concord *s-form* applies to present tense constructions only (remember, *be* excluded), it has been easy to many language specialists to adopt it for the present tense purposes. For instance, to say “He teach Mathematics”, is ‘correct’ in terms of marking tense, may not be true, since the present tense finite verb must be accordingly influenced by the number and person of its (the verb) agent. So, generally and because of the rationale already given, some linguists and grammarians unreservedly categorise the verbs inflected with ‘-s’ as ‘present tense verbs’ (Greenbaum & Gerald, 2002: 55; Greenbaum, 1991: 49-50; Huddleston & Pullum, 2005: 31). Huddleston and Pullum (2005) also express their views on the base-form concept which they refer to as *plain form*:

Almost all verbs have a present tense form that is identical in shape with the plain form. The only verb with a plain form distinct from all its present tense

forms is “be” (Huddleston & Pullum, 2005: 35).

The close link that the base-form verb has with present tense verbs has also led several linguists treat both verb forms as though they were one. Perhaps, such interchangeable usage is facilitated by the reality that, as said earlier, these very same base-form verbs are the ones used to carry present tense. This is true only where the verb form in question is also a finite verb in a given expression:

Box 2.1: Finite verbs

- | | |
|-----|--|
| (i) | <i>Children love sweets.</i> (finite) |
| (i) | <i>Children would stay with her.</i> (non-finite) |

In the first sentence in Table 2.1, the expression keeps to the present, because of the use of the base form ‘love’ which functions simultaneously as a finite verb. Unlike in the first sentence, in the second example, the “stay”, despite its base form, does not have any influence on the indication of *tense*, because it is not a finite verb, but “would” is. As a result, it is the auxiliary “would” that marks *past* tense in the sentence, for it is the finite verb in the given verb phrase. Even concerning the *base-form* verbs, Collins and Hollow (2010: 73) reiterate that these forms represent present tense just like the *s-form* ones, as explained earlier. The *base-form* and the *s-form* verbs are referred to as the *general present* and the *third person singular present*, respectively, by Collins and Hollow (2010: 73). The former refers to what has been earlier called base form. The s-form is used with the third person singular subjects, as well as all other singular Noun Phrases (NPs) as subjects, except the first person ‘I’ and second person ‘you’ (Greenbaum & Gerald, 2002: 55). For anyone who wants to apply simple present tense correctly, he or she must also be conversant with the persons besides subjects and number in English. Here are the examples of a simple present tense with an –s form verb as presented in **Box 2.2** below:

Box 2.2: Present tense verbs

- | | |
|------|---|
| (i) | <i>She catches the 7 o’clock bus every morning.</i> |
| (ii) | <i>The university receives prospective students with sufficient points only.</i> |

The same scholars, Greenbaum and Gerald (2002: 55), state that the base form is used with the first and second persons as well as all plural Noun Phrases (NPs) as subjects to sentences. See the examples in **Box 2.3**.

Box 2.3: Verbs and plural noun phrases

- | | |
|------|--|
| (i) | <i>Her children</i> catch the 7 o'clock bus every day. |
| (ii) | <i>Universities</i> receive prospective students with sufficient points only. |

As stated before, the 'be' verb has three forms in the present tense (Greenbaum & Gerald, 2002: 55). These are *am*, *is* and *are*. Greenbaum and Gerald (2002) assert that *am* is used with the first person singular pronoun 'I', *is* with the third person singular noun phrases and *are* with all other noun phrases. It is this verb *be* that is able to perform the role of tense which is placing an *event* or *situation* in time. For example: "*Students are excited.*"

The verb '*be*' is the only English verb that has totally different verb forms in the present tense. All other verbs, as indicated earlier, have the base and s-forms in the present tense. Another thing to note in the above sentences is that in the first example, the verb *be* functions as an *auxiliary*, and in the second as a *linking verb*.

Still discussing the verbs, especially the auxiliary verbs, one needs to state that the *do* and *have* verbs can perform different functions at different times. At one time they can function as auxiliary verbs, and at the other, as main verbs of a sentence. The different tense forms are applied just like all other tense forms of regular verbs. For example, in the present tense sentence with a singular subject *have*, when inflecting or adjusting, will conjugate to its 's-form' *has*. See **Box 2.4** for examples.

Box 2.4: 'Has' and 'have' with singular or plural subjects

- | | |
|------|---|
| (i) | <i>The new coach</i> (singular subject) has (adjusting) new plans for the team. |
| (ii) | <i>Players</i> (plural subject) have (base form) different opinions about the new coach. |

The verb *do* also adjusts like many other regular verbs to the singular subjects in the present tense sentences. See the example in **Box 2.5**.

Box 2.5: The verb *do* and the singular subjects

- | | |
|-----|---|
| (i) | <i>The new coach</i> (singular subject) does (adjusting) <i>things differently</i> . |
|-----|---|

The discussion of the past tense follows next.

2.3.2 Past tense

As indicated above, although there is the commonest way of marking past tense, not all verbs follow that way to mark tense. Whilst it is a fact that most English verbs mark past tense by assuming the ‘-ed’ inflection, there is a handful of some, including *be*, that are called irregular verbs which behave differently. So, all the regular verbs have ‘-ed’ as one past tense form. Below are the examples of the regular past tense form in use. Unlike in the present tense where person and number influence the form of the verb used in a given clause, in the past tense the verb form can function with all three persons in English:

Box 2.6: The use of ‘-ed’ to form past tense verbs

- | | |
|------|---|
| (i) | <i>The president greeted the crowd with a slogan.</i> |
| (ii) | <i>The voters complained to the government.</i> |

Even with the irregular verbs, the same past tense form is used:

Box 2.7: The use of irregular past tense verbs

- | | |
|-------|--|
| (i) | <i>She caught the 7 o'clock bus every morning.</i> |
| (ii) | <i>Her children caught the 7 o'clock bus every morning.</i> |
| (iii) | <i>We caught the 7 o'clock bus every morning.</i> |

The verb *be* is always different, functioning either as a linking verb or auxiliary verb. Regarding the past tense, the verb *be* transforms into an irregular form. While most verbs take a morphological ‘-ed’ to mark past tense, the *be* changes into two different forms, which are *was* and *were*. The former is used with the first and third person singular subjects. The latter is used with the first, second and the third person plural subjects.

Below are examples of the verb “be” used as a linking verb:

Box 2.8: ‘Be’ as linking verb

- | | |
|-------|------------------------------------|
| (i) | <i>He was tired.</i> |
| (ii) | <i>Students were happy.</i> |
| (iii) | <i>We were hopeful.</i> |

The verb ‘be’ below is carrying its function of being an *auxiliary verb*.

Box 2.9: Auxiliary verbs

Present tense

- (i) John is singing.
- (ii) Police officials are looking for ten escapees.
- (iii) I am working in the president's office.

Past tense

- (iv) John was singing.
- (v) Police officials were looking for ten escapees.
- (vi) I was working in the president's office.

Therefore, it would be grammatically incorrect to say, for example: “John **was sing**” or “I **was work**” if *sing* and *work* function as main verbs. The inclusion of participles in the exploration of tense becomes vital when one is presented with sentences from both the active and passive voice. The examples below are in the passive voice, unlike in the examples mentioned above; so, the main verbs in their respective verb phrases take on a different participial form as seen in **Box 2.10** below.

Box 2.10: Past participles

- (i) The office *was* **broken** into.
- (ii) It *is* **stated** in the constitution.
- (iii) We *were* **invited** to the wedding.

The functions carried by the verb ‘be’ are so various that they can cause confusion if not treated with caution. The same verb that functions as an auxiliary verb can also function as a linking verb.

Box 2.11: Linking verbs

- (i) The chairs **were** comfortable.
- (ii) His dog **is** quiet today.

Another type of auxiliary verbs is called *modal verbs* or simply *modals*. Modality expresses the user’s attitude. However, it should be stated that there are other functions performed by modals other than what has been already said. For example, Palmer (1987: 96) argues that some modals at times do have a clear reference to time rather than attitude:

... not all of them are regularly used to refer to past time: only *could* and, less commonly, *would* have simple past time reference.

This assertion by Palmer (1987) does not dispute the reality that the same modals he refers to can also mark tentativeness, unreality and politeness. The modal *will* can make an unambiguous prediction about future time. So, for every verb phrase that has an auxiliary verb will have *tense* marked in the auxiliary verb. In the case where there is more than one auxiliary verb, the finite one, which usually is the nearest to the subject, will carry tense. For example:

Box 2.12: More than one auxiliary verb

(i)	<i>Our team will be taking part in the tournament.</i>
(ii)	<i>Their team would be taking part in the tournament if it had been invited.</i>
(iii)	<i>He said he would have built them a new house.</i>

In the case where the verb phrase has only one auxiliary verb and it is a modal, the main verb assumes the base form. Moreover, modal verbs function with all persons and they do not have to change their form with the change of the number or person of the subject. Below are examples as illustrated in **Box 2.13**.

Box 2.13: Modal verbs with singular and plural subjects

(i)	<i>It (<i>singular subject</i>) may (<i>modal</i>) rain (<i>base form of the verb</i>) this afternoon.</i>
(ii)	<i>Students (<i>plural subject</i>) must (<i>modal</i>) submit (<i>base form of the verb</i>) their assignments in time.</i>

It will, therefore, be incorrect and unacceptable to make expressions like “*It **may rains** this afternoon*” or “*It **mays rain** this afternoon.*” Therefore, tense will be carried by an auxiliary verb in a sentence where there is one or more auxiliaries. This assertion refers to both primary (*be* form) and modal auxiliary verbs. To strengthen the view that a finite verb is the one that marks tense even in a verb phrase that has a series of auxiliaries, Collins and Hollow (2010: 72) assert that “there is a close relationship between tense and finiteness.” Such assertion also corroborates the view that is discussed at length later, that some expressions generally viewed as aspectual, seem to have a temporal element as well.

As noted earlier, the ‘*be*’ forms, present and past, does not always function as auxiliary or helping verb. It also functions as linking verb. As it is said by Downing and Locke (2006) and

Kroeger (2005) that *tense* is used to place events and situations in time, it is the linking verb that performs that role. Let us compare the following two sentences in **Box 2.14**.

Box 2.14: Examples with linking verbs

- | | |
|------|---|
| (i) | <i>He was singing.</i> (auxiliary verb) |
| (ii) | <i>The minister was sick.</i> (linking verb) |

In the first example, “singing” is an occurrence (event or incident) that is placed in the past time by the auxiliary verb *was*. However, in the second sentence *sick* expresses the kind of feeling that the minister was in. It presents the condition or state in which the minister was. Then the linking verb *was* places this situation or condition in the past time.

The other intriguing verbs whose conjugations and functions cannot be ignored are *have* and *do*. To mark past tense, the two verbs function like many other irregular verbs. Just like many other verbs, regular or irregular, their past tense forms do not change with the change of the number or person of the subject. Below are the examples:

Box 2.15: Examples of Past tense verbs: *had* and *did*

- | | |
|-------|---|
| (i) | <i>The new coach_(singular subject) had (past tense marker) new plans for the team.</i> |
| (ii) | <i>The players_(plural subject) had (past tense verb) different opinions.</i> |
| (iii) | <i>The new coach_(singular subject) did things differently</i> |
| (iv) | <i>Different coaches (plural subject) did things differently.</i> |

Besides, *have* can also be looked into as in *have to* (modality function). Unlike other modal verbs, it keeps changing between the s-form and the base form when used in the present in order to agree with the person or number of the subject. When used in the past tense, though, it functions just like other modal verbs. See **Box 2.16** next.

Box 2.16: Verbs functioning as modals

- | | |
|-------|---|
| (i) | <i>The minister (3rd person singular) has (present tense) to fulfill his promise.</i> |
| (ii) | <i>Ministers (3rd person plural) have (present tense) to fulfill their promises.</i> |
| (iii) | <i>The minister (3rd person singular) had (past tense) to honour his promise.</i> |
| (iv) | <i>Ministers (3rd person plural) had (past tense) to honour their promises.</i> |

Moreover, another verb whose function needs further explanation is the verb *do*. This verb can function either as the only verb or helping verb in a sentence. If used to execute the former role, its form (the *s* or *base*) in the present tense is always determined by the personal number of the given subject. Its past tense form *did* remains unchanged irrespective of the person or number

of the subject. In both cases, present or past, where *do* is in use, the adjacent verb assumes the base form:

Box 2.17: Using ‘do’

- | | |
|-------|---|
| (i) | <i>Some players do complain about the new coach.</i> |
| (ii) | <i>The teacher did warn the naughty boys.</i> |
| (iii) | <i>The convict does plead guilty.</i> |

What is significant about the helping verbs above is that they mark the tense just like it happens with all other helping verbs. Mansfield-Phelan (1992) explains this further by stating that if the verb itself does not indicate time, the first auxiliary verb of the verb phrase will. According to Greenbaum (1991), such a verb is called finite verb, because it marks tense. He states that a finite verb carries tense and may also be marked for person and number. To corroborate Mansfield-Phelan, Greenbaum (ibid) says the following:

In a finite verb phrase the first or only verb is finite, and the other verbs (if any) are non-finite (Greenbaum, 1991: 56).

The assertion applies to the verb *have* as well in the examples given below in **Box 2.18**:

Box 2.18: Using ‘has’ and ‘had’

- | | |
|------|--|
| (i) | <i>The coach has introduced new tactics in the team.</i> |
| (ii) | <i>Some players had complained about new tactics in the team.</i> |

The s-form above ‘has’ indicates time, which is the present time, and the past tense form ‘had’, also indicate time, the past time. It can be reiterated that tense is always marked in the *verb phrase*. This is part or component of a sentence that the study focused on when evaluating the written work of the learners.

2.3.3 Future tense

Linguists such as Quirk and Greenbaum (1973), Greenbaum (1991), Greenbaum and Gerald (2002), Huddleston and Pullum (2005) as well as Kroeger (2005) argue that English verb forms indicate or carry only two tenses without the help of auxiliary verbs. The two tenses are the present tense and past tense. For example, for the expression of a situation holding to the present time, the form ‘take’ can be used as expounded earlier, and for the past time, ‘took’ will do, provided the said verbs are finite verbs in the contexts where they are used. In all the forms

that the given verb can conjugate to, *take, takes, took, taken and taking*, there is not a single one that can be said to be an outright marker of the future time. In other words, there is no obvious future tense or verb form in English corresponding to future time. For instance, *take* (a finite verb) and *took* correspond to the present and past times, respectively. It has already been stated that besides inflection, auxiliary verbs can also be used to mark tense (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973: 47; Comrie, 1985: 12; Huddleston & Pullum, 2005: 41). The aforementioned linguists state that future tense in particular is expressed or marked in various ways. Such ways include, amongst others, present tense form, the combination of *will* or *shall* with a base form verb, phrasal auxiliaries like **be + going to** and progressive forms:

Box 2.19: Types of carrying Future tense

- | | |
|-------|---|
| (i) | <i>He goes on leave next year</i> (present tense); |
| (ii) | <i>The minister will deliver the speech tomorrow.</i> (will + base form verb); |
| (iii) | <i>She is going to report the perpetrators.</i> (be + going to); |
| (iv) | <i>He is returning tomorrow from the conference.</i> (progressive form) |

What is discernible in the above examples in Table 2.19 is the insertion of adverbials like *tomorrow, next year*, et cetera. Without the inclusion of *next year* in the first sentence for instance, one would correctly think that the expression referred to the present time. Hornstein (1990: 38) argues that *will* can perform multiple functions and one of them is indicating tense. The multi-dimensional role of the auxiliaries *will* and *shall* is also corroborated by Kennedy (2003). He says that they both have several other meanings and functions. Like *will*, *shall* is another modal used for marking future tense. It is, however, commonly used in England according to Greenbaum and Gerald (2002) when the subject is 'I' or 'we'.

One needs to restate the point already made that future tense does exist and its existence cannot be refuted on the basis of its multiple markers. Even the past and the present verb forms perform several functions other than locating situations and events in time (Huddleston & Pullum, 2005: 44). Comrie (1985) argues that future tense in English makes a vivid prediction about some future state of affairs, and is therefore, clearly different from modal constructions that make reference to alternative worlds. He further argues that even if the predicting sentence, "It will rain tomorrow", may have predicted incorrectly, that does not attest to the non-existence of the

future tense. Tense is not based on the truthfulness of the proposition. If it were so, people would not give different accounts about supposedly one event as it is common in the courts of

law.

2.4 Tense versus aspect

Several linguists are in agreement on the view that to understand tense is so challenging that it is commonly confused with *aspect* as argued below by Comrie (1985: 6-7):

The readers should, however, beware that in many linguistic works ... the term tense is rather misleadingly used to cover both tense and aspect ...

Comrie (1976: 66) further argues that traditional grammar terminology does not always rigorously distinguish the two concepts.

Similarly, Vet and Veters (1994: 1) attest to the closeness in their assertion:

Tense is so closely related to aspect ... that treating it in isolation ... may cause more confusion for non-native learners in particular.

In this study, therefore, the independent existence of the two concepts: aspect and tense are unequivocally upheld. The two concepts are separate and should not be discussed as if they are one. *Aspect* has nothing to do with time.

2.5 How *tense* is different from *aspect*

Whilst acknowledging the closeness between tense and aspect, Comrie (1976: 66) reiterates that the two are not one and they should be treated as such. He states that tense is a deictic category because it locates situations in time with reference to the present moment though also with reference to other situations. Citing Comrie (1985: 14), Hall (2005: 25) corroborates, on the one hand, the relation between tense and time whilst, on the other hand, he rejects the existence of such relation between aspect and time:

A system which relates entities to a reference point is termed a deictic system, and we can therefore say that tense is deictic. By contrast, aspect is non-deictic, since a discussion of the internal temporal constituency of a situation is quite independent of its relation to any other time point.

Talking of the deixis of tense, Hall (2005: 21) asserts that the deictic centre to which every time-reckoning utterance relates is the time of utterance which is the now. This assertion

illuminates the distinction between ‘absolute tense’ and ‘relative tense’. According to Comrie (1985: 56 in Hall, 2005: 29), the former category of tense is when the reference points for a location of a situation or event in time is directly the present time. Regarding the latter category, the reference point for a location of a situation or event in time is some other point given by the context and not the present moment directly (Comrie, 1985: 56; in Hall, 2005). An example of an absolute tense can be a sentence like, “My mom departed an hour ago.” The past tense marking verb, “departed” has the utterance time as its direct reference point. That is, “departing” takes place prior to the utterance moment; hence, it is marked as a past event. But, in the sentence below, the same verb, “departed” does not have the utterance time as its direct point of reference e.g. “*When I arrived home, I discovered that my mom had departed already.*”

In the foregoing example, there is another time point (when I arrived home), other than the utterance moment, which has become the direct reference point for “my mom’s” departure. Therefore, the “had departed” event is the time related to the subsequent events. This characteristic of the event (had departed) attests to the assertion that the auxiliary verb “had” marks *tense* although it is part of the *aspect* “had departed” which is non-related to time. However, it is important to note that whether the tense at hand is absolute or relative, the utterance time will always be the centre, because the second reference point is itself dependant on the speech event which is the deictic centre (Botne, 1986: 303; in Hall, 2005: 31). Botne (1986) calls this second reference point the event-locus:

In effect, the grammaticalisation of this second event-locus establishes a second temporal continuum, dependant on the time of the speech event for its proper temporal interpretation (Botne, 1986: 303; Hall, 2005: 31).

So, the second reference point which is the event-locus cannot become a deictic centre. Moreover, the sentence “He read the book” is in the past time, because it is marked by the verbal morphology or *tense*, “read”. Anything happening or situated before the present time, is in the past tense, and actions that occur in the past time are marked or indicated by past tense. On the contrary, *aspect* does not deal with reference to time. See **Box 2.20** next.

Box 2.20: The influence of time on verb forms

(i) <i>(John was reading) 2. (when Zinhle entered.)</i>

The above sentence has two clauses. The first clause, whilst also touching on time, makes

explicit reference to the internal temporal constituency of the situation. That is, the reference is made to an internal portion of *John's reading*, while there is no explicit reference to the beginning or end of his reading. In other words, this event is open, not characterised by closure as the speaker is now in the middle of the situation of John's reading and asserts that it was in the middle of this situation when the event of Zinhle's entering took place. Therefore, when one is presented with another situation, given as "Zinhle's entering", this situation is located temporarily at that point in time where one already is, namely, at the internal constituency of John's reading.

According to Quirk and Greenbaum (1973: 40) *aspect* refers to the manner in which the verbal action is experienced. It answers the question: Is the action completed or in progress? Hence, Greenbaum (1991), Downing and Locke (2006) argue that English has two aspects and they are always indicated by a combination of an auxiliary and a main verb with either an '-ing' ending (present participle form) or '-en' ending (past participle form). These are the *progressive* and *perfective* aspects respectively.

Notably, *aspect* is marked by a participle which in most instances is coupled with an auxiliary verb. The auxiliary verb becomes the finite verb of the sentence which automatically carries *tense* amongst many other functions it performs. Thus, it is arguable that the pair of sentences below expresses an instance of *aspect* since the sentences focus on the manner of executing the action:

Box 2.21: Examples of (progressive) Aspectual constructions

(i)	<i>The teams were competing in the tournament.</i>
(ii)	<i>The teams are competing in the tournament.</i>

However, since tense is an obligatory phenomenon of every English sentence, and as 'were' and 'are' demonstrate it in the above examples, one can still argue that the same 'aspectual' constructions do mark and carry tense as well. Such an argument is informed by the use of the auxiliaries *were* and *are* respectively. The two sentences above do mark *tense*. Thus, it is untenable to conceive of the exemplary sentences as displaying only *aspect* and not *tense*. Besides, *aspect* is primarily not concerned with relating the time of the situation or event to any other time point. The above examples are accorded the deictic attribute by the time indicators in them, *were* and *are*. Both of them are looked at in relation to the time of utterance,

past and *present*. The interesting question that can then be posed now is, “Does the inclusion of a time marker in a sentence deprive the sentence of its aspectual character?” Based on this foregoing explication, the answer is arguably in the negative as each of the concepts concerned is independent. In the expression of aspect by the sentences, there is an indication of *tense* as well. For example, if one were to ask whether the two verbs, *are* and *were*, were totally the same in all their functions, the response would be *in the negative*. With or without a plethora of published sources, a competent speaker of the English language would be able to state the difference between the two verbs. That is, the former verb is in the present tense and the latter, in the past tense. The verbs, *are* and *were*, have similar attributes and functions, because they are different forms of the verb *be*. The distinction between *are* and *were* which is the marking of the present *tense* and past *tense*, respectively, is discernible irrespective of whether they are used in a context or not.

Comrie (1985: 6-7) corroborates this in his assertion that “the difference between ‘John was singing’ and ‘John is singing’ in English is one of *tense*”. In other words, Comrie (1985: 6-7) suggests that the auxiliary verbs, *was* and *is*, mark past tense and present tense in their respective applications above. This is so even though the expressions concerned are deemed to be an instance of *aspect*. Hudson (1998: 53) stresses that *were* and *are*, in sentences one and two above respectively, are finite verbs since they are the only verbs in the chain of verbs affected by changes in the subject. Having said this, Hudson (1998: 53) adds that “only finite verbs have a *tense* (past or present).” The evidence should be sufficient now that the positioning of the two verbs in question, *were* and *are*, indeed, do mark tense in addition to other functions they might be performing.

This hard-to-see divide also exists between the perfective *aspect* and *tense* and between the progressive *aspect* and *tense*. Whilst the writing should be on the wall with the use of verb forms marking relevant tenses, it is not always so explicit with “have”. In instances where the said verb functions as an auxiliary verb, it gives the impression that it is a past tense marker. Consider the two examples below whilst simultaneously pondering on the three divisions of time:

Box 2.22: (Perfective) Aspectual constructions

- | | |
|------|---|
| (i) | <i>We have interviewed five candidates.</i> |
| (ii) | <i>He has arrested two drug dealers.</i> |

The above exemplary constructions express actions that were carried out (present perfect tense), for they came prior to the time of the utterance. The complexity in the given sentences apparently is brought about by the closeness of *aspect* to *tense*. For example, in a sentence, “I have money,” *have* is unequivocally indicating present tense (morphologically and temporally), meaning that at the time of utterance I am in possession of money. So, the researcher strongly asserts that in sentences one and two above, it was only through the combination of both the present *tense* (have) and perfective *aspect* (interviewed/ arrested) that a non-present tense construction was produced. That is, it is the entire verb phrase that creates the impression of a past tense proposition. As a result, the researcher argues that the perfect tense verbs in the next two sets of sentences can be replaced by past tense sentences as they are given below, respectively, but still keep their relativeness to the moment of utterance. See **Box 2.23** below.

Box 2.23: Present and past tenses

(i)	<i>We have interviewed five candidates.</i>
(ii)	<i>We interviewed five candidates.</i>
(iii)	<i>He has arrested two drug dealers.</i>
(iv)	<i>He arrested two drug dealers.</i>

Where the form *have* is the only element constituting the verb phrase, it unambiguously marks present tense as evidenced earlier, “I have money”. More so, on the *aspect* part, the “interviewed” or “arrested” could not function without that temporal helping verb *have*, hence the aspect is constituted by the combination of elements, auxiliary verb and main verb. The combination of the two elements does not remove the temporal function of the auxiliary as there exist phrases like, “have gone” and “had gone”.

The above examples attest to the understanding that *tense* and *aspect* are so interrelated that the researcher could not explore the former and ignore the latter altogether. This intriguing interrelation is also noted with the past tense form ‘had’. Whilst ‘had’ directly relates to the utterance moment as a past tense in the sentence, *I had money*, it seems not to do the same in the following sentence e.g.: “*When he **arrived** at the station, the bus **had** gone already.*”

In the foregoing exemplary sentence, *had* with the combination of the perfective aspect, *gone*,

creates another temporal point which is prior to the past (arrived). As a result, there are two past events which do not relate in exactly the same way to the utterance moment. Whereas the “arrived” clause is directly relative to the utterance moment, the “had gone” clause is tentatively relative to the same utterance moment. In fact, the *had gone* (clause) seems to be more relative to the *arrived* (clause) than to the moment of utterance. Such an observation may spark debates considering the firm stance taken by this study that there are only three time divisions. However, the leader of the study found support from grammarians such as Downing and Locke (2006) as well as Comrie (1985) who argue that whether it is direct or indirect, the *tense* relation centre is always one and it is the present or the utterance time and, subsequently, all expressions made at a clause level cannot be non-relational.

According to the grammarians, every utterer of a clause, for instance, is in most cases likely to perceive any utterance he or she makes in relation to his or her utterance time. For example, for a speaker to say, “*We will discuss the exam papers*”, it requires that he or she understands the position of the discussion of exam papers to that of the utterance in the time continuum. The given example suggests that the discussion is post to the time of the utterance. Otherwise, if the proposition made were on the other side of the utterance time, the utterer would say something like the following clause: “*We discussed the exam papers.*”

Even if a sentence carried an “aspectual element” like in the example below, the centre which is the present time still holds either directly or indirectly: “*We discussed the exam papers after we had met with the teacher.*” Both the *discussed* and *had met* acts have a common temporal relation to the time at which the utterance is made. They occur before the time of speaking which makes them past to that time. The crucial thing about the two acts is that although they occurred in the past, they occurred at different times. That chronological occurrence is what *tense* manages to display in the sentence above. The sentence above is a typical way through which *tense* places situations or events in the time continuum so that their relation to the central point which is the present *time* is manifested accordingly.

The reality that *aspect* can only be appropriately applied with the aid of *tense*-marking auxiliary verbs, has misled people, including some linguists in thinking that aspect is also temporally relational (Comrie, 1976: 52). Kroeger (2005: 158) also corroborates the foregoing point that linguists are divided on whether they should classify the perfective, in particular, as *tense* or

aspect since it incorporates both the concepts of completion and location relative to other reference points in time. It is misleading to talk of a clause or sentence that is relational instead of the actual word or element of a broader constituent. For example, in the second clause of the sentence above, it is safer to say only ‘had’ is relational and not the whole clause because if the reference is to the whole clause, it will mean that even the aspectual ‘met’ is included. However, a general statement suggesting that all sentences are relational might also be true when considering that every English sentence must have a finite verb which is the actual custodian of *tense*. Arguably, this accounts for Downing and Locke’s (2006: 253) and Comrie’s (1985: 36) assertion that in principle, the time of the utterance is a universal point of reference for ‘all sentences.’

So, it is important to remember that the research was not about the relation between *tense* and *aspect*; hence the related debate could not be entertained any further. Thus, Greenbaum’s (1991: 51-52) and Greenbaum and Gerald’s (2002: 55) argument that in various instances, past tense can be used interchangeably with the perfect *aspect* is tenable. The aim of the study was to establish whether or not learners were able to indicate time grammatically in their English expressions. Therefore, anything that is grammatically relational to time falls within the scope of the study.

Despite all that has been said regarding the interrelation between *tense* and *aspect*, the two concepts are independent of each other and this stance is supported by Kroeger (2005: 161). Therefore, if there is anything indicative of time in any given expression, certainly, it cannot be *aspect*, but *tense* in line with the definition of the two concepts. The role of indicating time and thus locating events or situations accordingly can be performed by *tense* only because even adverbials which are sometimes used to indicate time cannot consequently place events or situations on the time continuum. See the following examples in **Box 2.24** below:

Box 2.24: Time and Events

- | | |
|------|--|
| (i) | <i>Yesterday</i> the president delivers his speech on economy. |
| (ii) | <i>Yesterday</i> the president delivered his speech on economy. |

The adverbial *yesterday* only marks the time as a point of reference, in the first sentence above, but the placing of the event (delivery of speech) relevant to the time point can only be performed by a verb (delivered), as it is correctly demonstrated in the second sentence. In other

words, the second attests how incapable it is to place an event or situation as an adverbial. The above given exemplary pair of sentences serves to illustrate the incapability of adverbials in marking *tense* singlehandedly because they are just a point in the time line. They are not grammatical but tense is (Kroeger, 2005: 147; Downing and Locke, 2006: 352-353). That is, they would still need a complement in the form of an appropriate *tense* marking verb form for their application to make sense. On the contrary, grammar, with or without an adverbial suffices to give a sentence a *tense* status provided it (tense) is marked or carried accordingly:

Box 2.25: Future and Past tenses

(i)	<i>The president will deliver his speech (Future tense).</i>
(ii)	<i>The president delivered his speech (Past tense).</i>

So, the point the researcher is making about adverbials is that their mere inclusion in an expression is not adequately indicative of the user's competence in the language as the user still needs to supplement that with an appropriate verb form: e.g. "*The train arrived tomorrow.*"

Regarding the sentence above, the reader will be in the dark until the writer changes either "arrived" or "tomorrow" to, for instance, "arrives" and "yesterday" respectively. The complete and the most appropriate way to mark *tense* is not by pointing to the time concerned only as adverbials do, but also by ensuring verbal conformity to the pointed time.

For instance, the verb "delivers" in the sentence "The president delivered his speech," does not conform to the point of time referred to which is past time. That way, *tense* is incorrectly marked in the sentences concerned. In other words, the point is that if a user of the English language cannot maintain the necessary relation between *tense* and the time of the occurrence or situation, a mere mentioning of time will create more confusion. Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) refer to that verbal conformity or relation to the pointed time as "the correspondence between the form of verb and the concept of time." This assertion's implication is far-reaching for this study in relation to the proposition that tense and time are two independent concepts. According to Hall (2005: 22), the most discernible distinction between tense and time is that the former is indicated in the verbal morphology while the latter is not.

2.6 A different view of the verb

It is worth stating that not all linguists or grammarians view tense or its form the same way as

this study does. Whilst the study focuses on the verb form as a way of marking or carrying tense, some grammarians argue that that is misleading, especially if the whole story about tense ends with the form. Kennedy (2003) asserts that the teaching of *tense* should not end with the ‘form’, but must expand to the form’s various ‘functions’. He states that the terms ‘simple present’ and ‘simple past’ refer to the form of the verb, not its meaning since these *tense* forms can have several meanings. That is, while the present tense and past tense forms typically refer to ‘present time’ and ‘past time’, respectively, they do not always do so. For example, in a narrative discourse, sometimes the present tense form is used to refer to past time (the historic present). Sustaining the idea, Greenbaum and Nelson (2002) also reiterate the often imprecise correspondence of the said tenses to present and past time when used in the real world. They argue that the present tense, while normally referring to the time of utterance, also ‘extends’ to incorporate other times which are not necessarily within the actual utterance moment. That is, generally and more often the present is used to refer to situations which hold to a longer period of time than the actual moment of speaking alone.

Such cases are traditionally referred to as stative uses and habitual uses of the present. In short, the point is that learners need to be made aware that ‘present tense’ does not refer to the time of utterance only as it incorporates other times (for example, habit and universal truth, as mentioned earlier). Huddleston (1984: 146) argues that *tense* sometimes becomes so insignificant that it is even almost imperceptible. Other grammarians who emphasise the *unattachment* of the semantic value to the form are Huddleston and Pullum (2005) who say that things are not as straightforward as they are usually defined between form and function. In their words it is put thus (Huddleston & Pullum, 2005: 6), “The relation between the *grammatical* category of past time and the *semantic* property of making reference to past time is much subtler.” Huddleston (1984: 147) stresses that the irrelevance of time or *tense* to certain expressions cannot be confined to the present tense and it is also true with the past tense. He says that sentences like “*Zinhle tells me you are divorcing her*” is a testimony to such situations:

Probably, at the time of uttering the above statement, Zinhle has already told the utterer of the statement (me) about the impending divorce. However, the speaker (me) does not care much about time. If he cared, he would have used ‘told’ which is a grammatical way of placing the situation (Zinhle’s telling him) at the point in time prior to the utterance time. The main concern of the statement is the content it carries, not Zinhle’s deed and time of communication. Despite the supposed mismatch between the occurrence time and the verb form, the statement above is

deemed appropriate. This is so because the addressee to the respective spoken sentence is likely to respond only to the truthfulness or untruthfulness of the proposition, not to the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the tense or form of the verb applied. This was one of various applications of the verb which the researcher thought had to be considered for other studies for further and more enhanced use of the English language. With the acknowledgement of the different view from the one held by the study, the study should not be seen as having gone misdirected or losing its original focus. It was one of the secondary aims of the study to secure a lasting resolution to the challenges of English faced by learners constituting the population. The study can yield the best of results only if the research has been conducted with an objective mind and exhaustively. As early as 1987, Palmer is already noting a possible danger in confining oneself to structure. He draws his examples from the way modals function and argue that their past tense form is not always used to refer to past time. At other times, and very often, a modal past tense form marks unreality, tentativeness and politeness. Referring to the link existing between grammar and function, Motsoeneng (2003) says the following:

These two aspects (*features*) of communicative competence complement each other, and they should be treated equally for there to be successful communication which is grammatically accurate and also appropriately expressed (Motsoeneng, 2003: 59).

The point made above about the extensive meaning of the form of a verb should not be viewed necessarily as a counter argument to the one upheld by the research throughout. According to the research, the verb form is important because it and it alone, in a clause or sentence does mark or carry tense. See the following example: “*They are my neighbours.*”

For example, the sentence above is in the present tense, because of the form of the operator verb “are” which is non-past. To convert this exemplary sentence into the past tense, one will only change the form of the said operator to be ‘were’. Therefore, the extensive meaning argument that is now brought forward is given as an addition to the primary responsibility carried by the form of the verb. In other words, the new argument asserts that let learners not be left at the rudimentary level of how the verb form applies, but be taken beyond that level where the same form can perform different functions. This argument does not in any way suggest a weakness of the research, but points out other areas where future research projects may be focused. The research on which the current report is based, was clear on its own and recognised this other view as a sign that there is no single study that can deal with all problems

of a discipline instantly.

It was important for the researcher to listen to the above list of grammarians agreeing on a single point in order to have it underscored and to make doubters reconsider their position or positions concerning the matter at hand. Although the study attaches meaning to the form of a verb, it also acknowledges this different view by other grammarians that it is not always true that, for example, the present tense verb and past tense verb forms refer to the present time and past time, respectively. However, the study chose to focus on the “primary” function of the verb form which is to mark tense, and leave other functions for other studies. Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 6) warn that it could be a dangerous and misleading teaching theory that confines meaning only to the form of the verb. They (Huddleston & Pullum, 2005: 7) argue that by putting words like the “primary function” or “characteristic” in the definition of *past tense* and *present tense*, people acknowledge a possible arbitrary connection between grammatical form and meaning. These two grammarians summarise their argument as follows:

What we need to do is to introduce a qualification to allow for the fact that there is no one-to-one correlation between grammatical form and meaning (Huddleston & Pullum, 2005: 7).

The researcher can only say that correct *tense* structures or forms and all their relevant functions must be taught to learners, otherwise, the teaching will be found, by learners, unrelated to the way the language is applied on a day-to-day basis. That is, it is this very multi-functionality of the form of the verb that complicates application, hence making explicit teaching inevitably necessary. By and large, grammatical form and meaning correlate well and as such the teaching of correct grammatical form, *tense* in this regard, must be encouraged (Motsoeneng, 2003: 59). Eventually, if *tense* or grammar in general was not taught, there would be more frustration in learners who would not know how they had to arrange words into sentences in order to put the message across. Likewise, the listener would be unable to infer any meaning from the various strings of words. It is likely that the resultant frustration would lead to mediocre learners who would be uncertain about the correctness of the rules applied. When making these recommendations, the researcher was aware that most schools where these learners were supposed to be taught faced other teaching and learning challenges.

2.7 Theoretical framework

Theoretical perspectives from various scholars are shared next.

2.7.1 Internalisation of grammar rules

It is worth noting that the research was carried out under the view that the internalisation of grammar rules by the language users is fundamental for a linguistic interaction between the users. The only thing that the researcher had to argue for was the teaching method or approach that could be the most effective in ensuring the mastery of the rules by the learners who were the second speakers of the language. The researcher was, therefore, of the view that the choice of the theory that formed the basis for the selected approach was of paramount significance. As a result, it (the choice) had to be informed by, among other things, the existing and perhaps even the non-existing conditions that would have an impact on the teaching process. That is, each theory that can possibly be adopted needs to be looked at against the existing conditions so as to determine if the theoretical practice has any prospects of success or not. For the internalisation of the grammar rules by the language learners, there are always two main options. Scott (1989: 15) and Dang and Nguyen (2012: 112) are in agreement that the question of teaching the grammar of an additional (foreign/ second) language in a classroom remains a subject of debate and is confined to the explicit and implicit grammar teaching approaches.

Dang and Nguyen (2012), for clarity-giving reasons, also refer to the explicit and implicit approaches as the deductive and inductive, respectively. Because of the fact that both of the approaches have a potential of doing either well or badly in different contexts (Dang & Nguyen, 2012: 114), the researcher had to look at the research projects on the approaches before deciding on one. In her project, *An Empirical Study of Explicit and Implicit Teaching Strategies in French*, Scott (1989) is able to test the strength and flaws of the two approaches. She conducted a research on the teaching of selected French structures (L2) to college students (all teenagers) who were from an *Advanced French Conversation Class*, serious challenges on the target structures. The group of students (34) was divided into two and both groups were taught two specified linguistic structures, at the different times of each meeting day (6 periods in total). One structure was taught in the explicit approach and the other, in the implicit approach. Every time she came for the explicit grammar teaching in any of the two classes or groups, the researcher-cum-teacher introduced a grammar rule, explained it and modelled it with five exemplary sentences. There was neither oral nor written classwork practice on the structure by the learners.

In the implicit grammar teaching period, the researcher-cum-teacher narrated an episode of a

long story whose other episodes were told individually and respectively in the five ensuing periods. The episodes were embedded with the target linguistic structures. At the end of each period, the researcher-teacher asked questions based on the content (not grammar rules) of the episode for the students' understanding. Then, she immediately thereafter re-read the episode. That is, the students listened twice to the episode. In the last period the students had an opportunity to listen even to the entire long story at once. As a result, both of the groups received almost everything in the same way and they were taught by the same researcher. After the pre-post-test procedure adopted by the research, the results showed that on the oral scores there was no remarkable difference between the two approaches of teaching. Based on the written test, the students' performance under the explicit grammar teaching conditions surpassed the performance under the implicit grammar teaching conditions in both groups. While the Scott's research (1989) is relevant to this study in terms of the effectiveness and/ or non-effectiveness of the said teaching approaches to grammar, it is noticeable that the participating respondents in the respective works come from different backgrounds. Her respondents were at an "advanced" stage of their learning of the second language. The respondents for the current research were at a lower level where most learners still battled with the second language concerned, English (Ndlovu, 1993: 23). As a result, the less advanced learners cannot understand the teacher's explanation of grammar rules the same way the more advanced learners do.

In Dang and Nguyen (2012: 114), Ellis (2003) asserts that induction (implicit) grammar teaching approach "may not be appropriate for beginners or young learners". From their research project conducted on the Vietnam high school learners of the second language English, Dang & Nguyen (2012) also compare the explicit (deduction) and the implicit (induction) approaches. Under explicit grammar teaching conditions, the experimental group listened to a passage and thereafter, the teacher identified and explained the target rules from the passage. Unlike in the Scott's (1989) research, here the examples modelling the target rules were not isolated, but contextualised. In the implicit grammar teaching class, the control group was also read a passage to listen to, but there was no teacher intervention thereafter. The learners had been instructed to work in pairs or small groups to identify a language form, rule or function on their own. The results showed that both groups improved their grammatical competence and performance, but the experimental group statistically surpassed the control group particularly in the analysis and understanding of rules as well as their application (Dang & Nguyen, 2012: 117).

Both of the above discussed projects do not state the extent of their exposure to the target language. It is worth noting Scott's argument that "actual immersion is the most conducive way to learn a foreign language" (Scott, 1989: 19). This means that in a situation where learners are expected to learn by absolutely observing the application of the target language in the classroom only, the possibility is great that the desired results may not be attained. That is, artificial immersion (a classroom only) is never a real one, no matter what one puts in place to make it real, the physical environment of the classroom makes this almost impossible (Tarone & Swain (1995: 168). This is not good news for the implicit grammar teaching approach considering the conditions of the respondents of the current research project. As the Immersion Theory believes in the individual learner's observation of the application of the rules by competent language users in a real-life environment, it vigorously discourages the explicit teaching of grammar rules. The proponents of it assert clearly that it does not help the learners when educators just talk about the grammar rules and theorise about how they operate instead of letting the learners observe and infer the rules themselves. One popular approach for the teaching of a language is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Its pioneers and many other like-minded grammarians including Widdowson (1979, 1983), Halliday (1975) and Munby (1978), do not consider grammar competence (knowledge of grammar rules) as a "prerequisite" to communication, yet at the same time they claim that grammar is one of the ingredients of communicative competence. Ndlovu (1993: 28) in Motsoeneng (2003: 15) cites Munby (1978):

Competence should refer to an understanding and production of utterances which are not so much grammatical, but more importantly appropriate in the context in which they are made (Ndlovu, 1993: 28).

The above quote implies among other things that whilst the CLT approach embraces grammar knowledge as part of communicative competence, it does not view grammar as the central focus (Hymes, 1971 & 1974; Halliday, 1975; Munby, 1978, in Ndlovu, 1993: 28). The said linguists seem to hold 'appropriateness' higher than 'accuracy' as they believe that "communication is possible without grammar rules" since they (linguists) accentuate that a language can be learnt the best whilst the learner is simultaneously "communicating" in it (It should be noted that the explicit grammar teaching theory which counters the Immersion Theory also approves of the use of the target language by the learners whilst they are still learning it). However, the remarkable difference between the two theories is that the latter does

not have a mechanism enforcing grammar rules to the learners. That is, it just hopes that sometimes in the unfolding of time with repeated observation, all the learners will notice the various ways the grammar rules function and subsequently internalise them on their own. So in a situation where the implicit grammar teaching approach seemed inappropriate [Motsoeneng (2003), amongst others, strongly asserts it], can one conclude that the explicit approach is the way to go, just by default like that? Motsoeneng (2003: 54) attributes the failure of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach in the same Lower Umfolozi Circuit to the fact that it (CLT Approach) has not adopted the explicit grammar teaching approach. The validity of the assertion can only be verified through research; hence this study took on the explicit grammar teaching. It is believed to have an immediate mechanism to “ensure” the instilling of the grammar rules to the learners as opposed to the teacher’s uncertainty caused by the counterpart approach (Tarone & Swain, 1995: 172). That is, the teacher is never sure whether the learners have, at least, noticed the target grammar rule. Of course, the internalisation of the rules by the learners cannot be ascertained immediately under both approaches.

So far it appears that both of the theories admit that grammar rules are an integral part of the communicative competence, but they do not agree on the manner in which such rules should be attained. In that regard, it is not yet reasonably possible to say which of the two theories would be more effective to the research population. Both of them had the prospect of being successful provided there were respectively suitable conditions. Even the implicit grammar teaching approach was not yet ruled out as a possible solution to the challenge of teaching grammar rules successfully to the said population. The research project could possibly come up with a totally different approach as Scott (1989: 15) asserts that there are claims that the explicit and implicit approaches do co-exist, but there is little empirical data supporting the effectiveness of the claimed approach. The research at hand might turn out to be the provider of the much needed data. The foregoing assertion indirectly reiterates the point mentioned earlier that the choice of the relevant teaching theory can only be determined by the existing conditions of the population.

Now it is worth looking at each theory together with its expectedly favourable conditions.

2.7.2 Implicit Grammar Teaching Approach

Scott (1989: 15) defines it as the *presentation of a given linguistic element in context so that*

students (learners) will hear (observe) the structure and grasp its function without any formal analysis.

Dang and Nguyen (2012: 113) use Indirect Explicit Grammar Instruction (IEGI) and Induction as the alternative concepts to the implicit grammar teaching approach.

Dang and Nguyen (2012: 113) define the IEGI as the *learners' discovery of the grammatical rules through tasks and therefore does not involve giving grammatical explanations.*

This approach favours the immersion of the learners in the real situations of a target language as it calls for the unlimited exposure of the learners to the language (Scott, 1989: 15). It is grounded on the availability of sufficient learner exposure to the target language from whose abundant use learners will independently observe the application rules. Tagarelli et al. (2011: 2062) also present “sufficient exposure to the system as an important component of implicit conditions” because the learners are neither told the purpose of the experiment nor the expectation of them to learn anything. Besides the ‘abundant availability’ of the target language, the theory further expects as part of its favourable conditions that the users of the language surrounding the learners be perfect models from whom the learners can make positive observation or imitation. Unfortunately, the background of the population of the study was of a different condition from the presumed one. It was indicated earlier that most of the participating learners of the study received exposure to the target language only when they were in the classroom and mainly when it was time for English as a subject. Previous research also indicates that many African teachers did their classroom teaching in the learners’ respective L1s because they (teachers) themselves lacked competence in the English language, the officially adopted language for teaching and learning (Mulaudzi, 1994: 136; Chisholm, 2004: 218 in Manyike, 2007: 110; Mashiyyi, 2011: 188). Most educators teaching English language in the population schools were African (more than 95%). Moreover, it was said earlier that besides educators’ incompetence, learners from rural communities generally, including the population of this study, hardly access English language; hence, Mulaudzi (1994: 136) says that, “it is a difficult task to make learners communicate in English especially in the rural schools since most of them are not conversant in English”. It soon became evident to the researcher that any teaching approach informed by the immersion theory would not work for the population. For any immersion theory-based teaching approach to succeed, there had to be an adequate accessibility of the target language by the learners. In supporting the

aforementioned point, Clement (1979, 1980) and Hartshorne (1991) in Manyike (2007: 75-76) state that,

Research suggests that a person's degree of contact with the L2 group will have an influence on the extent to which an L2 is learned.

2.7.3 Explicit Grammar Teaching Approach

Scott (1989: 15) defines the explicit grammar teaching approach as an *explanation of a given linguistic element directly, as a set of rules*.

Again, Dang and Nguyen (2012: 113) use alternative terms to refer to the implicit grammar teaching approach. These alternatives are Direct Explicit Grammar Instruction (DEGI) and Deduction. Dang and Nguyen (2012: 113) define DEGI as *the form of explicit explanations of grammatical structures provided to learners orally or in writing*.

Summarily, the functioning of this approach is dependent on the teacher. He or she is the one who provides and explains the rules. For argument sake, the teacher may choose to ask the learners to explain the rules the way they understand them, but he or she remains in charge as his or her word will be final. The teacher may use isolated sentences or extract them from a given passage to explain the target rules. That is, the implementation of this approach does not necessarily need learners to be immersed in real life target language situation. Indeed, if such conditions are available, they will enhance the implementation of the approach concerned.

The existing conditions of the research population were not favourable to the implicit grammar teaching model and all other related language teaching approaches. Precisely, the desired conditions for the immersion theory were non-existent. Even when educators establish their own immersion island by passing policies urging learners to communicate in the target language only, at least, in the school premises, it does not work. Tarone and Swain (1995) assert that the most persistent and frustrating challenge for researchers and immersion educators is the tendency of older immersion learners not to use the target language when conversing with each other on social issues, but only in academic discussions. Heitzman (1993) in Tarone and Swain (1995) state that the said interchange of the L1 and L2 is so serious that it happens even within the same conversation. That is, the speakers keep changing the communicating code with the change of a topic, L2 for academic topics and L1 for social interactions, respectively. Therefore, this unintended development defeats the aims of the proponents of the immersion

theory as it culminates in the creation of what Tarone and Swain (1995) call diglossic situation where the target language and a vernacular are reserved for formal and informal interactions respectively. The resistance, in accordance with the immersion theory, caused learners not to use the target language because it is cognitively more demanding to communicate using the L2 than to communicate in the L1 (Tarone & Swain, 1995: 167). Warden (1994) in Tarone and Swain (1995: 174) argues that the peer-peer L1 use is inevitable and subsequently suggests that the situation of diglossia must be recognised and accepted as learners will never develop a target-cum-vernacular language under the said conditions.

Given the foregoing description, it appeared that the said conditions of the population were more suitable to the language teaching theory advocating for the direct and explicit talk about the grammar rules. That is, the mastery of the grammar rules was deemed so fundamental to the attainment of the linguistic communicative competence that it could not be left altogether in the hands of a learner to observe independently. The already described conditions of the population demanded that the rules be brought before the learners in the form of isolated examples and be explained, since they were seldom observed in real practice by the learners. The explicit approach was considered the more suitable and effective for the attainment of the accurate expression by the learners and was subsequently adopted by the study.

The research's adoption of the above mentioned approach does not necessarily hold the approach as a complete resolver of the language teaching-and-learning problem. The approach should not be thought to be against the learner's attempts to communicate in the language just because they are still internalising grammar rules. The learner must still engage both processes concurrently, because language is viewed not only as an object to be studied, but also as a means of the study of the object itself. The most paramount attribute of the adopted approach over the immersion theory-based approaches was its relevance to the existing conditions. Otherwise, in a research population where there is sufficient learner exposure to the target language, the immersion-based teaching approaches may even be given an upper hand over the explicit grammar-based ones. In other words, the explicit grammar teaching approach can still be supplemented by other approaches for it to be even more effective. The compatibility of various approaches informed by the two different theories discussed above is corroborated by Mulaudzi (1994: 135) who asserts that the natural acquisition of a language (taught without formal instruction) and the instructed Second Language Acquisition (SLA) are not necessarily conflicting or repulsive, but instead, can be mutually supportive. The only point where the

researcher's view emphatically favours the explicit teaching of grammar rules is, as said earlier, when the learners concerned come from a background where they rarely access the target language, which deprive them of the opportunity to deduce grammar rules from the real-life usage. For this, the researcher was unequivocally in support of the explicit structure teaching theory. The explicit teaching of grammar rules as advocated for by the study calls for the emphasis of the explication of the rules including immediate correction, because if correction is delayed, the deficiency may become internalised as learners will think it is correct. It can be gathered that the two theories differ in the amount of value they attach to grammar respectively, that subsequently determines the amount of attention and time given to its (grammar) teaching. For the study the emphasis was not on any type of grammar, but tense.

Krashen (1982: 34) in Mulaudzi (1994: 20) attests to the effective contribution made by explicit grammar teaching in the trying conditions similar to those experienced by the population of the study:

Instruction helps when it is the main source of low filter comprehensible input, that is, for beginners and foreign language students who do not have the opportunity to get input outside the class.

Contrarily, just as it was alluded to earlier, the immersion theory does not believe that formal instruction on grammar is invaluable, since the learners are expected to infer the rules independently. To underscore the triviality of grammar rules in the immersion theory realms, educators are discouraged from openly and immediately correcting the learners' grammar deficiencies. This foregoing attribute emanates from the presumption that the learners will, by observing the use of the target language, do self-correction of their deficiencies. In the environment like that of the research where the classroom is the only exposure to English, the assumption of observing the target language in its real application is a mere fallacy. So the study unwaveringly adopted the explicit grammar-rule teaching theory which, at least, 'ensured' that teaching occurred. Although there could be a counter view questioning the effectiveness of the teaching; in this case, good results were anticipated since the teaching process was surely put in place.

Moreover, there is conviction that the communication rules which are grammar rules have been introduced to enable effective linguistic communication. Even if a rule may have not yet been

internalised at the time of its application, the users can keep on referring to it and thus using it as their guide in the next applications. The research study was, therefore, conducted on the premise that “effective communication can be executed if there has been internalisation of grammar rules” (Kilfoil & Van der Walt, 1989: 13). What this quotation implies is that any (linguistic) communicative expression made must conform to grammar rules. It is also worth noting that the study at hand was not exploring the teaching of English language at large, but *tense* in particular. It was also indicated above, that each *tense* was applied following a particular pattern determined by grammar rules. Henceforth, the study emphatically favoured the language teaching theory which, when applied, instills the rules into learners openly and consciously rather than subconsciously.

This is what the researcher himself did when he gathered the data for the research. Although, according to Krashen (1999) in Abdalla (2014), a clear divide between conscious and subconscious learning, if any, is still vigorously debated, he loosely equates the latter to the acquisition which, as he argues, occurs under informal settings. Under the said situations rules are not spelled out by any instructor, but observed by individual learners on their own. On the other hand, Abdalla (2014) refers to the explicit grammar-rule teaching as a “Consciousness-Raising (C-R) technique” and he argues that the main aim of applying it – as he is exploring its effect on the learning of English tense system by EFL students – is to assist learners produce error-free English. He further asserts that the “C-R techniques are seen as beneficial to learners for their presumed ability to draw EFL learners’ attention to features of the target language, thus participate in increasing their linguistic feel for English” (Abdalla, 2014: 810).

English may not be a Foreign Language (EFL) to the research respondents, but as L2 still has a common and significant link with the EFL and it is that of being additional or non-first. As a result, what is beneficial to the teaching of the EFL is likely to be so to the ESL as well. Considering the background of the population of the study, where the respondents seldom came across the target language except in the one-hour classroom lesson coming three or four times a week, the subconscious way of learning the target language was unlikely to be of help to them. The option that stood as the best in the given circumstances was the one that directly spelled out the rules. Hudson (1992: 3) argues that the curriculum that is almost without grammar impacts negatively on the effective use of the language, because the stress on communicative efficiency only occurs at the expense of grammatical knowledge. The point made or underscored here is that in a situation where the significance of grammar is

undermined, the means to attain communicative competence will always defeat the desired ends. Hudson (1992: 5) asserts that since education has far-reaching and lasting consequences, it is imperative that the planners of the curricula are always not only mindful of, but also suitable for, the task. Hudson (1992: 5) further argues that a badly planned curriculum leads to what he calls pedagogical disaster as it turns the entire education system into a vicious cycle. That is, the teachers that are produced by such a skewed curriculum are unsuccessful in their teaching methods.

2.8 Conclusion

The chapter has defined *tense: past, present and future* and clarified the difference between *tense* and *aspect* as both are language features that get easily confused. Moreover, the chapter reviewed other research projects relevant to the topic of this study and decided on what was conducive and unconducive to the conditions of the research at hand. As a result, the informed decision was taken on the choice of the teaching approach to be adopted (the explicit approach) by the research project.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter tells the reader how the actual investigation was planned for and carried out applying the relevant approach (paradigm), strategy and instruments. The chapter does not only name the relevant tools, but it also explains why and how the said tools were the most suitable for the research at hand.

The next subsection focuses on defining a research design. It is worth saying it beforehand that the concept “research design” should be looked at as the macro-shape of the whole research, embracing the other micro designs of the paradigm, strategy and instruments.

3.2 Research Design

The concept *research design* is defined differently by various scholars as shown below. Blaikie (2000: 21) in De Vos et al. (2011: 142) calls it “an integrated statement of and justification for the more technical decisions involved in planning a research project and a process ‘analogous to the activities of an architect designing a building.’” This understanding seems related to the one held by Bless et al. (2006: 71) in De Vos et al. (2011: 143): “a specification of the most adequate operations to be performed in order to test a specific hypothesis under given conditions.” Krueger and Neuman (2006: 12) in De Vos et al. (2011: 143) proffer it as an outlining step in the research process dedicated to, and enabling, the collection and the analysis of data.

The central understanding of all the research design definitions given by the above scholars is similar. The first of the three definitions given above sounds general and inclusive of “every decision” of the whole research process. The last two definitions, by Krueger and Neuman (2006), as well as Bless et al. (2006) in De Vos et al. (2011: 143), relate research design to specific parts of the research which are “the collection and analysis of data” and the “testing of hypothesis”. In other words, research design concerns itself with the manner of gathering and analysing data in pursuit of the solution for the research problem. For instance, in the case of the current research study, the research design gives the approach that was used to collect the data from the respondents and the accountability for choice of that approach. Eventually, the hypothesis’s, the explicit teaching of tense can improve the learners’ linguistic competence, should be deemed reliable without any doubts, based on the way the whole process was carried

out. That is, the research design is accountable for “all the decisions we make in planning the study”. The distinctive attribute of the adopted research design is that it comes after the formulation of the research problem and before the collection of data (Monette et al., 2008: 9; in De Vos et al., 2011: 143). For this reason, that there has to be justification for whatever decision, plan or method adopted for executing the research project (Blaikie, 2000: 21; in De Vos et al. (2011: 142), this chapter does not only outline the plan and methods followed in carrying out the research project, but it also provides a rationale for the choices made as it was said earlier. Reflecting on the task of this chapter, one can arguably say it forms the heart of the entire project. That is, it is the decider for either the success or failure of the research project, since it looks at the aims of the project and determines how best they can be realised.

Davison (1998) encapsulates what research design entails:

The way in which research is conducted may be conceived of in terms of the research philosophy subscribed to, the research strategy employed and so the research instruments utilised (and perhaps developed) in the pursuit of a goal – the research objective(s) – and the quest for the solution of a problem – the research question (Davison, 1998: 1 [online]).

Talking of the best possible ways of attaining the aims of the research project that the design must account for, it is worth turning to the approach and/ or philosophy adopted by the current project. From the approach which is a rather broad concept, the report names and discusses the strategy as well as the data collection instruments which are the lower levels of an approach. It is worth reiterating that this chapter was not solely for elaboration on the said units, but also to validate the choice.

3.3 Research Approach

A research approach or philosophical theory (also called paradigm) is nothing but a convention concerning the nature of existence or reality called *ontology* (Mack, 2010: 5; in Okeke & Van Wyk, 2015: 23), and the understanding or knowledge of that reality called *epistemology* (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2015: 23). There is a variety of such philosophies which include, inter alia, positivist, interpretivist and critical approaches or paradigms (De Vos et al., 2011: 5). It must be stated that the presence of these philosophies or approaches confirms the difficulty of measuring a phenomenon as dynamic as a human life. A human life is different from any other

object that can be taken for an exact measurement with laboratory instruments (De Vos et al. (2011: 5). The said philosophies of social sciences make it convenient and practical to deal with the phenomenon at hand which in this case is the learners' linguistic competence which could be detected from their behaviour (performance).

Indeed, different philosophical paradigms view *reality* and its generation or development differently. They provide different alternative methodologies for a researcher to adopt in order to arrive at the best desired answers for the research questions.

3.3.1 Positivist paradigm

Subsequently, this research project adopted the positivist model. Actually, the choice that the researcher made was informed by various influential aspects about the study. Such factors included, amongst others, the nature of the research, that is, whether the study at hand was qualitative or quantitative as well as the aims and objectives that the study pursued. The positivist paradigm believes in the absolute existence of truth. That is, a truth need not be “created”, but, at least, should be discovered because it is out there already. To continue with the project, the researcher being was driven by his knowledge that the absolute truth was reachable especially if the proper scientific ways were applied appropriately. The research at hand so believed that the respondents' linguistic competence was there during both the pre-test and the post-test (whether high or low). All what the research was going to do, was to discover the levels of the linguistic competence at the time of each test. There was no philosophical approach suitable for this task, but the positivist.

To allay unnecessary confusion, it is worth mentioning that the concept “positivist” is sometimes used interchangeably with the concept “quantitative” (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2015: 23). The nature of the current study was certainly quantitative for it was predictive and testing as it had a hypothesis that was confirmed at the end. The study at hand also gave its results in the statistical language, for example **Table 5.1** where the conclusion about the hypothesis was derived. So, the positivist paradigm was the most suitable to the research project concerned and the researcher had to be aware of the entire picture before taking the decision on the philosophy that would help him navigate the way from the beginning to the end of the investigative project. Eventually, when the results were arrived at, they were to be believed to have been produced by the soundly reliable method because that reliability would turn out to

be the basis for turning the audience's belief into a truth. The longer the belief holds, the better for the research fraternity, because that strong belief transforms into truth or reality (changing what is *believed* to be true, **doxology**, to what is *known* to be true, **epistemology**).

Considering the fact that the researcher was a human being and as such could be trapped into biasness, the positivist conviction that "reality is stable and can be observed and described from an objective viewpoint, that is, without interfering with the phenomena being studied," further endorsed its (the paradigm), (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 23; Neuman, 2003: 75; in De Vos et al., 2011: 6). The aforementioned attribute of the positivism paradigm is reiterated by Morris (2006: 3) in De Vos (2011: 6). The fact that this philosophy does not need the researcher's interpretation for the discovery of the truth minimises the chances of the researcher pre-empting the solution to the research problem particularly when there is a hypothetical statement, just as it was the case with this current research project. In order to get to the source of the problem and find possible solutions to it, the researcher had to embark on an empirical research. This he had to do because he knew that the solution or the truth he was in search of was not in him, but existing somewhere out there.

The other attribute of the positivist paradigm that distinguishes it from other paradigms whilst also projecting it as the best choice for this study is its emphasis on the researcher's detachment from sentiments and views of participants or the variables under study. The researcher should be as objective of, and distant from, the actual participatory situation as possible (Okeke & Van wyk, 2015: 23) and (Morris, 2006: 3) in De Vos et al. (2011: 6). As alluded to earlier, the researcher's nature of being human needed a constant reminder urging him to always uphold impartiality in midst of all the subjects involved in the process of the investigation. Any other paradigm that would not hold high the researcher's detachment from the participants' emotions and views would stand a good chance to compromise the investigative process and even the findings eventually. The study was in pursuit of the pure truth about the existence of the English competence problem in the selected schools and the subsequent possible solution. The least human intervention required in this paradigm is when it has to apply and monitor the methodology from the start to the end of the research process. However, according to De Vos et al. (2011: 6) positivists are of "a convention that the objects of the social sciences, namely people, are not an obstacle to the implementation of the scientific method." Positivists do not believe only in the existence of the truth, but in its firmness or immovability as well. That is,

in pursuing the truth researchers need not allow their own views and emotions to determine the outcomes because if they do, that will compromise the facts or reality. This statement is corroborated by Davison (1998). Okeke and Van Wyk (2015: 24) also buttress the positivist researcher's detachment characteristic from the subject of study:

Thus a positivist researcher is enjoined by axiology to keep personal values out of the study. Thus the positivist will accomplish by entirely omitting statements about values from a written report, using impersonal language, and reporting the facts, arguing closely from the evidence gathered in the study.

The paradigm helped to instil integrity in the researcher as it urged him to uphold moral values in the implementation of the research work. This attribute had the potential of cultivating intrinsic desire in investigators to strive to do good all the time and it possibly worked against any deliberate compromise of the research process. The positivist paradigm underscores scientific theories as the grounding for empirical research since hypotheses derived from them can be gauged through empirical tests. Okeke and Van Wyk (2015: 23) corroborate the foregoing assertion:

Noting that the positivist research paradigm is also termed the quantitative, the traditional, the experimental, or the empiricist paradigm; we can define a quantitative or positivist study as one based on testing a theory.

The promotion of scientific theories as the base for the empirical research projects the positivist paradigm as both the guard against any form of compromise and a guide for the correct way of collecting the data especially for the novice researchers. In short, the positivist paradigm does not only manage the correlation between theory and field work, but also underscores that each and every move in a research process should be informed by theory. The interconnection between theory and practice was significant for the current research, because its data were not the already gathered information, but generated by the researcher himself through conducting *tense* lessons and achievement tests as it is explained later.

Because of its highly structured nature, the positivist paradigm connects smoothly with the deductive approach; hence, the study adopted it (the deductive approach). Both of the two phenomena move from theory to data. That is, the positivist beliefs became a point of reference that guided the researcher throughout the arduous process of pursuing the truth.

Having the approach given the researcher the understanding of the nature of what he was in pursuit of, the truth as desired by the investigation (learners' tense competence), the researcher had to choose a strategy (plan) that would help him discover the truth at the operational level. Now that the researcher knew that the learners' tense competence existed out there, he had to have an operational mechanism through which to gather the relevant information about its (the competence) status whether it was advanced, pedestrian, appalling, etc., hence the next section discusses the strategy that was adopted by the research.

3.4 Research strategy

Since the researcher was already aware that he was dealing with the quantitative research, the strategy adopted had to be between the experimental and non-experimental designs because these are the only two options under the qualitative approach (De Vos et al., 2011: 144). The research did not bother itself discussing the various types of strategies but it focused on the one it adopted. The whole aim of discussing the strategy is to indicate to the readers the effectiveness of it in the attainment of the research aims and objectives.

3.4.1 Experimental strategy or design

The main characteristic of the experimental design or plan of gathering research data, is that it sets up two groups or two settings of comparison, applies manipulation to the one and does nothing to the other. Once this process is done, the two comparison groups or settings are compared with each other with the aim of finding out whether there is a causal-effect relationship and the degree of the causal effect (provided it is there) between the two concerned variables. Indeed, it was the aim of the current research to determine whether there was a causal-effect relationship between the two variables called *tense* and English the learners' tense *competence*. *Tense* being the independent variable was manipulated (taught to learners/respondents) to determine whether the manipulation had any impact on the dependent variable, learners' tense *competence*. In addition to the above given reason for adopting the experimental design, the research project had two situations to compare which were the scores of the respondent's performance in the pre-test and post-test. The results from the said comparison were important for the confirmation or invalidation of the research hypothesis, the explicit teaching of tense can improve the learners' tense competence.

However, the experimental design itself cannot be implemented in a straight-jacket like form in all situations and at all times. It is implementable variously through its three subdivisions, *true experimental*, *pre-experimental* and *quasi-experimental designs*.

3.4.1.1 Pre-experimental category

This category also has its own sub-categories of which *One-group Pre-test Post-test Design* is one. The study was steadfast in its adoption of the *One-group Pre-test Post-test Design* as it came with many advantages. The adoption of the pre-experimental design was continued despite the researcher's awareness that the true experimental design was deemed the classic one (Bernard, 2013: 91-92). The true or classic experimental design would divide the population sample into two groups, the experimental group and the controlled group who would then be "treated" differently. For instance, the experimental group would be manipulated (taught tense), but not the controlled one. The achievement tests (instruments for collecting data), however, would be conducted on both groups to determine their respective levels of tense competence. Then the scores from the two said tests would be compared to arrive at the research conclusion. The foregoing explanation is described the best way by De Vos et al. (2011: 145):

The basic idea of an experiment, in social science research, is that two comparison groups are set up. Then we, as researchers, will do something (administer an intervention, or manipulate an independent variable) to one of the groups, namely the experimental group. We do something different, or nothing at all, to the other group (the control group). We then compare the groups or test for differences between them on some outcome or dependant variable. Our intention is to say that any differences we find in the outcome (dependant) variable between the groups are due to (or caused by) the intervention or independent variable (De Vos et al., 2011: 145).

The researcher had no qualms about the aforementioned design, but realised that both options did have the necessary requirements for the successful experimental design to occur as they both remained the *experiment designs* and not the *non-experiment designs*. The researcher maintained that if there was any difference incurred, because of the choice of one experimental design (pre-experimental) over another experimental design (true experimental), it would have been trivial and un-influential. A discernible difference in this case is, arguably, in the wording of the concepts. For instance, the terminology 'true experimental design' gives an impression that the pre-experimental design, together with the other option, is fake, just because it is not called so (true experimental design). The important question now is, "What makes an

experimental design a ‘true experiment’?” Punch (2005: 69; in De Vos et al., 2011: 226) asserts that there shall be a true experiment if there is,

The manipulation of one or more independent variables for the purposes of the research, and the random assignment of participants to comparison (control) groups.

Considering the foregoing quote, one can argue that the pre-experimental design as adopted by the study is a true experiment, because it embraces the attributes of a true experimental design. The study had *tense* as its independent variable which was manipulated through the explicit teaching. Moreover, the sampling was randomised from the population of the poorly performing schools. With all the above said, the researcher found the One-Group Pre-test Post-test design as the sub-division of the pre-experimental design more conveniently manageable. Although it did not have all the features of a classic experimental design, it, however, had the major ones, enough to unequivocally suit the nature and aims of the research project at hand, hence it did exactly so. The same group of respondents was administered a pre-test on the tense, then taught tense and then administered another test, the post-test. The tests’ scores were then compared. And as for the realisation of the aim of the study, the researcher found no substantial difference between the two options that could have compromised the research process or the results.

The aim of undertaking this whole process was to be able to say at the end whether the explicit teaching of *tense* had or had no impact the respondents’ tense competence. The remarkable difference between the two designs in question is the absence of the controlled group whose presence makes the comparison possible and genuine. Instead of controlling a group for the entire period of data collection, the researcher found it more convenient to apply *One Group Pre-test Post-test Design* because the pre-test also gave a genuine tense competence of the respondents as it was at the time of the testing which was before the manipulation. Another contributing factor to the adoption of the *One Group Pre-test Post-test Design*, was the issue of the “protection” of the respondents. Unlike commodities which could be locked in a chamber for days and nights, human beings could not be given the same treatment. As a result, the researcher could guarantee that the controlled group members (in the case of a true experimental design) would not meet with members from the experimental group to discuss their respective treatment. Besides, the researcher did not have a permanent stay at the

respondents' residing places during the research. He came to the places of the respondents only when he had to perform a research activity. So, being conscious of these challenges, the researcher became more than aware that the classic design would remain the best only on paper, but not in practice. The adoption of the *One-group Pre-test Post-test Design* lessened the risk of having research variables manipulated by extraneous factors, because only one group had to be "protected" during this important period. Over and above that, respondents were not stationed in one school. As a result, one had to hire many educators to guard the experiment group respondents in their respective schools. In short, if the researcher had adopted a design which had a control group and experimental group, more people would be needed for the safeguarding of them. Arguably, the more groups to protect were there, the more vulnerable they would become to the influence of the extraneous forces. It was going to be difficult for the researcher to even identify factors to guard against. Nestor and Schutt (2012: 176) corroborate:

The great challenge is, of course, in identifying or selecting which variables are to be controlled for or held constant, as there are more control variables than a researcher could ever desire to hold constant in practice (Nestor & Schutt, 2012: 176).

Although there was nothing much done to "safeguard" the respondents, creating more research groups under the said conditions would be inviting unnecessary vulnerability. So, one way of minimising chances of having unwanted and invisible factors compromising the results of the research, was to implement the *One-group Pre-test Post-test Design*. The adopted design enabled the experimenter to exert maximum control to his research enterprise, subsequently keeping it intact. The amount of control that an experimenter exercises over all aspects of the design is seen as the defining feature of an experiment (Nestor & Schutt, 2012: 173). Dyer (1995: 218) argues that an appropriate choice of an experiment design minimises problems of the extraneous sources:

The first step towards controlling error from extraneous sources in the experiment is to select an experimental design which minimises the possible effects of some kinds of error, while still enabling the research problem to be pursued (Dyer, 1995: 218).

The experimental design as a plan of collecting data still needed the devices or instruments that would actually get the said cognitive knowledge (tense competence) from the respondents. A

mere plan alone could not get the respondents performing some actions as a way of assisting the research realise its aims and objectives. The experimental design was a chart directing the researcher where and how to go. Now the report takes the reader through the practical process of the researcher-respondents engagement. That is, in order to get the respondents practically providing him with their tense competence, the researcher had to employ instruments such as the questionnaires, interviews, achievement tests, et cetera.

For convenience reasons, the researcher decided to intercept the *strategy* and the *instruments* of data collection with the *Population and Sample* section. He deemed it convenient to refer to the population already presented to the readers when describing the implementation of the instruments.

3.5 Population and Sample

The Population and Sampling headings do overlap to a certain extent and because the selection of the actual respondents (sample) involves the sampling technique as it did with the current project. As a result, the researcher discussed the two headings under one bigger heading.

3.5.1 Population

The Lower Umfolozi Circuit had thirty-eight (38) high schools at the time of the carrying out of the research (Lower Umfolozi Circuit Management, 2017). Considering the big number of the population of the research, 38 high school members plus the limited time available, the researcher realised that it would not be possible to have every Grade 10 or 11 learner from each school participating in the research because that would compromise the whole project (Yates, 2004: 25, in De Vos et al., 2011: 24). Instead, the researcher adopted the sampling method which entails among other things the extrapolation of the results found through the concentrated resources available (Marlow, 2005: 136; in De Vos et al., 2011: 226). In situations where there is huge size of a population, the sampling method is advisable for the production a quality research (De Vos et al, 2011: 224). Therefore, the major reason for adopting the sample design was to ensure the feasibility of the research (Sarantakos, 2011: 139; in De Vos et al., 2011: 224).

Then, borrowing from both the major sampling types, the probability and non-probability, the researcher selected the elements that possessed the most representative characteristics of the population to serve the intention of the project in the best possible way. That is, the application

of the said types of sampling was itself determined by the type of the specimen elements needed at a given time of the research project (**See 3.5.2 for details on sampling**). For example, the non-probability sample (the purposive) was adopted when the researcher wanted to exclude the well-performing schools from being the actual participants to the study. The said sifting led to an eleven-member group of the less performing schools which was still too big to be properly handled. At this stage the probability, and specifically the Simple Random, sampling, was applied and the process helped to select five (5) schools from the eleven “poorly performing”. These five became the actual respondents of the research project. In terms of the schools’ participation, the actual respondents’ number (05) constituted thirteen percent (13%) of the whole research population consisting of thirty-eight (38) school members. So, the sampling technique stopped with the selection of the schools. For the selection of the learners to become actual respondents, a different technique was adopted for the reasons that are explained below.

Actually, in instances where a grade had various divisions (e.g. A, B, C, etc.), only one division participated in the study. Of the three high school grades that constitute the FET phase, the researcher involved only Grades 10 and 11 in the study, leaving out Grade 12. From each of the five selected schools, only one class became practically involved in the research. To be exact, two of the five schools were represented by their Grade 11 classes and the remaining three schools by three Grade 10 classes. The word ‘class’ is deliberately used to refer to a section or division of a given grade, since each grade in all the sampled schools was divided into more than one section, for example, Grade 10 A, B or C. So, due to the big numbers of the grades, a grade could not be involved in its totality, lest, it compromised the feasibility of the research. The total number of the learners from grades 10 and 11 of the selected schools was about 600. But it was also reduced because only one class in each identified school was selected for the actual participation in the research as illustrated earlier. At first 145 learners had been identified as the would-be respondents.

There were twenty-two (22) and twenty-five (25) expected from the two grade eleven classes and thirty (30), thirty-two (32) and thirty-six (36) to come from the three grade ten classes, respectively. However, due to unreported reasons, some learners were absent from their writing venues (respective schools) on their respective days of writing the pretest, since the test was conducted on different days (five consecutive days). Subsequently, the researcher decided to ignore these learners for the posttest as well. The respondents’ participation in only one of the two tests would not assist the research realise its aims. Eventually, the respondents were eighty-

three (83). At the school level there was no systematic selection of a class for the participation, but any class for which it was convenient to participate, was taken. In some instances, some of the learners from the very needed grades 10 and 11 attended extra lessons especially those who came from the science and commercial streams. So, it was going to be inconvenient for such learners to participate in the research, and that could possibly compromise even the research aims. Many other issues were considered like the other commitments or availability of the various sections of the target grades. Two and three of the five schools were represented by grade eleven and grade ten respectively as it was mentioned earlier. Eventually, there were eighty-three (83) individual respondents. The two grade eleven classes had fourteen (14) and fifteen (15) learners each representing their respective schools. The remaining three schools were represented by their grade ten learners who constituted the classes of sixteen (16), seventeen (17) and twenty-one (21) accordingly. The total number of the respondents (83) represented the number of the responses' scripts that were expected and received by the researcher. Although their precise age was not secured, the respondents were mostly at their late teens and in all the relevant classes the boys were less in their number than the girls'.

It was fast observable that the respondents met English only in the classroom. Even there it was not stressed as a rule that English was a language of instruction officially. In the respective first meetings with them, the research had to remind them quite often when they addressed the class to do so in English. Otherwise they blatantly addressed the class in IsiZulu even when they dealt with academic issues. A decline in the participation in the classroom was also noticeable after the researcher had advised them to familiarise themselves with the English language. In the ensuing meetings, when they brace themselves for the use of the English language in the classroom, the respondents were not so bad that the researcher not comprehend what they said. The remarkable thing in them was that they had become silent in all the schools. As a result, the same learners actively engaged the researcher in class.

The issue of the research population overlaps to the sampling sub-headings which was inevitable since the sampling dealt with the same population numbers.

3.5.2 Sampling

According to Blair and Blair (2015: 11) there are two major types of samples in the research realm, the probability and non-probability. The former is sometimes referred to as the random

sample, because it selects specimen elements or samples from the larger population by means of random processes, thus affording all elements a non-zero chance of selection. The latter never uses randomisation, but it relies on personal judgment, quotas and convenience which deliberately put population elements on an unequal footing for selection.

This research study borrowed from both the sample types. In short, it mixed the two main types of sampling as it charted its design for, and navigating the path of the collection of the data. Each of the two sample types was adopted in different stages of the study as and when it fittingly became. For example, from the thirty-eight (38) schools the most relevant one for the research had to be selected so that even their number would be reduced for feasibility (Sarantos, 2000: 139; in De Vos et al., 2011: 224). The adoption of the purposive sample by the research at this stage was very significant. It was critical that the hypothetical question of the research was best responded to by the findings of the study conducted on the learners who had not yet internalised much knowledge of the target structure. This sample type afforded the researcher an opportunity to apply his mind accordingly to ascertain that the relevant respondents were selected for the research.

According to Blair and Blair (2015: 16) the purposive technique is also called *judgment sampling*. So, with its adoption the researcher predetermined the schools that became the respondents to the research since it is a sub-category to the non-probability sample. The selection of the population members under this technique was somehow dependent on the judgment of the researcher who had to consider the nature and the aims of the research project in taking the decisions. It is discernible that even when the researcher had an opportunity to exercise his discretion, he remained science-based. Conscious of these expectations with the clear aims of the study in mind, the researcher, using the purposive sampling method, divided the members of the population into two groups in order to ignore or exclude the schools with the English records that showed good performance consistently. The learners coming from such schools as those that had good performance records, were presumed to be competent in the English tense already and, therefore, were excluded from literally participating in the research. It is worth reiterating that the study aimed at, among other things, establishing whether the explicit teaching of tense could improve the learners' tense competence. The researcher managed to do the necessary predetermination, because he first secured the performance records or statistics, from the DoBE, for matric English examination results of all the secondary schools in the Lower Umfolozi Circuit for the recent consecutive five years. It

was on the basis of this information that the two divisions or blocks (of schools) were formulated. The study's reference to the matric results was informed by the fact that these were the results from the examination that was strictly monitored and standardised for the research schools. Other examinations of the said schools particularly the relevant Grades 10 and 11 were developed and finalised internally, that is, within individual schools. Moreover, the Grade 12 or matric results were utilised because the grade was part of the FET-Phase which was the phase in which the research was done. Besides, Grade 12 was not only the reflection of Grades 10 and 11, but the highest grade and the exit point of the learners from, at least, a 10-year long period of the teaching and learning of English language.

As stated before, the two main types of samples were both adopted by the study as and when they became relevant to the needs of the study respectively. Once the researcher had formulated the two blocks of schools based on their respective English performance in matric, he was then faced with another challenge. The number of the poorly performing schools was still high and needed to be reduced as stated earlier. That is, the selection process had sifted eleven schools as homogeneously tense incompetent. So, there was no need for the predetermination of the selection. The non-probability sampling could no longer help, hence the purposive sample was discontinued. Any population element in the selected pool so far, was relevant to the nature and aims of the study and had a potential of providing the study with the most relevant data. However, the main reason for another reduction of the number of the eleven schools was, at this stage, to ensure the feasibility of the research. A smaller and more manageable number of the respondents was a necessity so as to ensure the integrity of the research. Consequently, the Simple Randomising Sample (probability) was adopted for the task. It afforded all the population elements or members an equal opportunity for the selection.

Blair and Blair (2015: 64) define simple random sampling as a "chance mechanism" drawing elements directly and physically from the sample container or frame. The researcher put the names of all the less performing schools in the small equal slips. The slips were then folded into similar small balls before they were thrown into an opaque container (its emptiness had been ascertained earlier). This was to ensure that one could not see them through. The container was then shaken. The shake guaranteed the disturbance of the original positioning of the folded papers inside. Subsequently, five (5) of the eleven (11) schools in the container were randomly selected. This then concluded the actual participating schools, the sample, of the research at the school-membership level. The technique that was applied in the selection of individual

respondents from the five schools and the manner in which it was applied, was explicated earlier (See 3.5.1).

3.6 Research Instruments

According to De Vos et al. (2011), there are various instruments of collecting data for research. Structured observation schedules, structured interviews and questionnaires are some of the instruments through which the necessary data are collected or gathered for studies with various aims. The instrument or instruments selected for a research study are determined largely by the nature, aims and, to a certain extent, objectives of the research concerned. In any given situation, the above forms of questionnaires are applied either to an individual, a pair or a group of individuals. Usually, interviews and questionnaires are adopted in situations where it is presumed that the respondents are in the position of deciding on *what* to give and not to give. That is, the situation where a person is in possession of information and he or she is aware of it and he or she can decide whether to release it or not. With the current study, researching on the respondents' tense competence, something that the respondents themselves might not know what it was and whether they had it or not, questionnaires and interviews were considered inappropriate instruments to adopt and as such could not assist the research achieve its aims.

Then, having put the research strategy in place, the *One-Group Pre-test Post-test Design*, the researcher deemed the achievement tests as the most appropriate instruments to implement the adopted strategy and attain the desired aims at the end. In the case of the achievement tests, the respondents were afforded an opportunity to apply the target linguistic structures and it was the researcher who then decided on who "knew" and who "did not know". The conclusion given by the non-involved, the impartial person (the researcher) would always be more reliable than the one given by somebody involved in the game but also acting as a judge simultaneously. Just imagine a question (in a questionnaire), "Can you mark English *Past Tense* correctly?", and choose your answer from the given options, "YES or NO". Any of the given options would remain reliable because it would be lacking evidence.

As the strategy design dictated, the researcher did his experiment on a single group of the learners that were now referred to as the respondents. That is, the eighty-three (83) learners in their respective schools were deemed as one group of respondents based on their sameness of being the learners of the less English performing schools in matric for the said period of time. It is worth reminding the reader of the aims of the research right at this juncture. The

researcher's main intention was to find out if the explicit tense teaching could improve the learners' tense competence which the hypothetical statement believed could. So, once the respondents were organised, the researcher conducted the pre-test on them, then taught them tense rules explicitly and carried out another test, the post-test, on the same group. It was imperative for the main aim of the research to start with the administration of the pre-test. This test ensured that the researcher got the baseline cognitive level (tense competence) of the respondents. To secure this information before the manipulation of the independent variable, was crucial especially because the experiment was carried out on a single group and the aims of the study suggested that the researcher be not told, but should discover the truth himself. It was only through the securing of this pre-test-related information that even the post-test made a meaningful contribution to the research aims. Of course, it is acknowledged that the effectiveness of the pre-test and post-test as the research instruments was enhanced by their interception by the manipulation, that is, the explicit teaching of tense.

After this three-phase process, the respondents' performance scores from the two tests were compared with each other to find out whether the manipulation of *tense* had caused any effect on the learners' *tense competence*.

The pre-test and the post-test were vital for the reliability of the research results. Therefore, it is equally significant to look at the items, the rationale as well as the whole process that ensured their development respectively. The set up for both tests was informed by the tense-related areas which are referred to as the "focus areas" or "themes" in this thesis report. These areas were deemed by the researcher, supported by the supervisor and his co-supervisors, as key to the mastery of tense or even the failure of it. They included *interrogation* and *negation* construction, confusion between *tense* and *aspect*, application of *was* and *were* (as an auxiliary verb & linking verb), *subject-verb agreement* as well as the confusion of *regular* and *irregular verbs* (yet there was no consensus on the last two, the researcher was happy with their inclusion) [See **Appendices A & B**]. It should be emphasised that from the onset, the learners' tense deficiencies had already been observed by the researcher in the Lower Umfolozi high schools generally (**See the Statement of the Problem section**). At that time the researcher was a teacher in one of the schools concerned for fifteen years. The deficiencies referred to as "errors" in this thesis, were largely common and recurring with different high school learners. Various studies do not only confirm the problem, but they also assert that it extends to the university level (Mqadi, 1990; Ndlovu, 1993; Motsoeneng, 2003; as well as Dang & Nguyen,

2012). So, the pre-test was conducted in order to have evidence and solid ground for the research. That is, decisions about the research could not be taken based on the presumption that “all the learners of the Lower Umfolozi Circuit have tense problems”. It was important for the post-test to focus on the same linguistic structures that the pre-test had focused on so as to take a well-informed decision about the explicit tense teaching. That is, the sameness of the tests’ structures was deliberately done. This was one way amongst many that helped to determine whether the hopes of the research were confirmed or invalidated as it hoped that the number of the problems or challenges faced by the respondents in the pre-test was reduced in the post-test. For example, if the respondent had only five correct out of ten given items in the pretest, the study hoped that the same respondent would score get more correct items in the post-test from the same question. Although the items covered in both tests were the same, the sentences’ wording and phrasing were not. The post-test was not necessarily a redo of the pre-test (**See Appendices A & B**). Both the pre-test and the post-test deliberately had one-word, isolated-sentence and discourse questions. It was so because the ultimate intention of teaching explicitly, at all times, is to enable the learners to internalise the target rules and apply them in their respective real-life situations. The discourse questions in particular managed to obtain that information from the respondents. That is, the relevant rule to be applied in the given situation was not specified, the language user took an individual decision based on his or her tense competence and understanding of the general situation. (**See Appendices C & D**).

The pre-test and the post-test were not piloted. They were set by the researcher and taken to the supervisor with the departmental committee for research. They were reviewed for relevance to tense which was the variable for manipulation and the aims of the research in particular. Some changes were effected in, among other things, the phrasing of some questions. Other questions were removed altogether. Since there was no piloting of the questions, a unanimity was reached on the variety of the question types. It was decided that the tests had to be comprised of the single-item, sentence-conversion and essay questions. The variety was aimed at ensuring that the respondents were given more than one way of displaying their tense competence. For instance, there was a fear that if the tests had the single-item questions only, the lucky respondents could possibly guess all the correct answers and that would have defeated the aims of the project. Similarly, the essay-type only questions might counter the desired aims of the research since they would need more time to carry out (**See Appendices A, B, C, D**). Then there was an argument on the inclusion of the Subject-Verb agreement as some members

asserted that it had nothing to do with tense, but it only marked the number of an agent. On the other side, the researcher and a few other members argued that *the number* does feature in when the English language users construct tense, interrogation and negation, just to name a few. Eventually, it was agreed that subject-verb agreement was included in the test with the understanding that although it generally marked the number, it had an impact on the application of tense as well. The duration of the tests was also deliberated and decided upon, eventually. The panellists who all of them were lecturers took the decision on the duration of the tests based on their respective experience as tests and examinations setters. The decision taken was based on the types of questions that were there in both the pre-test and post-test. Considering that there were discourse questions involved, the panel agreed unanimously that the respondents were likely to have enough time to finish each test within three hours respectively.

3.6.1 Pre-test

The test was conducted over a period of two weeks. This could be attributed to various reasons including the long distance from one school to another. It was not possible for the researcher to conduct the test in two schools on a single day as he did not have any assistant in this regard and the duration of the test (3 hours) did not allow it. Moreover, the researcher did not convene the respondents at one place for the test since they were attending to other school activities.

On the day of the pre-test, the researcher visited the respondents at their respective school A. The setting in the classroom was organised such that each respondent sat alone on the desk and there was a reasonably big space in between them to ensure that they did not share information during the writing of the test. There was no need for the researcher to explain the whole process about the test because he had already done it previously. On this day he issued the respondents with the test question papers and the answer sheets especially for the discourse questions. All the questions were typed and legible to all the respondents. Although the researcher urged the respondents to read the instructions carefully, he let them secure clarity from him where there was a need. They were invigilated by the researcher himself. The writing was without disruptions. Once done, the respondents returned both the question papers and the answer-sheets to the researcher and quietly left the room. This process was repeated to the other respondents in their respective centres (schools) on the relevant days later.

It was discernible that in all the five writing sessions, there was never a respondent who finished in the first hour of the three-hour duration. The fastest of them all to finish, went out just after

sixty minutes (an hour). Most of them finished writing in the second hour. And it happened in the three sessions that two or three respondents dragged the respective sessions to two hours and thirty minutes' spell. There was never a session that took all the three hours earmarked for each test. Since the respondents' scores collected through and/ or with this achievement test (pre-test) were going to be compared with their (respondents) scores from the post-test later, the writing of the pre-test was followed immediately by the manipulation session where the independent variable, tense, was taught by the researcher to the respondents. However, besides the comparison, the pre-test provided the researcher with the most valuable information, the tense competence level of the respondents, at least before the manipulation.

The following subsection provides details regarding what transpired in the classroom when the researcher delivered his lessons to the respondents.

3.6.2 Delivery of Lessons

It should be remembered that the researcher was following the *One-group Pre-test Post-test Design* in his pursuit of a possible causal-effect relationship between the explicit teaching of *tense* and the learners' *tense competence*. He managed to meet each class four (4) times over three months delivering lessons on tense. The four meetings were equivalent to two hundred (200) minutes because a single teaching period was fifty minutes (50 X 4). The pre-test and the post-test were conducted on the other respective and exceptional days as they were given three hours each. So, in total the researcher had six (6) formal meetings with each class. The three months' time gave the researcher sixteen weeks of gathering the data. The first two and the other last two weeks were used for the administration of the pre-test and post-test, respectively, to all the five schools. However, it is worth reminding the reader that the five classes of the respondents, despite being apart from one another, in terms of the research design, they were a single and "homogeneous" group. As a result, they were all treated the same way by the researcher. That is, they were all taught in an explicit teaching approach. Every time the researcher came to class to teach, he introduced a tense-related rule to the learners, explained it and modelled it with three or four sentences. The loose words and sentences used by the researcher to model the target structures resembled those in the pre-test and post-test (See **Appendices A & B**). He wrapped up each lesson with an oral practice (the respondents did not write it down) on the target structure of the day (the sentences for the practice were written on the board by the researcher). The items taught were dictated on by the focus areas or themes

mentioned earlier. In the instances where a given rule seemed to have been easily conceived the majority of the learners in the class, the researcher introduced a second rule in the same period. The respondents were never assigned with a written activity during the whole three months' period, but only the pre-test and the post-test.

The different grammar books that the researcher referred to in preparing his lessons were shown to the respondents and recommended for further reading by the individual respondents at their respectively available times and provided they got the books.

3.6.3 Post-test

The carrying out of the post-test was as vital as the pre-test was for the achievement of the aims of the research project. The post-test was already set at the time when the pre-test was conducted. It was stated above that the two tests were set together from the onset by the researcher and then taken to the supervisor and the relevant departmental committee for the review. The test was not piloted, but discussed at the meeting. The recommended changes were effected and the test was to be written over a three-hour duration. It is worth reiterating that the pre-test and the post-test tested the respondents on the same linguistic structure or structures, that is, tense or the focus areas. The research had to show the response of the respondents to the tense-related challenges (the tests) before and after the explicit grammar teaching approach was applied (manipulation). That is, it had to show whether the challenges the respondents faced in the pre-test remained the same, became easier or tougher in the post-test. Moreover, if they had become easier to sort, the results still the results had to indicate the extent to that regard. The either way the results went they confirmed or invalidated the research hypothesis which was, "the explicit teaching of tense can improve the learners' tense competence". Nevertheless, just as it was stated earlier, the post-test had totally different wording, phrases, sentences and questions whilst still dealing with the same linguistic target structures. Otherwise, the post-test would have been a "mere rewrite" (**Compare Appendices A & C with B & D**). Largely, most of the things done by the researcher to administer the post-test were a repetition of what he had done under the pre-test. The post-test was run over a two weeks' period and the researcher went to the respondents' schools for the writing it.

Indeed, the researcher attended to the school A (not the A of the pre-test) and arranged the scenery such that the respondents were reasonably apart from one another to avoid the possible sharing of information during the writing period. As the test had long been prepared, the

researcher supplied each respondent with the question paper and the answer sheets for the discourse questions particularly. The questions were legibly typed and there were no complaints about the font or any other related thing from the respondents. The researcher monitored the session and there were no disturbances throughout. At the end the respondents handed in their responses together with the question papers. The whole process done at the school A was repeated to the other respondents at their schools and on their corresponding days.

The first respondent to leave the test room did so after forty-five (45 minutes). As the most other respondents finished in the second hour of the session, it is conspicuous that that group had increased from the number of the respondents who had finished at that time under the pre-test. Very few respondents from all the schools entered into the twenty minutes of the last hour, not a single one stayed for the test beyond that minute.

Table 3.1 below consolidates the whole process of the data collection within the three months' time used for it.

Table 3.1: Time Management

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
	Pre-test	Intervention	Post-test
School A	week 1	<p>week 3: Topic: <i>Time & Tense Relationship</i> Illustrating how tense (grammar) fits events and situations to time (natural phenomenon), i.e., Past time vs P tense; Pre. Time vs Pre. Tense; Fut. Time vs Fut. Tense.</p> <p>week 4: Topic: <i>Tense & Aspect</i> e.g.: The girls <u>walked</u> (vs <u>were walking</u>) to school.</p> <p>week 5: Topic: <i>Interrogation & Negation</i> e.g.: Sihle complains. <u>Does</u> Sihle <u>complain</u>? Sihle complained. Sihle <u>did</u> not <u>complain</u>.</p> <p>week 6: Topic: <i>Subject-Verb Agreement</i> e.g.: <u>Learners walk</u>, but the <u>teacher drives</u> to school.</p>	week 9
School B	week 1	<p>Week 3: Topic: <i>Time & Tense Relationship</i> Illustrating how tense (grammar) fits events and situations to time (natural phenomenon), i.e., Past time vs P tense; Pre. Time vs Pre. Tense; Fut. Time vs Fut. Tense.</p> <p>week 4: Topic: <i>Tense & Aspect</i> e.g.: The girls <u>walked</u> (vs <u>were walking</u>) to school.</p> <p>week 5: Topic: <i>Interrogation & Negation</i> e.g.: Sihle complains. <u>Does</u> Sihle <u>complain</u>? Sihle complained. Sihle <u>did</u> not <u>complain</u>.</p> <p>week 7: Topic: <i>Subject-Verb Agreement</i> e.g.: <u>Learners walk</u>, but the <u>teacher drives</u> to school.</p>	week 9
School C	week 1	week 3: Topic: <i>Time & Tense Relationship</i>	week 9

		<p>Illustrating how tense (grammar) fits events and situations to time (natural phenomenon), i.e., Past time vs P tense; Pre. Time vs Pre. Tense; Fut. Time vs Fut. Tense.</p> <p>week 4: Topic: <i>Tense & Aspect</i> e.g.: The girls <u>walked</u> (vs <u>were walking</u>) to school.</p> <p>week 6: Topic: <i>Interrogation & Negation</i> e.g.: Sihle complains. <u>Does</u> Sihle <u>complain</u>? Sihle complained. Sihle <u>did</u> not <u>complain</u>.</p> <p>week 7: Topic: <i>Subject-Verb Agreement</i> e.g.: <u>Learners walk</u>, but the <u>teacher drives</u> to school.</p>	
School D	week 2	<p>week 3: Topic: <i>Time & Tense Relationship</i> Illustrating how tense (grammar) fits events and situations to time (natural phenomenon), i.e., Past time vs P tense; Pre. Time vs Pre. Tense; Fut. Time vs Fut. Tense.</p> <p>week 5: Topic: <i>Tense & Aspect</i> e.g.: The girls <u>walked</u> (vs <u>were walking</u>) to school.</p> <p>week 6: Topic: <i>Interrogation & Negation</i> e.g.: Sihle complains. <u>Does</u> Sihle <u>complain</u>? Sihle complained. Sihle <u>did</u> not <u>complain</u>.</p> <p>week 8: Topic: <i>Subject-Verb Agreement</i> e.g.: <u>Learners walk</u>, but the <u>teacher drives</u> to school.</p>	week 10
School E	week 2	<p>week 4: Topic: <i>Time & Tense Relationship</i> Illustrating how tense (grammar) fits events and situations to time (natural phenomenon), i.e., Past time vs P tense; Pre. Time vs Pre. Tense; Fut. Time vs Fut. Tense.</p> <p>week 5: Topic: <i>Tense & Aspect</i> e.g.: The girls <u>walked</u> (vs <u>were walking</u>) to school.</p> <p>week 6: Topic: <i>Interrogation & Negation</i> e.g.: Sihle complains. <u>Does</u> Sihle <u>complain</u>? Sihle complained. Sihle <u>did</u> not <u>complain</u>.</p> <p>week 8: Topic: <i>Subject-Verb Agreement</i> e.g.: <u>Learners walk</u>, but the <u>teacher drives</u> to school.</p>	week 10

3.7 Data Analysis

After the three-phase process mentioned above was conducted, the results of the two tests were compared, thereby confirming or invalidating the hypothesis. The *One-group Pre-test Post-test pre-experimental design* made it easy for the researcher to carry out the research efficiently. It is worth noting that the respondents' performance scores from the post-test were received after the researcher had carried out the manipulation on tense as an independent variable. The intervention by the researcher was in relation to the hypothesis of the study that *the explicit teaching of English tense to the respondents would improve their tense competence*.

Because of the quantitative design adopted by the research, the scores of the two tests were quantified. For the single-item and isolated-sentence questions, it was even easier because each item was allocated a point or two points. So, the researcher simply counted the earned marking ticks to get the total in that regard. The marking of the essay questions was carried out with the help of a rubric used by the FET school educators of the research area on daily basis when marking the very same type of questions.

The rubric is designed such that it evaluates and scores an essay on two broader dimensions,

accuracy (language/ grammar) and relevance (to the topic/ aesthetic use of language in general, e.g., the use of idioms). The researcher amended this measurement instrument so that it was relevant to the nature and aims of the researcher. That is, instead of assessing the respondents on both the language and relevance, the researcher used the rubric to mark the essays but focusing more on the language dimension and tense in particular. It was then easy for the researcher to score the respondents since the rubric provided the levels at which every performance was rated and awarded a percentage score accordingly. Above all, the rubric provided the researcher with a standardised marking instrument which enhanced his impartiality in scoring the essays. It is also worth stating that the said instrument was not applied in a stereotyped manner. As it was adjusted to suit tense (accuracy), it did not mean that the other side of the essay was totally disregarded, but it was still necessary in order to provide a platform for the display of the accuracy. Accordingly, for the research, every performance rated below fifty percent (50%) was deemed poor or failure. Any score above fifty percent (50%) was considered a pass. The contribution for each essay to the test was ten percent (10%).

Table 3.2: Rubric for Essay Marking [50 Marks]

Content (15)	14-15 Virtually error-free in grammar	10-11 Effective language & few errors in grammar	6-7 Adequate use of language with inconsistencies	2-3 Inadequate use of language; limited vocabulary	0 Language incomprehensible; vocabulary limitations
Presentation (30)					
Exceptional Outstanding, well organised & coherent	14-15 (c) 27-30 (p)				
Skilful Very well crafted will relevant & interesting ideas		10-11 (c) 22-23 (p)			
Moderate Satisfactory; reasonably organised & coherent			6-7 (c) 15-17 (p)		
Elementary Inconsistently coherent response; unclear & unoriginal ideas				2-3 (c) 9-11 (p)	
Inadequate Totally irrelevant response; vague & repetitive; no attempt to respond to the topic					0 (c) 3-5 (p)
STRUCTURE e.g. Paragraph development & sentence construction 5 Marks:					
MARK RANGE	40 - 50	30 - 39	20 - 29	10 - 19	0 - 9

Source: (DoBE, 2020: 6 – 7)

It is also worth mentioning that the single-item and sentence-conversion questions were divided into two sets in each in both the pre-test and post-test. This was due to the challenges these two types of questions gave to the respondents, respectively. For convenience, the two clusters of questions were referred to as the *Category A* and *Category B* accordingly and are discussed in details later under the relevant section.

Once the scores of the respondents' performance in the tests had been gathered, the researcher converted them into the percentage. The analysis process fitted well to the quantitative approach adopted by the investigation project. Once gathered, the data were captured in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, for detailed analysis. This was done in order to execute three major different analyses of the collected data. One of these analyses was the **frequency analysis** whose aim was to establish how competent in the application of English *tense* each learner or respondent was. Every single response given by a respondent against every question of the test was examined. Frequency analysis helped indicate aspects or variables that either were mastered or remained a challenge to the respondents. Moreover, it also showed the degree of improvement or lack in a given item by the respondents. It was through this analysis that the researcher could compare the number of the correct answers against the total that had been given (this refers to discrete-answer questions, not essays). Frequency analysis also facilitated the selection of focus aspects for analysis. That is, respondents produced an extreme variety of responses which were not only diverse, but too peculiar to be entertained for analysis. To be considered for analysis, a response had to be reasonably recurrent from a sizeable number of respondents. To decide on the "sizeable number", the researcher's discretion was applied.

Another analysis that was done through the same software device, SPSS, was the **cross-tabulation one** which compared a respondent's performance in different questions of the same test. The foregoing explication is an indication that the analysis of the results did not start straight away by comparing the overall numbers or general performance of the two tests, but it looked at the respondent's performance in each test first (pretest in this case). Then, respondents' pretest scripts were matched with their post-test one (not comparing them yet), just to verify if the respondents' concerned wrote both tests. Every respondent had to participate in both tests to enable the comparison of the tests' results eventually. Then, the third and the comprehensive analysis compared the respondents' performance scores from the pre-test with those in the post-test. With this one concluded, the researcher was able to say whether the

hypothesis was confirmed or nullified.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The research for which this report is, is an official project that somehow investigated the practices and conduct of the learners, teachers, principals, parents, the learners' community at large together with its leaders and to a certain extent the entire Department of Basic Education as the research touched even on its (DoBE) teaching policy (CAPS). The integrity and great respect given to the work of this kind, is so much that its findings and recommendations are often deemed factual and true. Since the project carried so much value and was researching on people's and different institutions' lives, its findings would, in the same weight, pronounce on these lives. The findings, therefore, take to public what would have remained private. So, if one decides to tell the public about other people's or institutions' "private matters", one needs to get the permission from them. The right to privacy is a constitutional right and must be upheld (Constitution of the RSA, 1996: 7). The permission sought from all the members that might be affected by the research made them aware that the researcher was getting access to their privacy and what he was doing with it. By seeking permission from the relevant people, the researcher initiated an agreement with each one of them. The researcher committed himself to upholding each member's privacy by observing the other rights related to privacy such as the rights to *anonymity*, *informed consent*, *avoidance of harm* and *confidentiality*. The agreement with all the relevant stakeholders was crucial for the research to occur, otherwise they would turn down the application and keep the information away from him. Moreover, whilst the contracts were a constant reminder to the researcher to focus on the aims of the researcher, on the other hand they made the stakeholders participate happily knowing that there was going to be no harm to them.

So, the contribution of all of the following people and institutions was considered significant for the research and, subsequently, were written letters seeking permission: the Department of Basic Education, the chief presiding over the area of the schools, parents of the learners/ respondents as many of them were still under age, learners particularly the few that was above age (despite their age, their parents were approached too: customary practice) as well as the principals of the schools (**See Appendices E – M**). All the target people and institutions had not shown any fusses to the researcher's application. They welcomed and thanked him for recognising them, particularly the traditional leaders and parents of the respondents who put much trust in the project for their children's (learners) education generally.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has made attempts to provide the reader with a comprehensive design or structure of the research project. He mentioned and explicated the constituents of the project which are the approach or paradigm, strategy and the data collection instruments as well as the way they were applied. Moreover, the researcher, in this chapter, further explicated the ethics-related steps that the research took.

The next chapter presents the reader with the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The study set out to investigate the learners' competence with English tenses in high schools in the Lower Umfolozi Circuit. This chapter presents the findings. Five (5) schools represented by eighty-three (83) respondents took part in the study. The presentation is organized test-by-test beginning with the pre-test. The findings were presented question by question before the pre-test's overall performance.

Moreover, it is worth reiterating the fact that the findings were not presented school by school for two main reasons. Firstly, the respondents were considered as part of a single block of the high schools that were "homogeneous" in their English performance in matric. That is, their apartness from one another did not have much significance to the study except for the convenience in the handling of the respondents. Secondly, the decision not to give an individual school performance was endorsed by the fact that the findings showed similar *tense* patterns across the schools. There were no individual-school-based patterns. This was not something that took the researcher by surprise since the background of the schools (respondents) also showed huge similarity amongst them (**See Physical Background of the Population**).

Therefore, the organization of the presentation gives the number of the entries in each question as well as the relevant passes and failures. These figures are fleshed out with the explanation of the factors responsible for the figures. The above explained format is applicable to the presentation of both the pre-test and post-test, respectively. The findings from the pre-test are presented as *Part 1* and post-test as *Part 2*. In each part the presentation begins with the worst performed questions called *Category A*. It is worth reiterating that the results of the pretest held certain questions as the major culprits for the respondents' dismal performance in the test. Although the study had from the onset intended to teach all the earmarked tense structures explicitly, the results of the pre-test suggested that the intervention be focused on the questions mostly blamed for the failure of the respondents in the pre-test. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the other tense related structures were totally discarded from the post-test nor even from the intervention. Instead, more attention and time was given to the more challenging areas as revealed by the pre-test. It should be remembered that the researcher stated from the beginning that the effectiveness or non-effectiveness of the explicit teaching of tense would be evidenced better by the not-yet-competent learners. So, if in the same package of the target

structures, some were more challenging than others, the former had to be given the relevant treatment in order to assist the research realise its aims. Subsequently, as they were deemed responsible for the disastrous performance in the pre-test, the logic was that fixing them would turn the performance around. Furthermore, the *Category B* questions were not ignored entirely under the post-test because they too had not been passed by all the respondents in the pre-test. In fact, it was just that they had been failed less than the other questions, but above all, they were also poorly performed.

4.2 Part 1: Findings from the Pre-test

Four out of the eight questions of the pre-test were more attributive to the respondents' dismal performance than others. These were questions A (Subject-Verb Agreement), E (Negation Constructions), F (Interrogation Formations) and H (Regular vs Irregular verbs). The respondents' challenges were largely related to the above mentioned themes or focus areas. The themes or focus areas were not necessarily the findings, but through them the actual deficiencies of the respondents in applying tense were found or discovered. The *Category A* questions as they represented respective themes are therefore taken for explication one by one below.

4.2.1 Subject-Verb Agreement

Fundamentally, the Subject-Verb Agreement (SVA) topic is a concord-related issue, but its interrelatedness with the application of tense compelled the researcher to include it in the study. It should be remembered that in investigating tense competence, the study wanted to find out if tense was marked correctly. Question A which focused on the SVA rule, was in loose sentences. The respondents had to choose a semantically fitting verb from a list that was given and fill a space with it. The instruction put it clearly that the insertion had to be grammatical. Fortunately, the choice of the words was never a problem to the respondents. The problem emerged when the word was inserted. Most respondents did not apply the SVA rule correctly. Below are the examples of what the investigation found:

Box 4.1: The SVA Rule

- (i) This book (*singular subject*) belong (*unmatching v. form*) to me.
- (ii) His father (*singular subject*) own (*unmatching v. form*) a chain of hotels.

The respondents' non-mastery of the agreement rule between the subject or agent and the

relevant verb was a biggest challenge negatively affecting the respondents' tense application in many other target areas. The problem manifested itself in a twofold manner. At first, some respondents thought that the SVA issue was only about numbers (i.e. singular subject to singular verb, etc.). As a result, the test produced the following type of sentence constructions:

Box 4.2: The SVA Rule

- | |
|--|
| <p>(i) She (singular subject) loves me and <u>I (singular subject/ agent) loves</u> her.</p> <p>(ii) <u>I (singular subject) prefers</u> (singular verb but unmatching) water to beer.</p> |
|--|

Therefore, the test revealed that the respondents lacked knowledge not only in the grammatical distinction, “number”, but also in the grammatical category, “person”. The researcher took the SVA issue as an important one such that he considered *Question A* answers incorrect if they did not have the said agreement. The firm decision by the researcher led to the sixty-eight (68) and fifteen (15) respondents, failing and passing the question (**See Box 4.3**). The SVA challenge proved that it was key to the learning of other important linguistic structures related to tense. For example, negation construction, interrogation formation, passive voice and so forth. In fact, the findings from the pre-test presented the awareness that any accuracy-pursuing teaching can be enhanced or compromised by the SVA issue. Consider the pair of sentences in the box below exemplifying *Voice Conversions*:

Box 4.3: SVA Rule and Voice

- | |
|---|
| <p>(i) <u>The young boy (singular sub.) has (matching verb)</u> washed the plates. (Active Voice)</p> <p>(ii) <u>The plates (plural sub.) has (unmatching verb)</u> been washed by the young girl. (<i>the above sentence converted to Passive Voice</i>)</p> |
|---|

Summarily, the conversion to the Passive Voice (ii) in the box above would have been perfect had the sentence acknowledged the Subject-Verb Agreement rule. Unluckily, all the sentences in this question had singular subject.

4.2.2 Negation Construction

Another question that posed much challenge to the respondents was *Question E*. The items

under *Question E* were in the form of single or isolated sentences that the respondents had to convert to Negative Form. The respondents were seriously challenged by sentences that did not have either a linking verb or helping verb. It was remarkable that the sentence in the box below was got correct by seventy-three (73) of the eighty-three (83) respondents, but ironically the overall number of the passes to the whole Question E, was only seven (7). This is the answer that was given by most respondents:

Box 4.4: Negation Construction

- (i) The two bombers were (*linking verb*) connected to the movement. (original sentence).
- (ii) The two bombers were (*linking verb*) not (*negation particle*) connected to the movement.

In fact, the challenge was with the dummy auxiliary verb “do” in cases where it had to be adopted for negation purposes. The respondents lacked competence to apply the correct form of “do” to mark the tense of the sentence they converted. For example, in the box below, both the (i) and (ii) original sentences are in the past tense and the conversion to the Negative Form should retain their original tense, the past. Sadly, the respondents failed to do the constructions correctly.

Box 4.5: Negation and auxiliary verb Do

- (i) The boy *died*. (*Original sentence in the Past Tense*)
The boy does not died.
- (ii) I *saw* them. (*Original sentence in the Past Tense*)
I do not saw them.

Another problem with the respondents emanating from *Question E* pertained the relevant conjugations to the main verb once “a correct” form of the dummy auxiliary verb was inserted for a negation construction. This was the case particularly with the “does” and “did” forms. The “do” form was not as challenging as the above mentioned ones. For instance, for the two respective exemplary sentences in the above box, some respondents inserted the correct form of the dummy indicating the past tense, “did”, but could not conjugate the main verbs accordingly. The researcher considered the said mismatch as the failure to mark tense correctly.

Box 4.6: Negation and auxiliary verb Do

- | | |
|------|---|
| (i) | The boy died. (<i>Original sentence</i>)
The boy <u>did</u> (<i>correct dummy aux</i>) not <u>died</u> (<i>unmatching form of MV</i>). |
| (ii) | I saw them. (<i>Original sentence</i>)
I <u>did</u> (<i>correct dummy aux</i>) not <u>saw</u> (<i>unmatching form of MV</i>) them. |

As stated earlier, the same conjugation issue with regards to the main verbs was experienced by respondents when inserting the “does” form. That is, sometimes the respondents never struggled to identify the tense of a given sentence as a Present Tense. Subsequently, they applied the *does* form but failed to adjust the form of the main verb accordingly. Therefore, since eleven of the twelve sentences constituting Question E needed the dummy auxiliary “do” for their completion, it should come with no shock that only seven respondents passed this question. To further confirm the severity of the problem, this question was the worst performed amongst the exclusive four, *Category A*. This challenge posed by the dummy auxiliary verb “do” seemed to have also extended its foul hand to the Interrogation Constructions (Question F) discussed in the next subheading.

4.2.3 Interrogation Construction

The question that focused on the interrogation formation structure was also set in loose sentences. The respondents were provided with the statement sentences and prompted to convert them to the question form. This was *Question F*. They were further instructed not to use the “WH-” (**WHAT, WHO, WHOM, WHERE and WHICH**) words in their answers. It was evidenced by the findings that the respondents could, without much difficulty, convert statement sentences to questions provided that the sentences had a helping or linking verb. As a result, fifty-seven (57) of the eighty-three (83) got the sentence below correct. All what they did was to swap the positions of the subject of the sentence and the helping verb as shown in the box below:

Box 4.7: Converting Sentences with helping or linking verbs

- | | |
|------|--|
| (i) | <u>The president</u> (<i>Subject</i>) <u>has</u> (<i>helping verb</i>) appointed the judge. (<i>Original sentence</i>) |
| (ii) | <u>Has</u> (<i>helping verb</i>) <u>the president</u> (<i>Subject</i>) appointed the judge? |

In the situations where there were no helping and linking verbs, the respondents found it difficult to fill that space with the dummy auxiliary “do” to complete the conversion. Firstly,

they failed to identify the correct form of the dummy auxiliary “do” based on the tense of the sentence concerned. That is, each time the sentence concerned was to be converted, its tense had to be taken into consideration so that even the converted sentence would keep it. The respondents’ inability to keep the tense of the original sentence was a proof that they lacked the necessary tense competence. Despite the correct structure for interrogation that they produced, the sentences concerned were deemed incorrect for the purpose of the research in particular. That is, the respondents were able to exchange the positions of the sentence subject and the auxiliary verb irrespective of whether it was a real or dummy accordingly to produce questions.

Box 4.8: Mismatch between auxiliary verb Do and given tense

- (i) The boy found (*Verb, Past Tense*) the book. (*Original sentence*)
Do (*Dummy aux verb in the Pres. Tense*) the boy found (*MV, Pas. Tense*) the book?
- (ii) The president loves (*Present Tense Verb*) them.
Did (*dummy aux verb, Past Tense*) the president loves (*Verb, Pres. Tense*) them?

Besides the respondents’ failure to match the tense of the original sentence with the relevant form of the dummy auxiliary *do*, the respondents had another problem. At other times they managed to insert a relevant form of the dummy auxiliary verb which corresponded correctly with the tense of the original sentence, only to fail to subsequently change the main verb accordingly. The interrogation sentential structure was correct for the respondents, with a question mark at the end in most cases, but the responses were deemed incorrect because they were just like that in terms of the research aim. That is, the research was investigating the respondents’ *tense* competence. Secondly, they had a challenge in changing the main verb to the relevant form once they had inserted the *do* form of their choice in the sentence. This little but critical weakness of the respondents was rife and severe and it spoiled the good work that the respondents had done, that is, to match the *do* form with the relevant tense of the sentence. Because of this deficiency the sentences affected were considered grammatically (tense-wise in particular) incorrect and marked accordingly, hence only seven (7) respondents passed this question (See Box 4.9):

Box 4.9: Disagreement between auxiliary Do and main verb

- | | |
|------|---|
| (i) | That minister <u>had</u> (<i>Verb in the Past Tense</i>) problems. (<i>Original sentence</i>) |
| (ii) | <u>Did</u> (<i>Dummy aux v., marking Past T.</i>) that minister <u>had</u> (<i>Unmatching MV</i>) problems? |

4.2.4 Regular and Irregular Verbs

The question on the regular and irregular verbs in the pre-test was *Question H*. The question was in single words. The respondents were provided with a tabular form with rows and three (3) columns representing the *Present Tense*, *Past Tense* and *Past Participle Form* verbs, respectively, which is sometimes called the “-en form”. These three markers were not written in the columns concerned, but in each row there was one or two words given and then a space or two spaces that were to be completed by the respondents. The discretion was the respondents’ as to what they wrote in the blank spaces. The instruction prompted them (respondents) to complete the table by providing the missing verb forms in the blank spaces. It is, however, regrettable that sixty-two respondents treated the types of the verbs with no distinction. The irregular verbs were attached with the “-ed” suffix the same way the regular verbs were treated to mark the past tense. The indicators on top of each column marked as *Present Tense*, *Past Tense* and *Past Participle Form*, are given only in the report for the convenience of the reader. That is, they were not provided in the test as mentioned before. The column for the Past Participle Form is not marking any tense because a participle, either past or present, is not a tense. However, since the column heads were not there in the test, the PPF was “used” later in the teaching of the past tense in particular. So, the procurement of the respondents’ competence on whether they understood tense as different from participle or not, was important for the investigation. As a result of the foregoing sentence explication, these principal verb forms were treated in a package, yet in this regard the focus was on the tense. Furthermore, the packaging of the verb forms did not compromise the aims of the research, instead it made the findings clearer, since the respondents themselves gave the same verb spelling for both the past tense and past participle forms as they attached the “-ed” suffix to both. What follows next are the examples.

Table 4.1: Generalisation of “-ed” Suffix

Present Tense	Past Tense	Past Participle Form
bite	Bitted (<i>by respondent</i>)	Bitted (<i>by respondent</i>)
broadcast	Broadcasted (<i>by respondent</i>)	Broadcasted (<i>by respondent</i>)

Some respondents amongst the sixty-two (62) showed their “awareness” of the distinction between the regular and irregular verbs by not attaching the generalizing suffix “-ed”. Their intelligence, though, was defeated by the repeated incorrect verb spelling they gave. The recurrence and prevalence of the deficiency proved that the deficiency was real, that is, it was not a misprint. The severity of the respondents’ problem on the regular and irregular verbs was evidenced by the small number of them who passed *Question H* that focused on it (the problem).

Table 4.2: Incorrect Spelling for Irregular Verbs

Present Tense	Past Tense	Past Participle Form
Sing	Song (<i>by respondents</i>)	Song (<i>by respondents</i>)
Born (<i>by respondents</i>)	Borne (<i>by respondents</i>)	borne

Out of the three hundred and thirty-two respondents (83x4 questions), only fifty respondents (N0 of *CATEGORY A* passes x 4 questions) passed. The small number of the respondents who passed the *CATEGORY A* questions proves that the respondents were really challenged by these questions.

The other questions of the pre-test, although challenging, were not as tough as the ones dubbed *Category A*. these questions were Questions B, C, D and G. For the convenience reasons, these questions were labeled *Category B*. The next few sections present the respondents’ performance on the *Category B* questions.

4.2.5 Question B (SVA)

This question tested the respondents on the Subject-Verb Agreement (SVA) theme which was discussed under the *Category A* questions. Unlike, in the question A, the SVA question under *Category B*, the question was given in a paragraph in the past tense form and the respondents were prompted to rewrite it in the present tense. Because the given paragraph was short, it was easy for the researcher to count the finite verbs to determine the number of the correct and incorrect ones. However, it was noticeable that the number of the respondents who passed this question was higher than those who passed Question A which tested the respondents on the same theme. This observation is at looked closely under the “Discussion of Findings” later. At this stage the report makes mention of this discernible and interesting matter because there has to be an explanation for the repetition of the SVA presentation and more so under the two

different categories, A and B. This question posed the challenge of the SVA the same way it did under Question A, but with twenty-four (24) passes and fifty-nine failures.

4.2.6 Tense and Aspect

Two questions tested whether the respondents were competent enough in the application of the tense rules that they did not confuse it with the aspect. The prevalent confusion of tense with aspect globally as indicated by literature was discussed in Chapter Two and does not need to be over-emphasised now. The researcher did state it that since the research was not on the aspect, it (aspect) was included in the explanations only when and where it helped to clarify tense. Question C focused on tense and the perfective aspect. The question was given in loose sentences. Each sentence had a blank space which had to be completed by the respondents with a correct verb phrase selected from the three given alternatives. The findings showed that the respondents had a serious challenge under this section. For instance, in the following example which is a specimen of what many respondents provided as their answers, past tense is mixed with the perfective aspect such that the construction is not only incorrect, but sounds awkward as well. The tense in the sentence denotes that the situation (a shock) existed then and does not show that it overlapped to the present. However, the aspect denotes that whatever that started in the past is as true now as it was then, (there is overlap). Moreover, the auxiliary, “have” in the perfective aspect is in the present form yet the verb “was” is in the past tense:

Box 4.10: Confusing past tense with perfective aspect

It <u>was</u> (<i>past tense</i>) a shock when the police <u>have turned up</u> (<i>perfective aspect</i>) today.

The respondents’ uncertainty on the linguistic structure concerned is confirmed by the small number of the passes (27) versus that of the failures (56) only on Question C. Question D tested the respondents’ tense competence in relation to the progressive aspect. The question was in isolated sentences as well. Each sentence had a pair of alternative answers from whom the respondents selected what they decided was correct. They were prompted to ring the correct answer respectively. The findings proved that the respondents had much of indecision when making their choices in this question. The indecision is not confirmed only by the huge number of the failures, but by the prevalent cancellation and changing of the answers before the final decision. It was noted that the simple present tense was not easy to distinguish from the present progressive aspect since both structures bore the “now” element. As a result, the respondents were seriously challenged by the situation where they had to choose the structure that referred

to the universal truth for example, the simple present tense (See i. in Box 4.11). The opposite was also true. That is, in a situation where the present progressive aspect was to be used to refer to the manner in which the action was carried out, the simple present tense was used (See ii. in Box 4.11):

Box 4.11: Confusing present tense with progressive aspect

- | | |
|-----|---|
| i. | Vegetarians are people who <i>don't eat/ <u>are not eating</u></i> (respondents' choice) meat. |
| ii. | Don't disturb him now. <i>He <u>reads</u></i> (respondents' choice)/ <i>is reading</i> the novel. |

The respondents that passed this question from the pre-test were twenty-five (25) and the failures were fifty-eight (58).

4.2.7 Question G

This question hoped to secure the respondents' consistence on the tense application. It (the question) was in loose sentences. Each question had two parts (clauses) which were in two different tenses. So, "having realised" the inconsistency from the original sentence, the respondent was supposed to change the tense of either clause to match the other. Moreover, this question hoped to get a little more than the tense correspondence competence since the instruction did not specify the structure to be changed. That is, it was a bit open and flexible representing error analysis in general. It was conspicuously clear that the respondents who chose to convert to the past tense performed better than those who opted for the present tense. With the past tense option, the respondents did just a simple thing, converting the verb in the clause concerned into the past tense. See the examples below:

Box 4.12: Tense Consistency and SVA Rule (in the past tense)

- | | |
|-----|---|
| i. | The criminal <u>broke</u> (<i>past tense</i>) the back window and then <u>jumps</u> (<i>present tense</i>) into the office. (Original sentence) |
| ii. | The criminal <u>broke</u> the back window and then <u>jumped</u> (given by respondent) into the office. |

The challenge with the present tense option emanated from the reality that it was not enough to convert a verb from the past tense to the present tense. Most of the sentences of the question required that the verb be affixed with an "s" to observe the Subject-Verb Agreement (SVA) rule

discussed earlier. Therefore, those respondents that opted for the changing the whole sentence to the present tense got their answers wrong because they disregarded the SVA rule. See the examples below:

Box 4.13: Tense Consistency and SVA Rule (in the present tense)

i.	The criminal <u>broke</u> (<i>past tense</i>) the back window and then <u>jumps</u> (<i>present tense</i>) into the office. (Original sentence)
ii.	The criminal <u>break</u> (<i>given by respondents</i>) the back window and then <u>jumps</u> into the office.

The questions from 4.2.1 to 4.2.7 above represented the single-word answer and loose sentence questions of the pre-test. **Table 4.3** below displays the statistical summary of the respondents' performance in the relevant questions:

Table 4.3: Pre-test Performance (Short Questions)

QUESTIONS	PASSES	FAILURES
A	15	68
B	24	59
C	27	56
D	25	58
E	7	76
F	7	76
G	27	56
H	21	62

4.2.8 Essay Questions

Below is the presentation of the results from the respondents' performance in the essays questions. The essay questions still used the same focus areas to gauge the respondents' level of competence in tense. From the essay responses, the very same focus areas and the way they were treated by the respondents kept emerging in various parts of the essays either correctly or incorrectly and the researcher deliberately looked for that. In fact, the essay questions were so helpful to the aims of the study that they uncovered some of the challenges that the researcher had not anticipated. In other words, the essay and the discrete questions supplemented each other in exposing the respondents' real status or statuses in relation to the tense rules application. That is, certain linguistic structures were applied more clearly either through

essays, one-word or single-sentence questions respectively. This was helpful to the aims of the research especially the determination of the tense competence status or statuses of the respondents.

Different essay questions had different numbers of entries because in each section only one question had to be responded to by an individual respondent as per his or her choice. That is, there was no essay question that was answered by eighty-three (83) respondents which was the total number of the sampled population.

4.2.8.1 Question 1

The essay was written largely in the present tense which was correct. The respondents encountered the problem of choosing between the simple present *tense* and the present progressive *aspect* (See Box 4.14). the extract in the box shows that the respondent had not yet grasped the tense rules as he or she mingled the tense with the progressive aspect. Such confusion is displayed by the bolded verb phrases which most of them were not supposed to be aspectual.

Box 4.14: Confusing present tense with present progressive aspect

Some of them get AIDS when they are helping people who are having this virus if he or she is not using protection. Many of them **are having** no idea what AIDS is, because they **are doing** sex when they **are not having** an idea how to prevent this virus and other diseases. They **are saying** skin to skin. That is a bad style because they are killing themselves.

The other deficiency that superseded all others under this question was the disregard of the SVA rule discussed earlier (See Box 4.15). One of the functions of this significant rule is to harmonise different grammatical units which includes, amongst other things, number and person (Tshotsho et al. 2015: 76).

Box 4.15: Disregard of SVA Rule

Parents mustn't choose for their children partners to marry. A heart **go** where it **want** to go.

Another discernible practice by the respondents under this question was their inability to apply past tense correctly and/ or consistently whenever they referred to the past event or situation. For example, the first sentence of the discourse in the box below present tense (choose) and past tense (selected) are applied concurrently and subsequently, incorrectly. The second

sentence in the same discourse displays the double past tense marking which recurred persistently under the discrete questions earlier (See **Box 4.16**). As a result, seventeen (17) out of thirty respondents passed this question.

Box 4.16: Double Past Tense Marking

Nobody choose for the parents their husbands and wives, but they selected them themselves. If they **did** not **selected** them, we were not going to be present today.

4.2.8.2 Question 2

Respondents applied either the future or the present tense to explain their imagined future world or life. This question produced not only the incorrect application of the future tense in particular, but the confusion of tense and aspect too. The specimen in the box below is a true reflection of the rife practice that was displayed by the respondents' responses.

Box 4.17: Incorrect Application of Future Tense

In ten years I **will passed** matric and have married. Maybe, I have two or three childrens. Me and my family **will be stay** in a big house. My husband **will driving** his car and me my own car.

4.2.8.3 Question 3

The respondents used the present tense in their responses to this question. With them addressing the “you” (the friend), the SVA rule issue was not a problem, the presentation was largely and correctly executed. Challenges emerged when the subject or agent of the verb changed. That is, the SVA rule problem re-surfaced. Moreover, the uncertainty about the present tense and the present progressive aspect was rife. The severity of the challenges faced by the respondents under this question is evidenced by the little number of the passes, twelve (12) out of thirty-one (31) entries.

4.2.8.4 Question 4

Many respondents narrated their stories under this question in the past tense. Several problems related to their marking of the said tense were also clear. Their incompetence on the regular-and-irregular verbs showed itself up again. Tense inconsistency (application of more than one tense incorrectly over a single event or situation) as well as double past tense marking were

also rife (See **Box 4.18**). Eight (8) out of twenty-four (24) respondents who responded to this question passed it.

Box 4.18: Tense Inconsistency

One day when I **waked** up I **find** my dad **have waited** for me in the sitting room. He asked me **did** I **had** a girlfriend. I'm still thinking the answer and my dad slap me strong in the face.

4.2.8.5 Question 5

The question was written in the past and future tenses largely. Where the respondents applied the past tense, deficiencies like wrong verb spelling, double past tense marking and the chop and changing of tenses incorrectly at a sentential level were rife. The future tense application also came with conspicuous incompetence of the respondents in applying it.

Box 4.19: Incorrect Application of Future Tense

I promise that I'm **changed** and **will respecting** my parents. I **will apologising** to all my family members my mom and siblings.

Nine (9) from twenty-eight (28) respondents passed this question.

The researcher hereby reiterates that the tense errors presented above were common amongst the respondents across the five sampled schools.

The table (4.4) below displays the summary of the results of the respondents from the pre-test question by question:

Table 4.4: ESSAY QUESTIONS (PRE-TEST)

SECTIONS		PRE-TEST		
		Entries	Passes	Failures
A	Question 1	47	17	30
	Question 2	36	11	25
B	Question 3	31	12	19
	Question 4	24	08	16
	Question 5	28	09	19

Having presented the pre-test results question by question, the researcher deemed it logical to also present them based on the overall performance of the respondents. That is, the following section presents the numbers of the respondents who performed at various score levels in the pre-test as a whole (inclusive of all the questions and sections). It is worth reminding the reader that the aim of the research was realised by the knowledge of the number of the respondents who were competent (passes) and those that were incompetent (failures). It is, therefore,

important to know, not the numbers of the passes and failures only, but also those of the outstanding, average and dismal performers.

The “Score Categories” column on the far left of the table represents various levels at which different respondents performed respectively. As displayed, one (1) respondent performed at the second-high score category. Three (3) at 60 – 69, four (4) at 50 – 59, seven at 40 – 49, fourteen (14) at 30 – 39, twenty-five (25) at 20 – 29, twenty-seven (27) at 10 – 19 and two at 0 – 9. “Frequencies” refers to the number of the respondents who performed at that given level or Score Category. The number is juxtaposed with the relevant percentage. The “N0 of Entries” (83) refers to the individual respondents who wrote the pre-test. From the eighty-three (83) respondents, eight (8) passed the test and seventy-five (75) of them failed. The numbers of the passes and failures equated to ten percent (10%) and ninety percent (90%) respectively as displayed in the table. The twenty-seven (27) on the far right-hand side of the table is the average performance, meaning that most respondents scored 27 or closed to 27 percent over hundred, the total.

Table 4.5: Pre-test results (Overall Performance)

Score Categories	Frequency	N0 of Entries	N0 of Passes	N0 of Failures	Pass %	Fail %	Average
80-100	00 (0%)	83	08	75	10	90	27
70-79	01 (1%)						
60-69	03 (4%)						
50-59	04 (5%)						
40-49	07 (8%)						
30-39	14 (17%)						
20-29	25 (30%)						
10-19	27 (33%)						
0 – 9	2 (2%)						

The study had as its hypothesis that the explicit teaching of tense could improve the correct use of tense by the learners under the investigation. Having conducted the pretest and received disastrous performance from the respondents, the researcher took to the classroom himself to teach the tense functions as suggested by the hypothesis. The detailed areas for the teaching

were more defined then since the pre-test had revealed them from the focus headings that the research had earmarked for scrutiny. In other words, through the focus areas or the headings, the nitty-gritties about the application of tense by the respondents were discovered.

The good thing about the results of the pretest is that they did a multi-faceted job for the study. They showed that the respondents of the test had a low level of tense competence. In other words, the results proved that the respondents were incompetent of applying *tense*. Besides, they proved that while *tense* application generally was a problem to the respondents, certain areas of the *tense* structure were more problematic than others and those areas were identified. Through the pre-test performance, the researcher was enabled to get to the roots of the problem. The severity of the problem as presented by the results indicated that drastic measures had to be taken to fix the problem. That is, concerted effort had to be made to ameliorate the problem. It was almost a disastrous performance where only 8 of 83 respondents passed the test, leaving the 75 others on a fail. This is a glaring disgrace of incompetence which, as it was said earlier, had to be addressed.

Reiteratively, as the aim of the research was to find out whether the explicit teaching of tense could improve the learners' tense competence, to attain that information, the researcher embarked on the teaching intervention. As said above, he taught all the respondents tense in an explicit teaching approach. That is, for three months he carried out the teaching process. During the teaching period, the researcher had a two-hundred minutes' face-to-face teaching with all the respondents from all the five schools (50min teaching period X 4). Every time the researcher-cum-teacher came to class to teach, he started by introducing a tense related rule, explained its application and modelled it by four sentences. At the end of each lesson, the respondents were given an oral class activity which was done in the class with the researcher still in charge. One of the prepared lessons that the researcher delivered to the respondents was on the negation construction from statement sentences. The intention of the lesson was to focus on the adoption of the dummy auxiliary "do" which been revealed by the pre-test as one of the most challenging structures related to the tense application. That is to say that the pattern of the responses from the pre-test played a big role in informing the content of the intervention manipulation. The researcher soon identified the deficiencies which were not only recurrent, but also as pervasive as affecting almost every respondent. Regarding the lesson, the researcher did not go straight from the onset to the "do" auxiliary verb. He first introduced the rule that says a negation sentence can be constructed from a statement by inserting the negation particle

after the auxiliary or linking verb of the statement sentence. He further modelled the rule using the sentences that had auxiliary verb and subsequently did not need the dummy auxiliary verb “do”. This the researcher deliberately did in order to step up from it (as an easier construction) to the adoption of “do” (the more challenging construction). The pre-test results had indicated that the respondents did not have difficulty of constructing negation from sentences that had either an auxiliary or a linking verb. So, it was convenient for the respondents to grasp the “unknown structure” (insertion of do) as they move from the “known” structure (construction with auxiliary/ linking verb). The sentences in **Box 4.20** below are a specimen of what the researcher delivered in class.

Box 4.20: Negation Construction

- | | |
|-----|--|
| i. | Most students <u>have</u> (helping verb) registered the module.
<i>Negation:</i> Most students have <u>not</u> (negation particle) registered the module. |
| ii. | The apple <u>is</u> (linking verb) rotten. (Statement)
<i>Negation:</i> The apple is <u>not</u> (negation particle) rotten. |

More modelling sentences were given with different auxiliary and linking verbs. Soon after this, the researcher then introduced a statement sentence that did not have any auxiliary or linking verb. He proved to the respondents that it was not possible to construct a negation from such a sentence. Below is the example.

Box 4.21: Negation without Auxiliary or Linking Verbs

- | | |
|----|---|
| i. | The priest prayed for me.
<i>Negation:</i> The priest prayed <u>not</u> for me. (incorrectly done) |
|----|---|

The researcher introduced “do” as the option in cases like this one. He further introduced the other forms of the verb do and the conditions under which they are used respectively. For example, the *did* form was used in the past tense sentences. The *do* and *does* were used with the present tense sentences. Moreover, the researcher explained the necessary conjugations that must be effected in the main verb of a construction once any of the *do* forms had been inserted:

Box 4.22: Negation with Do

- | | |
|-----|---|
| i. | The priest <u>prayed</u> (past tense) for me.
<i>Negation:</i> The priest <u>did not</u> pray (conjugation) for me. |
| ii. | He <u>knows</u> (present tense) all the languages.
<i>Negation:</i> He <u>does not</u> know (conjugation) all the languages. |

The teaching intervention was then followed by the post-test whose main aim was to determine whether there had been any improvement of tense competence to the respondents after the explicit teaching.

4.3 Part 2: Findings from the Post-test

The post-test results are presented in the same way as the pre-test results were presented, question by question. The presentation begins with the *Category A* questions and moves to the *Category B* ones. It should be remembered that these question were set in such a way that they focused on certain tense-related structures. As a result, the respondents' performance on a question is automatically a performance on a structure. The same structures focused on by the pre-test, were still the concentration areas of the post-test. The aim was to find out whether the respondents' had similar tense-application difficulties in both tests even after the intervention.

The posttest was largely similar to the pretest, particularly because it had the same content, the structure, equal weight of questions as well as the instructions on the test questions. The difference between the pre- and posttest was the actual items that each test consisted of. That is, different sentences and topics particularly for essay questions. The posttest had to be totally new and dissimilar to the pretest so as to allay any possible suspicions about the post-test being the duplicate of what the respondents had seen in the pretest. Nevertheless, the respondents did not have so "much" time with the pretest that they could digest it after writing, since they wrote their responses on the same question papers. However, the questions were different in terms of the wording of sentences, single-word questions and even the essay ones. Because of this reason the details of each question as to how it had been structured, are not repeated under the post-test presentation. This section of the presentation concentrates on the results.

4.3.1 Subject-Verb Agreement

Twenty-nine (29) respondents passed the question which is labeled as *Question A* in the test (*See Appendix B*) constituting part of the Category A questions. There was, in the responses of the respondents, an indication that they were aware of the SVA rule although there were signs of uncertainty. That is, the inflection of the "s", in several instances, was either squeezed in or scratched out (**See Box 4.23**): Sometimes the changing of the original response (by scratching and adding) made the originally given response incorrect. The underlined inflected "s" in the two examples below was scratched out by some and squeezed in by other respondents respectively. It is important to note that with the underlined "s" the researcher does not say the construction is incorrect or correct, but he makes a point that it (the "s") was the crux of the matter that the respondents were aware of.

Box 4.23: SVA Rule

- i. My mom and dad a farm in Gauteng. (*Original sentence*)

Response: My mom and dad owns a farm in Gauteng.

- ii. The two bottles poison. (*Original sentence*)

Response: The two bottles contains poison.

Considering the huge number of the respondents who failed the question proves that the challenge of the SVA rule was still rife with the respondents. Strangely, some respondents showed further incompetence on whether they had to inflect with “-s” or “-es”:

Box 4.24: Confusing inflection “-s” with “-es” (SVA Rule)

- i. The two bottles contains poison.

- ii. My mom and dad owns a farm in Gauteng.

4.3.2 Negation Construction

This is *Question E* in the post-test, Appendix B, and it forms part of the *Category A* questions. Nineteen (19) respondents passed the question and sixty-four (64) failed. The most prevalent deficiency was on the sentences that did not have auxiliary or linking verbs as the question was in loose sentences (mentioned earlier). The respondents struggled with the insertion of the dummy auxiliary verb in its three forms and the subsequent conjugations in the main verbs. It was noted that the respondents were less challenged by the identification of the tense of a sentence and its matching with the corresponding *do* form. The stubborn challenge troubling the respondents was the necessary changes that were to be effected on the min verb after the insertion of the dummy auxiliary verb “do”.

Box 4.25: Negation with auxiliary verb Do

- i. She sings well. (*Original sentence*)

Response: She does not sings (unmatching verb form) well.

- ii. I saw them. (*Original sentence*)

Response: I did not saw (unmatching verb form) them

4.3.3 Interrogation Construction

Question F of the post-test focused on this linguistic structure (*See Appendix B*). The respondents responded with a remarkable success to the sentences that had the auxiliary and linking verbs. Regarding those that did not have such verbs, the challenge still existed. They

had to insert the dummy auxiliary verb and match it accordingly with the main verb while exchanging the position of the sentence subject with that of the dummy auxiliary verb. It was discernible that they were able to identify the tense of a given sentence and match it with the correct form of the dummy auxiliary verb. However, the respondents still could not subsequently change the main verb accordingly:

Box 4.26: Disagreement between auxiliary verb Do and Main Verb

- i. She sings (*present tense*) well. (*Original sentence*)
Interrogation: Does (*correct tense*) she sings (*incorrect form*) well?
- ii. The young man died (*past tense*). (*Original sentence*)
Interrogation: Did (*correct tense*) the young man died (*incorrect form*)?

The extent of the respondents' competence or incompetence is reflected by the small and big numbers of the passes and failures of this question, respectively. Sixteen (16) respondents passed the test and sixty-seven (67) failed (**See Table 4.7**).

4.3.4 Regular and Irregular Verbs

This target linguistic structure was taken care of by Question H. The awareness by the respondents of the existence of the regular and irregular verbs was evident in the responses. That is, the respondents knew that not all verbs marked tense by attaching the suffix “-ed”. This was displayed in the fact that the respondents preferred guessing the past tense spelling of an irregular verb to the generalisation of it by attaching the “-ed” in cases where they did not know it. The responses **i** and **ii** in **Table 4.6** below would, arguably, be generalised as “teared” and “runed” separately, especially prior to the pre-test. For the respondents knew that the “-ed” was surely incorrect in this regard, most of them did not attach it to the respective verbs for the marking of the past tense.

Table 4.6: Dropping “-ed” for Incorrect Spelling

Present Tense	Past Tense	Past Participle Form
tear	i. torn (by respondents)	torn
run	ii. run (by respondents)	iii. run (by respondents)

This question had thirty-five (35) passed and forty-three failed respondents (**See Table 4.7**). Ninety-nine (99) of the three hundred and thirty-two respondents (83 entries x 4 questions) passed the *Category A* questions.

The following section presents the results of the *Category B* questions under the post-test just

like the researcher did under the pre-test.

4.3.5 Question B (SVA)

Just as it was the case under the pre-test, the post-test also had this Question B focusing on the SVA rule in order to give the respondents a wider space to express themselves in this regard. The researcher ensured the broader space since this question was in a discourse form, unlike the Question A (also testing SVA) which was in loose sentences in both the pre-test and post-test. The element of uncertainty on the verb forms agreeing with the subject or agent was still visible although it was not as prevalent as it was under the pre-test. The number of the passed respondents of the Question B, post-test, was thirty-four (34) with forty-nine (49) failures. The numbers improved by ten from the twenty-four (24) of the pre-test on the same question.

4.3.6 Tense and Aspect

This structure was tested through two sections, C and D. The former focused on the tense and the perfective aspect, while the latter focused on the tense and the progressive aspect. The responses showed that the respondents were still not sure about the choices they made regarding the attributes that separated tense from aspect. Some respondents selected a structure as their answer even though it was not only irrelevant but incorrectly constructed as well. For example, in the box below, option A is incorrect because, firstly, the auxiliary verb “have” is in the present tense yet the sentence is in the past tense. Secondly, the aspectual structure is incorrectly constructed. That is, if for argument reasons, the respondents were not sure whether to choose A or B, the construction in the A option should have dissuaded them from choosing it. They should have observed that instead of “have missing”, it had to be “have missed”. So, the fact that a sizeable number of the respondents chose the option A, confirms that they were not yet competent in the tense application. Thirty-six (36) passes and forty-seven (47) failures on this question are, indeed, a testimony for the respondents’ incompetence on tense.

Box 4.27: Separating Tense from Perfective Aspect

- | | |
|----|---|
| i. | I my appointment with the doctor last week. |
| | A. have missing |
| | B. missed |

The incompetence explained under Question C was also observed under Question D. Although there is a thin line dividing the present tense and the present progressive aspect especially for the Second Language (L2) speakers of English, the researcher had explained to the respondents

that the present tense is used to refer to, among other things, a habit. The sentence in **Box 4.28** below has the phrase “every Sunday” suggesting that the action referred to is done regularly. However, the respondents did not get the answer correctly. Only thirty-four (34) respondents passed this question and forty-nine (49) failed it. This is the evidence of the extent of competence or incompetence that the respondents had at the time of the post-test.

Box 4.28: Separating Tense from Progressive Aspect

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. My team <i>plays/ is playing</i> every Sunday. (Original sentence) ii. My team <u>is playing</u> (respondents’ choice) every Sunday. |
|--|

Indeed, it is true that some respondents made the correct choices, however, the big number of the failures of the questions at hand was still too big to be sidelined for discussion.

4.3.7 Question G

There was a spark of hope in the researcher when he saw the pattern of the responses to this question in particular. This question was more open than any other question in the test. It provided the respondents with an opportunity to decide holistically and independently on a given sentence. Remember that in this question, the instruction never confined the respondent to a specific part of the sentence. Most importantly, every sentence of the question deliberately had a clash of tenses or between a tense and an adverbial of time in it (sentence). It was noticeable that most responses showed awareness of the said mismatch and corrected accordingly. For example, the sentence (i) in the following box is in the past tense (sang) yet “next week” is the future time, thus making the whole sentence irrational. Many respondents adjusted it accordingly (**See Box 4.29**). In the answer (a) the respondents changed the future time that had been given in the original sentence to correspond with the past tense “sang”. In the (b) answer which is also correct, the respondents changed the past tense “sang” to be in the present tense form and use it with the auxiliary verb “will” to mark the future tense corresponding to the future time “next week” that was there.

Box 4.29: Tense (In)consistency

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. We <u>sang</u> (<i>past tense</i>) a lot of Gospel music <u>next Sunday</u> (<i>future time</i>). (a) We <u>sang</u> a lot of Gospel music <u>last week</u>. (respondents’ answer) |
|--|

(b) We will sing a lot of Gospel music next week. (respondents' answer)

Even where there was a clash between tenses, the respondents adjusted the sentences accordingly. However, the problems surfaced when, for instance, the respondents gave an incorrect spelling of a verb especially the irregular verbs. Despite the incorrect spelling the researcher observed that the respondents concerned were able to identify the required tense in the given sentence. Another example of a deficiency that persisted tricking many respondents was the SVA rule discussed earlier. In this question the deficiency surfaced when respondents decided to adjust the sentence to the present tense in particular. **Box 4.30** below is a specimen. Sentence i. is the original one, while sentences (a) and (b) are the responses.

Box 4.30: Incorrect spelling of irregular verbs

- i. When the president delivered (past tense) the speech, the woman cry (*Present tense?*). (*Original sentence*)
- (a) When the president delivered the speech, the woman cryed.
- (b) When the president deliver (*present but disregarding SVA rule*) the speech, the woman cry (*present but disregarding SVA rule*).

Because of the prevalence of the deficiencies explained above, this question had thirty-seven (37) passes and forty-six (46) failures.

Table 4.7: Post-Test Performance (Short Questions)

QUESTIONS	PASSES	FAILURES
A	29	54
B	34	49
C	36	47
D	34	49
E	19	64
F	16	67
G	37	46
H	35	48

4.3.8 Essay Questions

It is worth to keep in mind that the number of the entries in each essay question was less the number of the total sampled population, eighty-three (83) because respondents wrote on the questions of their individual choices. However, all the respondents responded to the equal number of questions and each section of the test had the same number of the entries just like the discrete questions discussed earlier. For instance, *Question H* (not an essay question) was attempted by eighty-three (83) respondents the same number of the respondents who responded to the *Section A* (essay questions). The difference with the essay questions was that the same number of the respondents was scattered across the various questions of the section, hence there were unequal numbers of the entries for each question (See Table 4.8).

4.3.8.1 Question 1

This question was responded to, largely, in the present tense as the respondents described jealousy in their various ways. Past tense also came in particularly at the time when the respondents gave examples of their own experiences. They applied the tense well in the descriptions where they used linking verbs, but in cases where they used action words, the Irregular-Regular Verb issue kept showing itself up. The respondents either gave an incorrect spelling or took a regular verb for the irregular one, although this deficiency had remarkably come down at this stage of the investigation. For example, in the **Box 4.31** below, the “founded” and “had starting” are the only anomalies of the extract, the rest of the extract is well exhibited. Look at the exemplary extract below.

Box 4.31: Improved SVA Rule application and Tense Marking

Jealousy is devilish and is so powerful. It is taking you by force and **it controls** you and **it makes** you hate people with no sin. It **happened** to me **last year** when my best friend **fell** in love. All of a sudden I founded that I had starting to hate my friend and I never wanted to see her when she was with her boyfriend.

It was observed from the responses that the respondents always found it challenging to apply the dummy auxiliary as explained earlier. As a result, the use of “never” was found as an option of avoiding the “do” and wherever it was possible to replace the former with the latter, they just went for it. For example, the clause, “I never wanted to see her,” in the last sentence in **Box 4.31** above is a sweet example. Probably, the respondent found it a bit risky to say, “I did not want to see her,” because of the uncertainty that always hovered over the respondents’ application of this structure. In anticipation of the above option in the discrete questions, the

researcher openly instructed the respondents “not to use never” in their answers (See **Question E, Appendix B**). Out of the nineteen (19) respondents who attempted Question 1, eight (8) passed and eleven (11) failed (See **Table 4.8**).

4.3.8.2 Question 2

This question was generally responded to in the past tense. When narrating their actual stories, the respondents used the past tense and only when they described a big family life in general did they opt for the present tense. Although the problems of confusing regular and irregular verbs as well as the tense and the aspect were still there, there were a few of the respondents that showed remarkable improvement in the application of tense. The example in **Box 4.32** below represents the said improvement. The extract from the work of a respondent has both the present and past tenses correctly applied. The only discernible deficiency is “wives” which is, however, not tense related.

Box 4.32: Remarkably Improved Tense Marking

A big family is hell. A big family is a school for brewing hate. I **used to play** with my half-brothers when we **were** all young but all that **changed** later. We **started** hating each other and we were always fighting. In my home there **were** fights every day, someone crying, shouting. My father **had** three wives and 18 children.

Thirty-five (35) respondents attempted the question. Twelve (12) of them passed and twenty-three (23) failed it (the question) as displayed in **Table 4.8**.

4.3.8.3 Question 3

Most the respondents who attempted this question showed their understanding that whatever they said was a projection to the future time. They wrote their responses in the future tense using, largely, the helping verb “will”. The “present tense” was also used with the time adverbials to express the respondents’ wishes for the future life. Some respondents applied the auxiliary verb “will” with the plain form of the main verb and very often they were correct. However, problems emerged as soon as the helping verb was used with the progressive participle. For some respondents, the correct future tense application was still evasive.

The extract in **Box 4.33** below is a specimen of the respondents’ expressions.

Box 4.33: Future Tense Application

I **see** myself as a lawyer in ten years' time. I **will wear** the long black gown fighting for my people and **have** children of my own as well as a beautiful wife. I always **see** myself as a slim tall guy, even in ten years I will not changing (incorrectly marked).

Twelve (12) out of twenty-nine respondents who responded to this question passed and seventeen (17) failed it (See Table 4.8).

4.3.8.4 Question 4

This question afforded the respondents an opportunity to bring all the three tenses in one essay. Some managed to apply the tenses interchangeably correct and others did not make it. Those that did, focused on the advice-giving part which allowed them to avoid many tenses, the past tense in particular. Those that kept on referring to the past behavior of the respective friends had to adopt more than one tense throughout. As a result, the question at hand produced the deficiencies that were discussed in other questions earlier. They included the verbs' incorrect spelling, attachment of the “-ed” suffix to the irregular verbs, disregard of the SVA rule especially in the present tense construction, the improper application of the dummy auxiliary verb “do” especially when the respondents wanted to construct a negation as well as the mistaking of the *aspect* as tense. However, it is important to state that the said deficiencies were then less than they had been in the pre-test. Look at the specimen in the Box below exhibiting an improved comprehensive marking of tense. The verb “heard” is the only tense-related deficiency found in the extract.

Box 4.34: Have and auxiliary verb Do Application

A friend who takes the advice of his friends will never go wrong my dear. The relationships of many partners have killed many people. I heard that you were boasting at the tavern over the weekend that you never use a condom when you sleep with your girlfriend. I also heard that you say you did not stay with one girlfriend for one month.

Thirty-seven (37) respondents attempted this question, but only fourteen (14) passed and twenty-three (23) failed it (See Table 4.8).

4.3.8.5 Question 5

This one was attempted by forty-six (46) respondents. Seventeen (17) passed and twenty-nine (29) did not make it. Whilst most respondents understood that the question had to be responded

to in the past tense, the application of the tense or tenses always had some deficiencies which included, among other things, the “-ed” past tense suffix generalization. Since this deficiency and many others had been observed already from other questions, the researcher deemed it unnecessary to extract further specimen solely for this question.

The **Table 4.8** below summarises the presentation of the results of the post-test on the essay questions.

Table 4.8: Post-test Essay Questions

		POST-TEST		
SECTIONS		Entries	Passes	Failures
A	Question 1	19	08	11
	Question 2	35	12	23
	Question 3	29	12	17
B	Question 4	37	14	23
	Question 5	46	17	29

The question by question presentation given above resulted in the overall performance of the individual respondents which subsequently formed what was eventually called the post-test performance. The post-test performance is abridged in **Table 4.9** below in the same way the pre-test results were displayed. The table’s labels explained under the pre-test are repeated here under the post-test. The Score Categories are for the rating of the respondents as per their performance in the test. There are three (3) respondents labeled as “Freq.” for “Frequency” who performed at the highest ranking 80-100; six (6) at 70-79; ten (10) at 60-69; eight (08) at 50-59; thirteen (13) at 40-49; twenty (20) at 30-39; sixteen (16) at 20-29; seven (07) at 10-19 and zero (00) at 00-09. All the frequencies put together total to eighty-three (83) the number of the entries. Out of this total, twenty-seven (27) respondents passed the post-test and fifty-six failed. In terms of percentages, the passes constituted thirty-three (33%) whilst the failures formed sixty-seven (67%). Lastly, the average performance of the respondents was forty-two (42). This suggests that the most respondents who participated in the test either scored forty-two or any number close to it.

Table 4.9: Post-test results (Overall Summary)

Scores Category	Freq.	N0 of Entries	N0 of Passes	Passes %	N0 of Failures	Failures %	Aver.
80-100	03	83	27	33	56	67	42
70-79	06						
60-69	10						
50-59	08						
40-49	13						
30-39	20						
20-29	16						
10-19	07						
00-09	00						

It is worth to frequently remind the reader that the post-test results had to determine whether there was any difference between the competence level the respondents had when they wrote the pre-test and the competence they had when they wrote the post-test. For this reason, the post-test results did not attach much value to the research until they were compared to those of the pre-test. Consequently, the researcher keeps referring the reader to the appropriate **Table 5.1** where the results of the two tests are juxtaposed to each other for the confirmation of the respondents' unequal tense competence at the times of the respective tests.

4.4 SPSS

As stated earlier, after the marking the data were taken to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The software assisted the researcher with the accurate frequency analyses of both the pre-test and post-test performance respectively, before their comparison with each other. The frequency analysis examined the way all the respondents performed in each question, whether they passed or failed with or without comparison (pre-test done first & alone). Through this process the researcher was able to obtain the information about each respondent's *tense* competence level which automatically presented the statistics regarding the performance of the entire group. The respondents were looked at as the eighty-three members of each group with the aim of determining the number of the passes and of the failures.

Moreover, it was this analysis that indicated to the researcher the areas that were more challenging to the respondents (from the pre-test). The evaluation of the respondents'

performance across the questions and the determination of the most challenging questions was easy to carry out because the software device also helped render the *Cross Tabulation Analysis*.

At the comparison stage the results are aggregated in each test and then compared with each other. That is, there was no comparison on an individual respondent capacity. The variances if found were identified in numbers, but as whether the difference meant a change in the same respondent or not, the analysis did not pursue that since the tests' scripts of the same respondents were not matched.

However, the group comparison should not be viewed as a quality compromising method, because both the pretest and the posttest were conducted with the same respondents and the same number of them. That is, arguably, if in the pre-test three out of ten respondents passed, and in the post-test six of the very same group of the respondents passed, the logic is that they had improved competence when they wrote the post-test, provided that they were assessed on the same content and there was no influence of any extraneous factors even if it meant that the six from the post-test did not include the three from the pre-test. The other intriguing characteristic of the pre-test responses was the uniformed pattern they produced even when the responses concerned were incorrect.

The study hoped for a remarkable improvement of the tense compete which would ultimately improve the English language communicative competence. The respondents' *tense* incompetence manifested itself through their applications of the language rules related to the above mentioned focus areas. It would be a misconception that the said areas of focus were manipulated only through the discrete short questions, excluding the essay type of questions.

Therefore, the presentation of the results is encapsulated in three categories which are the pre-test, post-test and the comparison of the two tests' results.

4.5. Comparison of the Tests' Results

The comparison of the pre-test and post-test results can be drawn from the statistics displayed by on **Table 5.1** which clearly contrasts the performance scores to each other. The detailed comparison as well as the underscored meaning of the results is given in the next chapter, *Discussion of Findings*. The exhibition of the improved post-test results confirmed the effectiveness of the explicit teaching of tense in the high schools of the Lower Umfolozi

Circuit.

4.6 Conclusion

Now that this chapter has presented the hard results of the research in the form of the discourse explication, numbers (supplementing tables) and the types of the responses that were given by the respondents (extracts), the next chapter takes these results to a subtler stage. The current chapter managed to present even the types of structures with their respective challenges to the respondents. Chapter Five will get deeper to the results so as to secure more meaning from them as it will be looking even at the underlying factors which contributed to the production of the very results themselves. That is, the next chapter discusses the findings generally and some relevant highlights in particular.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This study set out to ascertain learner competence with tenses in English. An intervention was developed to see the effect of explicit instruction and the subsequent results were presented in the foregoing Chapter Four. Chapter Five, this chapter, in discussing the findings, brings to the attention of the reader some important realities observed by the researcher throughout the investigation period until the point where the results were pronounced. This chapter, therefore, discusses every relevant discovery that was made at any point of the investigation process, that is, at the start, middle and right at the end. Besides the comparative results of the pre-test and the post-test, this chapter highlights the discoveries that underscored the research results, that is, the results that spoke to the hypothesis of the research. They were important to mention and discuss for the comprehensive understanding of the research findings. Subsequently, what comes next are the said discoveries, then followed by a short discussion on the direct research results.

5.2 Significant Discoveries of the Study

Due to their “subtle” relationship to the aim and objectives of the study, the underlying findings might have easily gone unrecorded and thus compromised the comprehensive outcomes of the research. Trivial as they might seem, all of them built up and led to the final verdict of the research. They are discussed one by one below.

5.2.1 Respondents’ Diverse Characterisation

Although the respondents were similar to one another in terms of their historical English performance at the matric level, they also had a few things that differentiated them as individual learners even within the same classroom of the same school. One such factor was the characterisation of the respondents. While most learners in all the sampled schools were quiet, there were individuals with exceptions. That is, they were either hyperactive or just naughty such that every time the researcher was in the classroom, these respondents did something that dissuaded the whole class from the teaching-and-learning activities. These funny things came at different stages of the lesson, from the onset or right in the middle. As a result, every time the researcher went to the classroom, he spent about five-to-seven minutes enforcing order and sometimes justifying the teaching and learning of English in South Africa because one respondent had one day, in the middle of the lesson posed a question, “*Sir, kungani sifundiswa*

futhi siphogwe ukuthi sifunde ngeSingisi sibe sikhona IsiZulu?” (Sir, why are we taught and forced to learn in English instead of IsiZulu?)” The question was followed by a blast of laughter from other respondents as it was deliberately posed in the vernacular despite the researcher ‘s instruction that urged every member in the class to use English as the sole medium of communication during his lessons. Besides, this type of question was not immediately relevant to the topic of the day, *The Regular and Irregular Verbs*. The researcher could not ignore the question lest the respondents lost the passion of, and the reason to learn, the English language. He understood that although it sounded funny, the respondent who posed the question could have not asked it in a different language other than IsiZulu because he appeared to be struggling in the given alternative, English, just like his classmates. The only language he was competent in and comfortable with, was IsiZulu. So, interruptions like this one robbed every lesson the researcher delivered of its valuable minutes. That is, the fifty minutes claimed to be the teaching time per visit were always reduced to something less. It was a common occurrence during a lesson in any of the sampled schools that a naughty learner just went restless, shoved and pushed the nearby learners so much that the entire class’s attention was taken. When the researcher enquired about the cause of the restlessness, the disruptor said that he thought his classmates had stolen his pen but he had since relocated it in his own pocket.

Bringing the teaching-and-learning-conducive atmosphere in the classroom situation was always a challenging task to execute. Some learners were so shy that they could hardly open their mouths for any reason during the lesson. They too posed a serious challenge to the researcher’s delivery of lessons as he could not tell whether they received them (lessons) well or not. Furthermore, the respondents’ conspicuous quietness aggravated the situation as it made the researcher hesitant, guessing and undecided particularly about each lesson until he got the results of the post-test right at the end. In his attempt to bring every learner on board, the researcher-cum-teacher spent time urging the learners to say something about the topic concerned each time he came to teach. This unexpected practice further compromised the time that was earmarked for the teaching. For instance, if the seven minutes lost in each lesson were added up they totalled to twenty-eight minutes. Consequently, the two hundred minutes recorded as the overall time spent on the teaching of each school is, arguably, less than that. Unless the enforcing of order in the classroom and the preparation of the learners’ minds for learning were deemed as part of teaching, the twenty-eight minutes were not lost. However, the explication detailing the use of the available time should assist the reader to understand the report comprehensively. The view of the researcher is that the redirection of the other minutes

(e.g. the 28 ones) away from the actual delivery of the *tense* structures made a “deficit” difference in the results of the explicit teaching approach. Likewise, a difference contrary to the one mentioned above would, arguably, have been achieved had every minute of the time earmarked for the teaching of tense alone been used accordingly.

It was also remarkable that the hyperactivity of some learners did not mean that the learners concerned were ahead of other learners in terms of the tense-related knowledge. They were just as energetic on irrelevant issues as it was indicated above. Regarding the tense-related structures, the learners at hand were as challenged as the rest of the learners and their responses were never exceptional. The researcher concluded that the mischief could not be taken away from the respondents altogether considering their teen-age. These were the teenagers of sixteen and seventeen years who still wanted recognition from their peers, hence they were restless, doing everything within their reach to get it. Probably, had the same teaching approach been applied to the learners with higher age, different results would have been obtained.

5.2.2 “Respective” Schools’ Responses

It is worth stressing that the researcher had initially intended to present the research results not only question by question, but school by school as well. Looking at their responses from the pre-test, the researcher found no evidence of dissimilarity that could be dubbed institutionalised. Across the schools’ range, the respondents had a tendency of being quiet in the classroom, posing themselves attentive to the teacher. They did not want to commit themselves to questions that required them to give elaborative answers, but they preferred questions that needed only short answers such as “yes” or “no”. They were aware of their English incompetence generally and feared that should they dared open their mouths in the language, they would make “unbearable errors” inviting them the unnecessary attention, hence they opted to remain silent. The pattern of the linguistic behaviour in the responses was similar across the schools’ spectrum, orally during the lessons and in the written form (the pre-test & post-test). A remarkable behaviour that was institutional came only in the form of the increased number of active participation in the classroom lessons. This was a common practice with one of the sampled schools. Importantly, the increased number of the actively participating learners did not influence the responses such that they became accordingly exceptional. The improved active participation did not mean much other than that the learners concerned were not as shy as their counterparts in the other schools and they could fearlessly speak their minds. Notably, this school was not as remote as the other four were from the nearest town and above all, it was

the naughtiest of all the sampled five schools. As a result, it was in this school where the researcher spent the most of the time just on the classroom control. Otherwise, all the respondents from all the sampled schools had poor tense competence and subsequently, had lost confidence in themselves and, moreover, had a mentality that they could only communicate in the English language once they had become competent and their English expressions were error-free. These details should help the reader perceive the difficulty encountered by the researcher teaching this type of respondents. Not a single lesson was ever a smooth delivery of the prepared tense structures. Rather, the researcher always endeavoured not only to keep the respondents psychologically present in the lesson, but also to instil the passion of, and the reason to learn, English language.

5.2.3 Explicit teaching Theory and its Application

The researcher, the teacher to the respondents, also got some lessons from the lessons he delivered to his learners, the respondents. He realised that conducting an experiment on the living beings, teenagers in particular, was not as easy as conducting it on the non-living beings. It soon came to the researcher's mind that the success of his well-prepared lessons was not reliant on him alone. In fact, the theory had it that the researcher-cum-teacher would, as he did, introduce a rule, explain and model it. The assumption was that, at this stage of a lesson the rule at hand would have been conceived by the relevant learners which were the respondents in this case. Unfortunately, the researcher was never guaranteed the assumed results in every lesson he delivered. This was due to a number of factors. It was not easy for the researcher to know the exact readiness of each learner to receive the new knowledge being delivered. The oral short assessment at the end of each lesson did not give much of assistance in this regard considering that only a few of the respondents actively participated. The little participation of the respondents could not be blamed on their introvert characterisation only, but to the limited time available to the researcher as well. Moreover, the other unexpected factors showed themselves up and thus compromised the application of the explicit teaching approach even more. For example, the restlessness of the respondents and the individual respondent's uniqueness mentioned earlier, made the application of the theory not as smooth as the researcher had assumed.

5.2.4 Tense Terminologies to L2 Learners

It was interesting to note that some of the concepts critical to the application of the explicit teaching approach were difficult to be conceived by the respondents, contrary to what the

researcher expected. One of these concepts included the “present tense”. The denotative meaning of the word “present” created a narrow and misleading understanding to the second language speaking learners. Their understanding of the concept made them confine the present tense strictly to the utterance time. That is, it was inconceivable to them that the present tense is the tense to use for habits or what occurs regularly. There were signs of surprise and disbelief in the respondents regarding this tense in particular. One respondent queried the exemplary sentence that the researcher used to model his explication (**See sentence i. below**). She disputed the relevance of the present tense to the sentence, arguing that “the sentence tells us about what the speaker *did* the previous Sundays and what he *will do* on the coming ones”, so it was incorrect to apply the present tense to the past time in particular.

- i. On Sundays I take my family to church.

The researcher had to come up with more model sentences to explain himself on this, to prove to the learners that the occurrences of this type hold to the present time as long as they are still on at the time of the utterance.

The present tense had another thought-provoking issue that could not be left out of the discussion. This was the Subject-Verb-Agreement (SVA) issue mentioned in various parts of the report earlier. The debate about this structure started from the boardroom when the items for the pre-test and post-test were discussed. The total disregard of this rule by the respondents especially in the pre-test further necessitated the focus of the intervention on it (the rule), despite the counter view that the rule was unrelated to tense. The researcher still maintained as he had done even in the boardroom that the rule was key to the mastery of the present tense in particular. Besides the fact that the practical interaction between the researcher and the respondents confirmed the interrelatedness of the present tense and the SVA rule, various grammarians use the term ‘present tense verbs’ to refer to the *base-form* and the *s-form* verbs. For example, Greenbaum and Gerald (2002) as well as Collins and Hollow (2010) speak of the *s-inflected* and the *non-inflected* verbs as the *two forms of verbs for the present* and the *third person singular and the general present*, respectively. Because of these reasons, the researcher saw it fit to stress that the said present tense verbs must be applied in a grammatically prescribed way by being in agreement with their respective subjects or agents so as to carry the present tense correctly. The explicit talk about “singular” and “plural” subjects versus the “s-inflected” or “non-inflected”, the first, second and third person was significant for the

explication of the present tense correct application in particular. It was crystal clear to the researcher that these concepts were new to the respondents.

It was explained previously that the form of a given verb would be determined by the person or even the number in some instances of the subject of a sentence or clause or the agent of a verb. For example, below are some of the sentences that the researcher considered as only partially correct. They were extracted from the constructions of the respondents, both the extensive writing and loose-sentence sections.

Box 5.1: Subject-and-verb (dis)agreement (partially correct sentences)

- | | |
|------|--|
| (i) | Many students does their work (<i>Incorrect</i>). |
| (ii) | Our friends comes for the party (<i>Incorrect</i>). |

These constructions showed that the language users which were the respondents in this case, were aware of the tense in which the sentences were (the present tense), but the lexical forms of the respective verbs suggest that the same users lacked the knowledge about concord which according to the researcher compromised the would-be respondents' completely correct *tense* application. That is, the researcher argued that for the exemplary sentences to be deemed as carrying the present tense correctly they should acknowledge the subject-and-verb agreement rule like the way it is demonstrated below:

Box 5.2: Correct application of SVA Rule

- | | |
|------|---|
| (i) | Many students do their work (<i>Correct</i>). |
| (ii) | Our friends come for the party (<i>Correct</i>). |

The person and the number of the subject in each sentence above (**Box 5.2**) are the third person in the plural form, which dictate that the tense carrier, the verb, must not be appended with the “s” morpheme. It is worth mentioning that one of the aims of the research was to establish whether tense was marked or indicated correctly by the high school learners of the Lower Umfolozi Circuit. The researcher was aware that the morpheme ‘s’ referred to above basically and debatably is unrelated to tense; however, the reasons for it to be an issue in this study could not be overemphasised as they were cited earlier. The main reason of bringing the ‘s’ inflection to this part of the report in particular is to make a sensible comparison of the pre-test and the post-test. That is, since the subject-verb matter was an area of focus for the pre-test, it was

logical to keep it as such in the post-test as well in order to have a fair comparison of performance in the tests especially because the intervention also focused on it. Arguably, the sentence, “Many students do their work,” is in the Simple Present Tense just like this one, “Many students does their work”. The difference between the two is that the latter sentence disregards the subject-verb agreement which has to be complied with for the sentence to be grammatically correct. The foregoing statement does not intend to mean that the mastering of tense will result in the production of grammatically error-free sentences. The ‘s’ inflection, however, became important in and for the study, because it had as it still has an immediate influence in the mastering of tense. That is, when looked at differently, the disagreement between the subject and the verb suggests that a present tense has been applied inappropriately. Indeed, the tense is recognised as the present tense; however, it is not carried correctly. This was one error, which was part of the research questions that puzzled many respondents in the study especially in the pre-test. Most of them never showed any competence on, or even an awareness of, the importance of the ‘s’ inflection which marks the difference in the above two exemplary sentences. So, the improperly inflected verb extended to the incorrect marking of the tense. The implication of disregarding the ungrammatically inflected morphemes on the basis that they are not related to tense can be observed from the comparison of the two sentences below which are the extracts from the respondents’ answers.

Box 5.3: Disregard of ungrammatically inflected morphemes

- | | |
|------|--|
| (i) | Many students does their work (<i>Incorrect</i>). |
| (ii) | Did the young man discovered the stolen phone? (<i>Incorrect</i>). |

The tense in each construction above in **Box 5.3** is unquestionable, but in both cases it is carried and marked inappropriately. The construction, “Many students does their work”, is as incorrect as is the following, “Did the young man discovered the stolen phone?” In this latter exemplary sentence, there is nothing suggesting that the sentence marks any other tense but the past tense. This would therefore suggest that the *tense* teacher of this language user would be happy or even excited that the learner has internalised the marking of tense. This would be the case in a situation where the appended affix ‘-ed’ is deemed insignificant for the marking of tense. The researcher’s stance in this had always been that the expert in the *tense* discipline, the educators in this regard, could not leave their learners at this stage of learning just because the time marked by the sentence is obviously the past. Whilst appreciating that the learner has internalised the initial stages towards the correct marking of past tense, the educator should not

condone incorrect marking of the said tense. The teacher must indicate why the given example is incorrect and subsequently provide a modelling version of the sentence as it is demonstrated here, “What did you eat?” Then, if the inflected ‘-ed’ is significant for the marking of the past tense as demonstrated above, so should the inflected ‘-s’ be for the carrying of the present tense.

Indeed, literature does say that tense is about time and the study concurs with that fully. Moreover, the study maintains, with the corroboration of Greenbaum and Gerald (2002) as said earlier, that the ‘s-form’ as ‘base-form’ function has a remarkable closeness with the present tense. Since this s-inflection issue is not existent in the past and future tenses, its presence in any sentence already tells one that the sentence in question is in the present tense. The instruction on *Questions A* and *B* of both tests urged respondents not just to pick a verb and fill the blank space, but to conjugate it accordingly as well. As said earlier, more responses from the post-test showed awareness of the interrelation between the subject-and-verb agreement and the carrying or marking of tense. Besides the remarkable awareness displayed, there were also more post-test responses which ensured that tense was not only indicated, but was correctly indicated as well.

Another explanation that gave the researcher (and the respondents) tough time, was the separation of *tense* from *time* (Greenbaum, 1991: 49). Although the dividing line seemed thin before the eyes of the respondents, the explanation was necessary so the respondents had it in their minds that the marking of tense was the responsibility of the language user, that is, it did not mark itself automatically. The researcher had to come up with relevant model sentences to buttress his point (See sentence ii. below). If the separateness of the two concepts had been undermined, sentence ii. below would do with the present tense form “return” instead of the past tense form “returned” which conforms with the past time adverbial “last Friday”.

- ii. Last Friday Zinhle returned to work.

This confusion of tense with time by the respondents had negative impact on the results of the respondents’ performance in both the pre-test and post-test. Hence some of their constructions were typical of the one below:

- iii. Last Friday Zinhle returns to work.

The most challenging part that the respondents encountered was to learn that there was no tense called “continuous” or “progressive”, but only the aspect was. It was not the main aim of the research to introduce new terminologies to the respondents, but it is a reality that for the convenience of the explanation, certain entities were to be called by their names. However, the main focus of the study was the “marking of tense”. It was a real puzzle to the respondents to learn what they had “known” as a tense to be said it was not. Moreover, the concept “aspect” was not familiar to them. The explanation and modelling of the two concepts were an eye-opener to the respondents. It became clear that, although they had not yet internalised the other structures of focus, they were not hearing about them for the first time. Regarding the aspect as a grammatical structure, it was their first time to hear about. They had thought of it as a tense. Perhaps, this misconception was engraved in the learners’ mind by the fact that even scholars are eluded by the problem (Comrie, 1985: 6 – 7).

The tense-aspect problem was aggravated by the application of “have” as an auxiliary verb particularly in the present tense form. It challenged many learners because of its exceptional way of functioning. That is, this helping verb together with a relevant main verb could be used, among other things, to refer to an event or situation whose existence begins from the past and proceeds to the present time. Such an existence is executed by the use of the ‘have’ auxiliary verb in its present tense form. As a result, many learners produced a number of grammatically inappropriate expressions or propositions whenever they used it. The inappropriateness was likely, because the literature review states that past and present times are marked or carried by past tense and present tense verbs, respectively. The researcher observed this “anomaly” with so much interest that some questions of the tests focused directly on it. The sentence below has the helping verb ‘have’ which is in the present tense form yet the occurrence of the event it points to overlaps both the past and present times such as in the sentence, “*I have not spoken to my manager since last Friday.*” The above sentence is one of those that have both *tense* and *aspect*. Arguably, the Verb Phrase (VP) ‘have spoken’ is an aspectual expression. Just like it was observed from the progressive aspect, where the auxiliary verb marked *tense* as one of its various functions, *have*, in the above sentence also performs that additional role of carrying *tense*. The ‘have’ is in the present form and its past tense form is ‘**had**’. In fact, the verb ‘**have**’ is one of the present tense carrying forms, the base-form, discussed earlier. The two forms have been referred to as, among other things, markers or carriers of *present tense* by this very research. The verb phrase, ‘have spoken’, denotes that the situation that was true in the past (last Friday) continued to be so in the present moment. The interesting part of this construction

is that the ‘past situation’ (last Friday) is expressed through the present tense verb. It is worth recalling that this research was conducted on the premise that there were three time divisions: past, present and future. Sentences that were typical of the above one caused much confusion to the respondents of the research. This problem emanating from the application of the auxiliary verb ‘have’ exacerbated the confusion of tense with aspect among the respondents. Some mistook the simple past tense for the perfective or vice versa. Eventually, adverbials indicating past time were used with the present perfective as the sentence below demonstrates: “*I have not spoken to my manager last Friday.*” Huddleston (1984: 131) argues that *takes*, *is* in “is taking”, *has* in “has been taken”, *may* in “may take” and “may have been taken” are present tense forms which have their respective past tense counterparts as *took*, *was*, *had* and *might*. Huddleston (1984: 131) keeps saying that the only verb or the initial verb in a series of verbs constituting a single VP carries the *tense* indicating function. That is, *takes*, *is*, *has* and *may*, above, “carry, among others, the *tense* function”. So, this tense-related structure being so challenging required more time to explain, but unfortunately, time was limited.

After the intervention the application of ‘have’ as a perfective auxiliary verb by the respondents improved remarkably. The tendency of using the perfective auxiliary verb ‘have’ with the past tense adverbials (prevalent before intervention) barely featured in the post-test performance. The respondents’ application now indicated that the language users knew that the verb ‘have’ is in the present tense and so should hold to the present time as demonstrated in the samples from the responses:

*Yes, there are good things about big (polygamous) families. My biological mother died soon after my birth and I **have since been** under the guidance of my other mother because my father had three wives. My (other) mother **has done** many things for me. I am a true believer that money is associated with evil. I **have seen** people die because of money. Some people **have sold** their bodies and souls for money.*

Responses like the above-mentioned ones, although still defective somehow, made it clear that it was rather intriguing to hope to treat only either *tense* or *aspect* without referring to the other. As a result, the researcher gave this interrelated part some time in order to explain it as there

were questions directed to it and it became clear that the explication was not exhausted due to the limited time available.

So, the highlights of the research as discussed in this chapter were the discoveries underlying the direct results of the research. Looking at all the discoveries discussed above, the time factor was the most crucial phenomenon across the spectrum. That is, the researcher pre-empted many things about the research including the time needed for the teaching of the target structures, yet the reality was that he did not know how much time each learner would need to grasp the teaching content. When he realised that more time was needed for the explication of certain concepts, the researcher could not do anything about it because he had already contracted himself to a particular period of time. This means that even when the researcher realised that the respondents had not yet grasped the rule that he was explaining, he had to proceed in the interest of time. The results that came at the end of the research should then be looked at through the above mentioned circumstances, understanding that a twist at them would lead to different results.

5.3 Hypothesis and Research Results

When the research was started to investigate the learners' competence on tense, a hypothetical statement was made that "the explicit teaching of tense could improve the learners' tense competence". When the posttest in particular was administered, the aim was to determine the influence the explicit teaching of *tense* could possibly have had on the learners' tense *competence* (knowledge). It is now a fact that after the explicit teaching intervention, the learners who were also the respondents to the research showed that their tense competence had since remarkably improved. The improvement was found, first, on the more difficult set of questions dubbed as Category A, and secondly, on the Category B set of questions and eventually on the overall performance of the post-test. In other words, the foregoing statement summarily means that the improvement of tense competence in the respondents occurred across the various areas of focus. Moreover, it should be remembered that each question in the pre-test and post-test represented a tense-related structure as it was indicated in Chapter Four. Since the presentation of the results in the foregoing chapter indicated the manner in which the improvement was shown in each structure concerned, chapter five did not want to repeat that lest the monotony. Conversely, it is worth reiterating that the combination of different types of questions in both tests was important for the gathering of the reliable data since the short and the long questions were effective in their respective ways. The consolidation of the two sorts

of questions allowed the respondents to display their tense knowledge or competence in a much more extensive way, especially the essays. Despite the fact that the post-test results showed that the respondents still lacked knowledge on tense, the tense improvement was never a question. Even the incorrect answers of the post-test bore the elements of improvement. The typical response that was prevalent in the pre-test, “The bridegroom **wear**ed the all-white”, was replaced by the following type, “The bridegroom **worn** the all-white” in the post-test. One discernible and, arguably, good thing about the latter example, though incorrect, was that it indicated that the respondent had learnt that the verb “wear” was not a regular verb and could not mark the past tense by attaching the suffix ‘-ed’. Therefore, the ‘worn’ response suggests that the respondent knew that the verb ‘wear’ was an irregular verb, but did not know its correct form of marking the past tense. Even at this stage where the respondents could have easily resorted to the popular way of marking the past tense through the suffixation of the “-ed”, they chose not to, because the discovery had been made that such an option was totally incorrect. The respondents of the post-test had become more conscious of the way the rules related to tense had to be applied. Their alertness was enhanced so much that even a difference as subtle as the “s” inflection became an important item after the post-test, unlike before. For example, the two sentences below (i and ii) were understood to be dissimilar after the explicit teaching intervention, yet prior to that point they were treated as though they were the same:

Box 5.4: Significant Inflection “s”

(i)	He does not complains to the councilor.
(ii)	He does not complain to the councilor.

Without being repetitive, the researcher deemed it worth stressing how the research results confirmed the hypothesis especially in the respondents’ own construction before such results were converted to statistics. Another interestingly slight but essential matter that was overcome by the respondents despite its stubbornness, was the application of the “be” verb in its past tense forms *was* and *were*. It was really interesting to observe the remarkably comparative improvement on this focus area which was a bit tricky initially to the respondents. Just as it was shown several times in the report, the improved tense competence was evidenced by all sorts of questions available in the pre-test and post-test, that is, the one-word, loose-sentence including the essay questions. The respondents’ mastery of this focus area was best shown by the paragraph and essay responses. The comparison of the extracts from the pre-test and the post-test essays openly display how the tense application in the post-test outperformed tense application in the pre-test (See **Boxes 5.5 & 5.6 below**). The extracts A and B below are a

testimony of how some respondents were almost certain that there could be no correct past tense construction unless it had inserted either *was* or *were*, from the Question 5 of Appendix C. It should be stressed also that all the exemplary responses referred to in the study were randomly extracted from the responses of the respondents. The two examples were accordingly taken from two respondents. In the A and B instances the intended meaning was even distorted. For example, the extract that reads that “My dad **was also blocked** ...” changes the intended meaning altogether. That is, “my dad” who is probably the doer in the given discourse is presented as a receiver of the action due to the inappropriate application of the verb *be*. The verb *be* should not have been inserted in the expressions above so that the concerned discourse would convey the intended meaning. Accordingly, this deficiency which was prevalent in the pre-test (**Extracts A & B**) was corrected by the intervention of the explicit teaching hence the evidence in the post-test performance (**Extracts C and D**), although they were taken from the work of different respondents, they stood as a discernible percentage representing visible improvement.

Box 5.5: Pre-test Constructions

Extract A

*My dad **was punished** me by forcing me out of the house. So, I **was lived** in the street for a period of two months. My dad **was also blocked** my number from his phone.*

Extract B

*My dad **was took** one decision of making sure that I cannot speak to other family members because they **were also blocked** me from their phones. But one day I **was decided** to end this bad situation about my life.*

Box 5.6: Post-test Constructions

Extract C

*My dad **punished** me by forcing me out of the house. So, I **lived** in the street for a period of two months. My dad **also blocked** my number from his phone.*

Extract D

*My dad **took** one decision of making sure that I cannot speak to other family members, because they **also blocked** me from their phones. But one day I **decided** to end this bad situation about my life.*

Sentences or constructions where the “be” verb was used in juxtaposition with a base or a past tense verb form decreased. In other words, sentences that read like, “Mr Hlongwane **was teach** us Mathematics” or “I **was spoke** to my educator about the test,” were not as common in the post-test as they had been in the pre-test. The researcher discovered during the teaching manipulation that there were multiple factors responsible for the misconception and

subsequently, the misapplication of the verb ‘be’. Amongst the various reasons that were, was the failure of the respondents to draw a line between the verbs in the past tense and those in the past participle or the ‘-en’ form. This confusion was aggravated by the verbs whose past tense and past participle forms are the same as is the case below:

Box 5.7: Past tense and Past Participle Verbs

(i)	Mr Hlongwane taught (<i>Past tense form</i>) us.
(ii)	We were taught (<i>Past participle form</i>).

Summarily, the explicit teaching of tense can improve the tense competence of the learners as it did to the respondents of the research. Although both the pre-test and the post-test did not have the above-fifty percent general performance, the performance in the respective tests was not the same. The evidence is there (**See Table 5.1**). All the figures indicate that, indeed, the respondents’ tense competence level went up after the intervention. Even the performance average of the post-test was higher than that of the pre-test by a variance of fifteen (15) points testifying that the tense competence level of every individual respondent was improved to a particular degree. In other words, the comparative statistical results did not only indicate the problematic areas for the respondents, but the severity of the *tense* competence problem that was with the respondents especially at the time of the pre-test. It is no longer a matter of appearance, but it became a reality. Confirming the foregoing point is, among other things, the disappearance of the frequency congestion at the bottom score categories of the post-test and their shift to the higher score categories, unlike in the pre-test. In the pre-test the spread of the frequencies across the score categories was contrary to the spread of the post-test. That is, more frequencies were found at the bottom score categories denoting dismal performance and poor tense competence.

The difference observed between the two tests’ performance was not taken only as an improvement on the respondents’ tense competence, but the interest was on the impact of the existing tense competence on the language users concerned (the respondents) as well. That is, the influence of the improved tense competence (or poor competence) and its subsequent performance was observed in, among other things, the manner in which the frequencies were spread across the *Score Category* column of the statistics table. So, the essay questions or responses were more helpful in this regard. That is, for example, the more harmonised expressions in the post-test discourse responses evidenced both the better tense competence

and its respective expression. Therefore, the remarkable upward shift of the respondents in the score table, was a testimony of the interrelatedness of the tense competence in particular and the language communicative competence generally. This was part of the aims of the research hence the topic referred to the “implications” of the tense errors (tense competence) for communicative competence.

The table below has conveniently juxtaposed the performance statistics of the respondents on both the pre-test and the post-test.

Table 5.1: Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Results

Scores Category	Frequencies		N0 of Entr.	N0 of Pas.		Pass %		N0 of Fail.		Fail %		Aver.	
	Pre	Post		Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
80-100	00	03	83	08	27	10	33	74	56	90	67	27	42
70-79	01	06											
60-69	03	10											
50-59	04	08											
40-49	07	13											
30-39	14	20											
20-29	25	16											
10-19	27	07											
00-09	02	00											

Clarity Signs:

Pre = Pre-test

N0 of Entr. = Number of Entries

Pass % = Pass Percentage

Post = Post-test

N0 of Pas = Number of Passes

N0 of Fail. = Number of Failures

Fail % = Fail Percentage

Aver. = Average

The understanding that the improvement of the tense competence displayed in the post-test came as a result of the explicit teaching intervention could not be doubted considering the disappointing performance that was produced by the respondents from the pre-test. The respondents had, unequivocally, a poor tense competence. They might have been competent in other parts of the English language in general, but in relation to the tense application, they were lacking. Canale and Swain (1980) support the foregoing statement as they assert that communicative competence is a multi-faceted phenomenon comprising grammatical

competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. The results of the pretest implied that the respondents' grammar competence, tense in particular, was weak. The extreme discrepancy between the performance figures of the two tests (See **Table 5.1**) is a proof that the dramatic change did not come as a natural course, but as a planned for development. The results of the pre-test were as important as those of the post-test were for the realisation of the aim of the research. The former's results prepared the ground on which the latter's results were to be best interpreted. That is, the improvement found in the post-test would not have been observed had the pre-test not been there.

5.6 Exceptional Results for Explicit Teaching

The explicit teaching of tense culminated in various exclusive results. For example, most of the tense structures discussed earlier were easily confused with one another because the dividing line was always thin. That is, the slight difference in between the structures concerned could, arguably, be hardly observed by the learner-respondents on their own, particularly, because they seldom accessed English in use outside the classroom situation. With the application of the explicit teaching approach, every part of the tense-related structure was dissected, brought to the full attention of the respondents and explained. The implicit teaching would have only hoped that the respondents had, at least, identified the rule and perhaps internalised its application. The chances of the hope to remain a permanent deferment were high since research shows that some educators in the population schools had limited English competence (Mulaudzi, 1994: 136). With this type of conditions, the learners were likely to observe not only different, but also incorrect application of the rules from their own educators. The implicit teaching approach, antithetical to the explicit approach, which hopes that learners will deduce the rules of grammar as they observe them in use as stated in the CAPS, would work successfully in the communities where the target language was abundantly in use and, as a result, was easily accessible to the learners (DoBE, 2011: 15). In the current research situation where the learners hardly accessed the target language, they would not be afforded the opportunity to observe the language being used and so there would be no learning of the target language at all. It was only through the adoption of the explicit teaching of grammar (tense) that the respondents' uncertainty and hesitance on the application of the rules were responded to. The other thing that the explicit teaching approach did to the respondents was providing them with the rules that served as a point of reference for the respondents whenever they used the language wherever they were. This kind of knowledge enabled each respondent an

opportunity to ruminate about the rules continually and independently. Similarly, the approach evoked an intrinsic motivation in the relevant respondents to continue pursuing the best possible use of English language even when there was no teacher around. In other words, the impact thereof does not stop with the end of the one-hour lesson delivered by the teacher, hence according to Krashen's monitor hypothesis (1985), the learners continue to edit the intake from their learning, assisted by the 'monitor' that acts as their teacher. This suggests that the recorded results of the post-test were only the immediate and visible contribution of the explicit teaching so far. In fact, the impact of the explicit teaching was continually improving with the unfolding of time and, as a result, it could not be easily and precisely measured. That is, it could be measured only to a certain extent.

5.7 Varied Performance Levels

It can thus be inferred from these varied performance average levels that, generally, both tests produced a performance below 50% and if 50% is considered as a dividing line between a pass and failure, it could mean that both of the tests were poorly performed. Another inference would be that, although the two tests had poor performance, the posttest was not as bad as the pretest. That is, looked at singularly, the results of the posttest were bad, but comparatively, they were better. Moreover, it can also be argued that the original competence level of the respondents did impact on the determination of the results of the posttest. For instance, if one considers the 15% variance between the pre-test performance average 27% and the posttest's 42%, one can question whether had the original performance position of the respondents been 40%, for example, the posttest results would have been propelled to a pass percentage of 55% considering the 15% discrepancy. This question may be applied to the pass percentage as well. The difference of 23% improvement from the posttest, would have parachuted the posttest performance to the new heights, arguably, far from mediocrity. Therefore, the researcher would dispute the view that deemed the performances on the two tests as the identical failures. He would take such a conclusion as an inappropriate judgement. Besides the different figures of the respective tests already mentioned, the hypothesis never projected the explicit teaching as a panacea for all the tense errors the learners had. Instead, it predicted improvement. These figures are a proof that the respondents had totally different tense competence statuses at the relevant times of the writing of the two tests. These figures and many others showed that every respondent benefited from the explicit teaching intervention to a particular extent.

5.6 Research Performance's Relation to DoBE's Performance

It was interesting to observe how the respondents' performance from the pre-test in particular "mismatched" the matric English performance of the respective schools given to the researcher by the DoBE through the Lower Umfolozi Circuit. The matric English performance of the sampled schools was not as dismal as the respondents' performance was in the pre-test. According to the English performance records served by the DoBE which the researcher studied for the purpose of determining the appropriate research elements, there was no grade twelve (12) which had performed below fifty percent (50%) in the said five-year period (2008 – 2012) at the matric level in the circuit. Based on the comparative assessment of the matric English performance amongst the circuit schools, the sampled schools emerged as the worse performing schools. That is, they were poor performers because they were poorer than others. For the period of five consecutive years for which the schools' performance was examined for the purposes of excluding excellent performers, there was no school that consistently performed, at least, under 60%. Some of these selected schools had once or twice scored a 70% pass rate in English within the said five-year period. However, the "mismatch" was not viewed as a deficit to the research results by the researcher because of a few existing reasons. One of the reasons was the fact that the respondents of the research were not the actual learners that had produced the previous matric English results. Therefore, a number of reasons might have the cause for the "mismatch" of the results. For example, the researcher did not know how the schools or the DoBE in general processed its competence points for English at the matric level. The thing that the researcher knew was that the research he conducted was on the tense application and the respondents could not mark tense correctly until they were taught with an explicit teaching approach. It was only after the intervention that the respondents' competence in tense was improved. The other reason that kept the researcher adamant that the results of the research were not compromised by the "mismatch", was the outcry of other studies about the dis-service of English language generally to the learners at school as well as the post-matric students (Mashiya, 2011:8; Mqgwashu, 1999; Mqadi, 1990). With all the reasons given earlier, the researcher was convinced that the poor tense competence status revealed by the research, truly reflected the tense competence of the respondents and all the learners of the population schools represented.

5.7 Error Implications on Learners' Communicative Competence

The consequences of the learners' being incompetent in the English language have been proved to be far-reaching and dire. The findings of the study showed that the status of the tense

competence of the learners bore a direct impact on the communicative competence of the language users. The respondents' essay responses in particular gave testifying examples of the expressions that skewed their intended messages only because they lacked the relevant tense-related knowledge. The researcher deemed it necessary to reproduce the two extracts below which had been cited earlier. They are the examples from the pre-test. They demonstrate how the action that was supposedly done by the agent is presented now as though it were done to him, "My dad **was punished** me....", and "... they **were also blocked** me...." In the extracts A and B respectively.

Box 5.8: Distortion of intended meaning

Extract A

*My dad **was punished** me by forcing me out of the house. So, I **was lived** in the street for a period of two months. My dad **was also blocked** my number from his phone.*

Extract B

*My dad **was took** one decision of making sure that I cannot speak to other family members because they **were also blocked** me from their phones. But one day I **was decided** to end this bad situation about my life.*

With the same breath, the researcher sounded the observed improvement in the respondents' communicative competence in the post-test essays since the tense competence had improved from the explicit teaching intervention. The extracts C and D below are a demonstration of the accurate expressions produced by the tense-competent respondents. Nonetheless, it is worth stating that the improvement that came as a result of the intervention manifested itself at different degrees in different respondents. The important point about **Box 5.9** below is that it demonstrates the improvement.

Box 5.9: Accuracy Constructs Clear Meaning

Extract C

*My dad **punished** me by forcing me out of the house. So, I **lived** in the street for a period of two months. My dad **also blocked** my number from his phone.*

Extract D

*My dad **took** one decision of making sure that I cannot speak to other family members, because they **also blocked** me from their phones. But one day I **decided** to end this bad situation about my life.*

Therefore, considering the above scenario and the fact that communicative competence incorporates grammatical competence (Canale & Swain, 1980), it is logical to conclude that tense (because tense is grammar) is not only related to, but its status also determines that of, the communicative competence of the language user. Knowing the central role entrusted with

the English language (being the medium of instruction) in the South African education system, the conclusion that an improved English grammatical competence will also improve the learners' performance across the subjects or learning areas, is rational. Moreover, if the English grammatical competence is poor, there will be poor performance in the other subjects done by the learners concerned. The earlier statement by the disappointed minister of the national Department of Basic Education on the matric results of 2009 that, "The LOLT, which is a second language for Black pupils, is viewed as a major factor behind poor matric results of Black learners in South Africa" (Mashiya, 2011:8) confirms the leverage that the English language had in the education of the country. Equally, the aims hoped to be achieved with the teaching of English as a First Additional Language (FAL) enshrined in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) will remain deferred until the learners' English grammatical competence is advanced. The aims concerned were mentioned earlier.

Generally, the respondents had a low competence level regarding the marking of tense. It therefore, presented them (respondents) as the vulnerable future victims of unemployment since the prospective employers, government in particular, carried out their activities in English. That is, employment advertisements are prepared and issued in English, interviews conducted in English and many other life-related activities as well, hence Mgqwashu's assertion, reiterated below:

In South Africa, the competent use of English confers significant social advantages, and competent speakers of this language have greater opportunities for self-advancement (Mgqwashu, 1999: 4).

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter managed to get deeper into the results and bring to the surface even the factors that led to the said results one by one. What it did more than just presenting the hard results as it was the case with Chapter Four. Chapter Five elaborated on the results and unpacked some for comprehensive understanding. It stressed the confirmation of the hypothesis as it highlighted the significant moments that emerged at different stages of the investigation process. These other "minor" discoveries were also essential for the all-inclusive understanding of the outcomes relevant to the research assumptions and aims. That is, knowing the nitty-gritties that transpired during the pursuit of the truth made the reader comprehend the subsequently discovered truth better.

The next chapter, Chapter Six, gives the summary and the conclusion of the research and makes recommendations on the best possible way of enhancing the respondents' tense competence in the high schools of the Lower Umfolozi Circuit and beyond.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter, Chapter Six, marks the last mile of the long journey that the researcher undertook. He got off with a clear intention of determining, firstly, the effectiveness (or non-effectiveness) of the explicit teaching approach on the English tense-related errors committed by the high school learners of the Lower Umfolozi Circuit, secondly, the implications of the said errors on the learners' English competence. Chapter Two defined *tense* as the key concept of the study, but in addition, it also explicated the two popular language teaching approaches, the explicit and implicit, as it explored briefly the research work of other scholars relevant to the research at hand. The subsequent section, Chapter Three, explained the comprehensive design inclusive of the methodology adopted by the research. In Chapters Four and Five the findings of the research were presented and discussed respectively.

This last chapter therefore in encapsulating the whole process, underlines the highlights of, draws conclusion on, the research and recommends the ways that can possibly enhance the teaching and learning of English structures in particular and any other second language in general. It is still significant even at this stage to remain aware of the aims of the research especially in order to match them with the findings and be able to make valid and reliable conclusions. The other way of finding out the extent at which the aims and objectives of the research were achieved, is by keeping the research questions in mind (**See Chapter One**).

6.2 Summary

It is now a fact that the respondents had poor tense competence before the explicit teaching intervention was made. The extreme tense arbitrariness displayed by their responses exposed them as the language users who had not yet internalised tense application rules. Their *tense* competence was so poor that they could not independently formulate grammatically correct English sentences despite them being at the Grades as senior as ten (10) and eleven (11), respectively. The study found out that the appalling tense competence situation of the respondents could not remain so forever. It could be improved. The teaching of the tense-related structures in an explicit approach managed to ameliorate the situation of the respondents. By improving the respondents' tense competence, the explicit teaching approach confirmed the research's hypothesis that predicted that the approach would improve the

respondents' tense competence and, subsequently, their communicative competence in the English language.

The radical improvement of the respondents' tense competence within a short time demonstrated by their performance in the post-test was a buttress to the effectiveness of the *explicit teaching method*. Moreover, it marked the significance of tense in the learning of English as a second language while, simultaneously, reinforcing the convenience of the view that advocates for the unpacking of a second language structures and taking them one by one for teaching. That is, the living conditions which were also the learning conditions of the respondents proved that tense-related structures would remain a permanent elusion to the respondents without the adoption of the explicit approach in their teaching.

Another research question which had to be answered was the one that related to the implications of the learners' tense competence on their use of English in various platforms and for different reasons. It was discovered that when the respondents' level of English tense competence was low, so would be the use of English language communicative competence. The lamentable performance in the pre-test evidenced the interrelatedness of the tense competence which was poorer than and the language communicative competence at large. Again, once the tense competence was improved after the teaching intervention, the English communicative competence was enriched accordingly, hence the improved performance in the post-test.

The interrelatedness in the foregoing statement further indicated that the selection of a target language structure for the focusing of teaching, was for the convenience only. The "isolated" structure was still an integral part of a holistic process of the learning of the target language as it (isolated structure) contributed to its (target language) development accordingly. Therefore, in South Africa where English is assigned with huge responsibilities which impact directly on people's lives, an upgraded tense competence forms a good start for the language user for it brings hopes in regard to career prospects (Mgqwashu, 1999: 4). The opposite is also true in regard to the poor tense competence, for it brings the prospects of a lasting suffering of the language user (Mashiyi, 2011: 8; Mqadi, 1990: 22). The aforementioned quotes from Mashiyi (2011: 8) and Mqadi (1990: 22) confirmed the dissatisfaction of the communities affected. So this negative impact which poor tense competence extends to the people's lives can still be turned around by fixing (improving) tense competence. Accordingly, the researcher has made

some suggestions which he hopes can alleviate the current undesirable situation of poor English competence. They are given as *Recommendations* after the *Conclusion*.

Once more, it is worth remembering that the respondents to the research were the sampled learners representing a bigger research population, the high school learners of the Lower Umfolozi Circuit. Therefore, while the research acknowledges individualism, in considering the adopted research design (*See Chapter Three*), the researcher concluded that the findings of the research be generalised to the whole population, wide as it was. That is, what the research found to be true to the sampled learners, was also true to the represented learners. Research theories support the decision taken by the researcher that generalisation of the scores or results to the entire population is a major attribute of a sample design (Marlow, 2005: 136; in De Vos et al., 2011: 226).

6.3 Conclusion

The research process with its findings being so clear led the researcher to the easily drawn conclusions. So, this subsection presents these conclusions as it encapsulates the gist of the research.

6.3.1 No qualms about explicit teaching

The explicit teaching of tense was confirmed as an effective teaching method for the improvement of *tense* competence for the learners of the Lower Umfolozi Circuit. The research showed that the improved learners' English tense competence leads to improved English competence generally. The respondents' repeated incorrect English expressions which inspired the research were remarkably reduced at the end of the research project. As for what could have been responsible for the incorrect marking of tense at the start of the research, the study could only speculate, since that was not one of the aims of the study. What mattered the most to the research was that the explicit teaching of tense was able to improve the learners' English poor tense competence and, subsequently, the English communicative competence.

6.3.2 Uniqueness of a research population

The environment in which the respondents lived was helpful to the effectiveness of the explicit teaching method advocated by the research and so it complemented its appropriateness. Moreover, the aforementioned point stresses the importance of acknowledging the uniqueness of each research space for the application of any teaching method. That is, to say that the

explicit method of teaching tense was effective for the learners of the Lower Umfolozi Circuit, does not mean that the same would be true in a different space. To the Lower Umfolozi Circuit itself, the teaching method appropriate now will not remain relevant even when the learners' living conditions have changed. That is, a teaching approach or method will not be automatically effective to the respondent B just because it was so to the respondent A. The success of the explicit grammar teaching method in the research area is testimony to the significance of the uniqueness of research population. That is, a teaching method is useful in different ways to different subjects. The study pointed out unequivocally that a learner in a deep rural area of KwaZulu-Natal and another in the Durban metropolitan do not have the same background conditions all the time. Therefore, their needs are not the same all the time too.

6.3.3 Specifying Teaching Content

More than the teaching method, the study evidenced the significance of targeting specific areas of the wide phenomenon called the English language. The study focused on the *tense* part not because other parts were unimportant, but in order to exhaust its treatment and thus maximise its individual contribution to the improvement of the English language as a whole. Therefore, where there is more time, various English areas influential to the efficient teaching and learning, should be treated one-by-one in a particular order. The study did not point only to the teaching of the content, but it also emphasised the alignment of the teaching content, teaching method and the desired aims of embarking on the teaching project. As a result, the study undoubtedly underscored the importance of grammar rules (Kilfoil & Van der Walt, 1989: 13), particularly tense, in the improvement of the learners' English competence, at least in the research space concerned.

6.3.4 Relationship between Research Variables

The most remarkable aim of the study which was to find out whether the explicit teaching of tense could improve the learners' tense competence, was positively and clearly answered (See **Table 5.1**). Indeed, the explicit teaching of tense did improve the tense competence of the respondents, thus confirming the interrelationship referred to. That is, the causal-effect relationship assumed between the explicit teaching approach and tense competence from the onset of the research, was confirmed.

6.3.5 No Single Method is Perfect

There is no method that is a stand-alone. The explicit teaching method advocated by the study

needs other methods that will give it support and thus make it complete. The study made it clear that teaching must be made complete by practice. Language competence in particular can be tested only in practice. This view is corroborated by Savignon (1983) in Van der Walt et al. (2009: 91) who asserts, “A person demonstrates grammatical competence by using a rule, not by stating a rule.” In other words, whichever method that is adopted for teaching, is adopted only as a major method that will still need supplementation from others.

6.3.6 “Unequal” Service to Schools

Different backgrounds for different schools might be exposing some for vulnerability to a selected teaching approach. The polarisation of the circuit’s high schools into the “performing” and “non-performing” based on their respective English performance at the matric level proved that the servicing of the schools was “dissimilar” to a certain extent.

6.3.7 Educators’ Role

The role of an educator in the application of any teaching approach has always been central. The problem of the teaching approach may be ameliorated or deteriorated by the position or the view of the educator to it. Ndlovu (1993: 41) in Motsoeneng (2003: 57) asserts that the success of any syllabus relies mainly on the educator:

Teachers can control the methods they use; they can control little else. Yet changes made to materials or syllabuses will be ineffective if teachers fail to understand them or feel unconvinced of the need for change (Ndlovu, 1993: 41).

6.3.8 Cooperation between Educator-trainee Institutions and Schools

The research showed that there were some challenges in applying the explicit teaching approach to the learners. Some of the encountered challenges had not been pre-empted by the theory, but were discovered by the educators who operated as “foot-soldiers” at the school level.

6.3.9 Non-examinable Structures

Another underlying factor on the field of teaching and learning which the research put before the spotlight, was the special commitment of both the educators and learners respectively to the examinable structures. There was less dedication given to the non-examinable structures. For example, when the researcher enquired about the huge unreported absentia of the

respondents mentioned in Chapter Three, some respondents replied by stating that some of their absent colleagues had said that it was a waste of their time coming to class for the non-examinable thing.

6.3.10 Contribution to Body of Knowledge

The findings of the study bear significant implications for the body of knowledge generally and the teaching of tense in particular. The study highlighted the thin line dividing *tense* from *aspect*. Above all, the ages long debate on the language teaching approaches is likely to benefit from the fact underscored by the research that there is no one-fit-all approach. This piece of knowledge will minimise unnecessary argument where a scholar imposes an approach on the population A only because the approach was effective on the population B. In short, both the explicit and implicit teaching approaches emerged as the beneficiaries from the research because the findings showed that both of them could be appropriate to different spaces respectively. Educators and learners alike also stand to benefit from the study. The views brought forward by the study will cast more light to the teaching-and-learning fraternity. Even if they do not share the same sentiments with the researcher, the argument will intensify and inspire more research. The contribution of the research is likely to extend across various disciplines since its immediate outcome is possibly the development of the learners' English language communicative competence. This will be a boost indeed to many learners pursuing careers in other fields especially because some essential literature is kept in English, locally and internationally.

6.3.11 Contribution to the Future Research

There were two most discernible achievements of this study which come out as unique and thus likely to influence future research immensely. Firstly, the study did not talk about the teaching approach only, the common element of the previous studies, but it also specified the language structure for which the approach was deemed suitable. This conclusion of the study may lead to other various interesting assumptions inspiring more research work. For example, amongst others, the questions may arise, "Can more than one teaching approach be adopted for the teaching of one target language?", "Is a specific teaching approach effective only to a particular structure or structures of a target language?"

Secondly, the current study has underscored the separation of *tense* from *aspect*. This distinction is rarely found from the previous studies. Even some scholars talk of these concepts as though they were one thing, tense (Tshotsho et al., 2015: 75 – 76). The emphasis of the

separation will not only help the educators and learners understand and apply the said structures better, but it will broaden the research space for other scholars as well.

6.4. Recommendations

The conclusions in the foregoing section led the researcher to making the recommendations which are explained briefly below.

6.4.1 Teach Tense Explicitly

The effectiveness of the explicit teaching approach to the high schools of the Lower Umfolozi Circuit was unquestionably confirmed. Ausubel (1974), Higgs (1985) as well as Mohammed and Jaber (2008) in Wang (2012) assert that “teacher instruction speeds up the acquisition process of adult language learners.”

6.4.2 Contextualise Teaching

The comprehension of the learners’ background and the existing learning conditions is significant for the selection of the appropriate teaching approach.

6.4.3 Identify Target Structure

It is a fallacy that in a single lesson you can teach all the target language structures. Take these structures one by one so that you will give all the endeavours to each lesson.

6.4.4 Create Platforms for Language Practice

According to Evans and Kilfoil (2009) it is a misconception to think that knowledge of a rule will automatically lead to the use of such a rule. That is, the knowledge of the rule by the learner does not guarantee the correct application of the rule by the learner. Therefore, whilst the educators explicitly inculcate the rule on the one hand, they should create platforms for the learners to regularly use the language in real-life or similar situations on the other. Tagarellie et al. (2011: 2062) asserts:

Instruction that provides students with explicit rule explanation and then gives them opportunities to engage in language production tends to benefit all language learners.

6.4.5 Inclusive and Effective Plan

Develop a plan led by the Department of Basic Education that will develop a curriculum with a balanced weighting between grammatical rules (tense is part of grammar) and the application of them. It should ascertain that all teaching units, teaching material, teaching methods as well as assessment are aligned to one another. The inclusiveness of the members drafting the plan should be informed by the consideration that the examinations for the affected population are common to all schools of the circuit and are, subsequently, standardised.

6.4.6 Educator in-service training

Capacitate educators regularly because they are central to the success or failure of the teaching and learning activities in the classroom. The regular in-service training will keep them not only abreast with, but also equipped for the current challenges and needs of the learners. Katiya (1999: 74) in Motsoeneng (2003: 57) stresses the essence of the educator's role in the success of education:

Education stands or falls by the quality of a person to whom the work is entrusted and not the quality of aids, however important these may be. However good the materials are, however shiny the technology, the human guide remains central (Katiya, 1999: 74).

It is worth remembering at this juncture what was said earlier that in many of the rural community schools, educators' English incompetence is so prevalent that it becomes a serious obstacle to the aims of the very teaching they execute (Manyike, 2007: 110) and (Mulaudzi, 1994: 136).

6.4.7 Collaboration between Educator-trainee institutions and Schools

Schools need to raise with the institutions of higher learning the seemingly unforeseeable challenges from the classroom situation which make the implementation of teaching theories difficult.

6.4.8 Pin Innovations to Examinations

The enormous value and respect that the educators and learners attach to the examinations will serve as a drive for them to take the target structures seriously. That is, let the English

examinations have a reasonably increased weighting on the relevant structures for them to be treated accordingly.

6.5 Limitations of the study

The researcher wishes to admit that the whole research process might have been influenced or uninfluenced by other concealed factors. The respondents were treated largely as a group or groups consisting of Grades 10 and 11. For that reason, the researcher wishes to acknowledge the possibility that, whilst most of the decisions taken about the investigation were based on factors common amongst all or many learners or respondents, there might have been the other influential ones, individually related, which were not given appropriate consideration for the analysis of the research findings.

It was possible that every time the researcher met with the respondents to carry out an activity, each respondent was in a unique mood, or had a different attitude, psychological state and so forth, caused by the diverse individual background of each respondent. Subsequently, the outcomes of the research might have been influenced differently had the speculated possibilities been considered. For example, the different degree of the improvement of the respondents' tense competence in the pre-test and post-test may be an indication of the influence of the alleged different factors on different respondents. Other realities like the gender and age of the individual respondents were also overlooked.

Time is another important factor as well as the manner in which it was handled during the research. The time issue surfaced in various ways. The amount of time spent on the teaching manipulation, had an appropriate impact on the dependable variable. That is, the different amount of time given to the teaching intervention would, probably, lead to a different outcome of the investigation. In fact, the time to be given to this exercise was predetermined by the researcher in consideration of the total time he had versus the tasks to be carried out. Whilst this time division can be extolled as the time well-managed, from one dimension, on the other angle, it can be disputed on the ground that the researcher could not be so intelligent as to perfectly determine the exact amount of time the learner-respondents would need to master the delivered content as learners always learn or grasp information at different paces. The impact of the time factor had enormous implications for the findings of the study. Another person could question the amount of time given to the manipulation process, as said already, and also the positioning of the pre-test and post-test, first, to each other, and secondly, to the teaching manipulation respectively. That is, the teaching period might be viewed too short or lengthy by different people and the carrying out of the post-teaching test, for instance, it might have been too soon or unreasonably delayed. The point made here is that, had the said activities and

processes been handled differently, that would have made a difference in the findings.

Another matter to reflect on, under this chapter, is the teaching approach that the researcher adopted. It might not have been the best or the way it was implemented might have been skewed by the researcher teacher. That is, there might have been moves, gestures or utterances too subtle to be acknowledged by the researcher himself, but at the same time, so noticeable to the respondents that some of them (respondents) were affected in one way or the other. Another essential issue under this section is what Shaughnessy and Zechmeister (1990) call *reactivity*. By this concept, they refer to the way subjects (respondents in this case) “react” to the presence of a stranger or observer. They argue that the “behaviour in these situations may not be representative of the behaviour displayed when an observer is not present” (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1990: 66). In the case of this research the researcher was not necessarily an observer, but a stranger in the classroom, especially at the beginning of the series of the teaching-and-learning meetings. Even though the researcher stayed with or visited the respondents over a period of some weeks, he was still perceived as “not our educator” or a “visitor” by the respondents. If this speculation is sensible, it was still likely that the researcher could stimulate a different “reactionary” performance from learners or respondents.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A (*Pre-test*)

SCHOOL NAME:

GRADE:

You are requested to respond to the questions as honestly as possible. DO NOT WRITE your name. All responses will be treated with great caution and confidentiality.

A. Choose one verb to complete each of the sentences below. One verb may be used more than once. Keep your answers in the Simple Present Tense.

N.B.: Write the whole sentence in each case and ensure that your chosen verb is grammatically inserted or used in the sentence.

Choose from the following verbs: believe, belong, contain, forget, hate, like, love, need, own, prefer, realise, remember, suppose, understand, want.

1. This book to me.

.....

2. His father a chain of hotels.

.....

3. She says she to see Fred.

.....

4. That bottle petrol.

.....

5. She me, and I her.

.....

6. "Beer?" "I water."

.....

B. Convert this passage into the Present Tense

The train slowed down. Linda anxiously looked outside. Sure enough, there she was! He gave a wolf-whistle, as if he were admiring some girl he did not know. She hurried to his carriage, stepped in and sat beside him. They seemed not to know each other from Adam. An old man nearby was giving a lively account, of the murders committed in Newclare.

C. Choose the correct answer from the alternatives given in each case below:

Ring the letter of your chosen answer.

1. That's a nice picture. Who it?
A. has painted
B. B. painting
C. C. both
2. on holidays this year?
A. Have you been
B. B. Did you went
C. C. both
3. Emma's email today?
A. Have you seen
B. B. Did you saw
C. C. both
4. Stop fighting, kids. Now: who it?
A. has start
B. B. started
C. C. both
5. It was a shock when the police today.
A. have turned up
B. B. turned up

C. C. both

6. I my appointment with the doctor this week.

A. have missing

B. B. missed

C. C. both

D. Choose the correct answer from the alternatives given in each case below:

Ring the correct answer.

1. My family *goes/ is going* to church every Sunday.
2. Look over there! She *takes/ is taking* her clothes off.
3. Don't disturb him now. He *reads/ is reading* the novel.
4. Many farmers live here because it *rains/ is raining* a lot in summer.
5. Vegetarians are people who *don't eat/ are not eating* meat.
6. You can't talk to my father right now. He *takes/ is taking* a bath.

E. Write the following sentences in the *NEGATIVE FORM*:

For example: They were singing in the school choir.

Answer: They were not singing in the school choir.

NB.: Do not use "never" in your answers.

1. She loves them.

.....

2. The boy died.

.....

3. His mom teaches Afrikaans.

.....

4. That minister has problems.

.....

5. That minister had problems

.....

6. Many students do their work.

.....

7. We stole the book.

.....

8. I saw them.

.....

9. Investigations revealed the truth.

.....

10. The two bombers were connected to the movement.

.....

11. Both members died in the blast.

.....

12. The spokesperson expressed regret.

.....

F. Change the statements below into QUESTIONS. Do not use the “WH-” words (WHAT, WHO, WHOM, WHERE and WHICH) in your answers.

For example: The two boys were singing in the school choir.

Answer: Were the two boys singing in the school choir?

1. The president loves them.

.....

2. His mom teaches Afrikaans.

.....

3. That minister has problems.

.....

4. That minister had problems.

.....

5. The boy found the book.

.....

6. The two players come from the same country.

.....

7. The president has appointed the judge.

.....

8. The principal left early today.

.....

Ask questions from each statement below so that the answer will be the word in italics.

e.g.: *Marks* loves Emma.

Answer: Who loves emma?

9. *Rob* bought a jacket.

.....

10. Rob bought *a jacket*.

.....

11. *Oliver* lost his credit card.

.....

12. Oliver lost *his credit card*.

.....

13. *Zinhle* has broken her leg.

.....

14. Zinhle has broken *her leg*.

.....

15. *This stuff* kills flies.

.....

16. This stuff kills *flies*.

.....

17. *His brother* collects Chinese paintings.

.....

18. His brother collects *Chinese paintings*.

.....

19. *Her child* broke our window.

.....

20. Her child broke *our window*.

.....

G. Check if there are errors in each of the following sentences. If you think there are errors, correct them. But if you think there are none, simply rewrite a sentence as it is.

1. Every academic institution had its challenges that it want to overcome.

.....

2. The criminal broke the back window and then jumps into the office.

.....

3. Every time I check in the lecture hall, I did not find anybody.

.....

4. We sing a lot of Gospel music recently.

.....

H. Fill each blank space below appropriately: [5]

Make	made	made
ride	(1).....	(2).....
(3).....	fled	fled
broadcast	(4).....	(5).....
sing	(6)	(7)
come	(8)	(9)

make	made	make
bite	(10).....	(11).....
(12).....	(13).....	borne
tear	(14).....	torn
put	(15)	(16)
run	(17)	(18)
read	(19)	read
play	(20)	played

APPENDIX B (*Post-test*)

SCHOOL NAME:

GRADE:

You are requested to respond to the questions as honestly as possible. DO NOT WRITE your name. All responses will be treated with great caution and confidentiality.

A. Choose one verb to complete each of the sentences below. One verb may be used more than once. Keep your answers in the Simple Present Tense.

N.B.: Write the whole sentence in each case and ensure that your chosen verb is grammatically inserted or used in the sentence.

Choose from the following verbs: believe, belong, contain, forget, hate, like, love, need, own, prefer, realise, remember, suppose, understand, want.

1. The red car to Mr Hlongwane.

.....

2. My mom and dad a farm in Gauteng.

.....

3. He tells me that he to visit her granny.

.....

4. The two bottles poison.

.....

5. She me, and I her.

.....

6. "Beer or water?" "I water."

.....

B. CONVERT THIS PASSAGE TO THE PRESENT TENSE

The train slowed down. Linda anxiously looked outside. Sure enough, there she was! He gave a wolf-whistle, as if he were admiring some girl he did not know. She hurried to his carriage, stepped in and sat beside him. They seemed not to know each other from Adam. An old man nearby was giving a lively account, of the murders committed in Newclare.

C. Choose the correct answer from the alternatives given in each case below:

Ring the letter of your chosen answer.

1. I was terrified last night. ?

A. What did you see
B. What have you seen
C. both A and B

2. on holidays this year?

A. Have you been
B. Did you went
C. both

3. Emma's email?

A. Have you receive
B. Did you see
C. both

4. Stop fighting, kids. Now: who it?

A. has start
B. started
C. both

5. He last week.
 - A. has been arrested
 - B. was arrested.
 - C. both

6. I my appointment with the doctor last week.
 - A. have missing
 - B. missed
 - C. both

D. Choose the correct answer from the alternatives given in each case below:
Ring the correct answer.

1. My team *plays/ is playing* every Sunday.
2. Look over there! She *fight/ is fighting* with others.
3. Don't disturb him now. He *reads/ is reading* the novel.
4. Many farmers live here because it *rains/ is raining* a lot in Summer.
5. Vegetarians are people who *don't eat/ are not eating* meat.
6. You can't talk to my father right now. He *takes/ is taking* a bath.

E. Write the following sentences in the *NEGATIVE FORM*:

For example: They were singing in the school choir.

Answer: They were not singing in the school choir.

NB.: Do not use "never" in your answers.

1. She sings well.

.....

2. The young man died.

.....

3. His mom taught Afrikaans.

.....

4. That minister has made promises.

.....

5. Zodwa has problems

.....

6. Many students love their work.

.....

7. We have stolen the book.

.....

8. I saw them.

.....

9. Investigations revealed the truth.

.....

10. The criminals were connected to the movement.

.....

11. Only a member died in the blast.

.....

12. The spokesperson expressed regret.

.....

F. Change the statements below into QUESTIONS. Do not use the “WH-” words (WHAT, WHO, WHOM, WHERE and WHICH) in your answers.

For example: The two boys were singing in the school choir.

Answer: Were the two boys singing in the school choir?

1. She sings well.

.....

2. The young man died.

.....

3. That minister has made promises.

.....

4. Zodwa has problems.

.....

5. The boy found the book.

.....

6. The players come from the same country.

.....

7. The president has appointed the judge.

.....

8. The principal leaves early today.

.....

Ask questions from each statement below so that the answer will be the word in italics.

e.g.: *Marks* loves Emma.

Answer: Who loves emma?

9. Oliver loses *his credit card*.

.....

10. Rob bought *a jacket*.

.....

11. *Rob* bought a jacket.

.....

12. Oliver lost *his credit card*.

.....

13. Zinhle has repaired *the window*.

.....

14. Zinhle has broken *her leg*.

.....

15. *This stuff* kills flies.

.....

16. This stuff kills *flies*.

.....

17. *His brother* collects Chinese paintings.

.....

18. His brother collects *Chinese paintings*.

.....

19. *Her child* broke our window.

.....

20. Her child broke *our window*.

.....

G. Check if there are errors in each of the following sentences. If you think there are errors, correct them. But if you think there are none, simply rewrite a sentence as it is.

1. When the president delivered the speech, the woman cry.

.....

2. The inmate tore up the roof and then jumps out.

.....

3. When she enters, she found no one inside.

.....

4. We sang a lot of Gospel music next Sunday.

.....

H. Fill each blank below appropriately: [5]

make	made	made
steal	(1).....	(2).....
(3).....	gave	given
broadcast	(4).....	(5).....
sing	(6)	(7)

succeed	(8)	(9)
make	made	make
beat	(10).....	(11).....
(12).....	(13).....	flown
tear	(14).....	torn
cut	(15)	(16)
run	(17)	(18)
read	(19)	read
pay	(20)	paid

APPENDIX C (*Pre-test*)

SECTION A

Respond to ONE question from this section:

Question One

The youth today is faced with several challenges in life. Among the challenges are early pregnancy and HIV/AIDS which is mostly transmitted sexually.

Do you think that it is a good idea that you should choose for your child (think of yourself as a parent) someone to marry him or her?

Write a three-paragraph essay where you give reasons why you think this is a good idea or not.

Question Two

Surely, your life will be changed in ten years' time from now. Write a one-page essay in which you portray the kind of life you will be living at that time. Think, for example, of marriage, employment, property, family, etc.

SECTION B

Respond to ONE question from this section:

Question Three

Parents today find it difficult to control the actions of their children. Your friend is one such child whose parents and the community are always complaining about.

Write a letter to your friend to tell him/ her how you feel about his/ her behaviour and also persuade him/ her to change.

Question Four

Your dad (or mom) did not usually use a rod to control your actions when you were still

young. However, one day it happened that you were severely and corporally punished. In a one-page essay state how it actually happened and you may give (a) reason or reasons that led to this unfortunate incident.

Question Five

Your dad chased you out of his house (family) when he got the news that you had fallen pregnant or impregnated your school mate. As a result, for a while now you were out of school, living like a beggar because your dad had since cut all his assistance directed to you. This short period of separation from your family taught you a lesson and thus made you take a decision.

Brace yourself up and write your dad a letter to communicate to him your decision. Be considerate of the humiliation your deed caused the whole family and the way your dad, in particular, was so angry at you about this.

APPENDIX D (*Post-test*)

SECTION A

Respond to ONE question from this section:

Question One

Jealousy is sometimes called a “green-eyed monster”. This monster often invades us all. When it visits you, it controls most of your life and overrules your decisions and behaviour. Write a one-page essay where you describe jealousy and how it drives your life once it has come to you.

Question Two

You grew up in a big family. In a one-page essay, narrate your childhood life story. State what you loved or did not love about it.

Question Three

Surely, your life will be changed in ten years’ time from now. Write a one-page essay in which you portray the kind of life you will be living at that time. Think, for example, of marriage, employment, property, family, etc.

SECTION B

Respond to ONE question from this section:

Question Four

South Africans look at the campaign against the spread of HIV/AIDS differently. Some feel it is a useless battle whilst others think that it is worth fighting. Probably, because of these antagonistic ideas and subsequent remarks, your friend has recently started making love without “protection” yet with different people.

Write him/her a letter to inform him/ her about your feeling regarding his/ her conduct and then advise him/ her accordingly.

Question Five

Have you ever been into a “special” relationship with someone? Write a one-page essay to

describe how it felt like to be in such a situation; who this person was and why do you think that this relationship was, indeed, special?

APPENDIX E



P.O. Box 2318
Empangeni
3880
09 November 2012

The Honourable Chief
KwaMthethwa Reserve
EMPANGENI

Dear Sir

Application for Permission

I hereby ask for a permission to conduct an educational study with some high schools in your area. Specific schools have not yet been identified, but that can be done in due course as soon as I obtain the permission.

I would like to ascertain you that the rights of your people (directly or indirectly involved in the study) will be respected at all times. Their right to privacy, anonymity, informed consent, avoidance of harm, confidentiality and many others will be treated with extra caution. I have attached herewith a consent form which I will ask you to sign provided you afford me the opportunity to access the schools.

I hope the study will benefit the schools concerned now and many other years to come.

I trust that you will consider my request.

So, may I thank you in advance.

Yours sincerely
Nkabinde W.S. (Mr)
Lecturer, University of Zululand (Department of English)
Cel.: 0823642587

APPENDIX F



CONSENT FORM (Chief/ Induna)

I, (Full names), ID:
....., hereby allow Mr Nkabinde W.S. to conduct an
educational research in the said schools under the area of my administration.

POSITION:

DATE:
.....

SIGNATURE:

APPENDIX G



Empangeni
3880
09 November 2012

The Parent/ Guardian
KwaMthethwa Reserve
EMPANGENI

Dear Sir/ Madam

Application for a Permission

I hereby ask for a permission to conduct an educational study with your child or children who are learners at the high schools so and so (I will mention the name of the school). The study aims at improving the education of our learners in the schools concerned.

I would like to ascertain you that the rights of your children (directly or indirectly involved in the study) will be respected at all times. Their right to privacy, anonymity, informed consent, avoidance of harm, and many others will be treated with extra caution. I have attached herewith a consent form which I will request you to sign if you do allow me to involve your children.

I hope the study will benefit the schools concerned now and many other years to come.

I trust you will consider my request.

So, may I thank you in advance.

Yours sincerely
Nkabinde W.S. (Mr)
Lecturer, University of Zululand (Department of English)
Cel.: 0823642587

APPENDIX H



CONSENT FORM (Parent/ Guardian of a child)

I, (Full names), ID:
....., hereby grant Mr Nkabinde W.S. a permission to
involve my child in the educational research he is conducting.

NAME OF LEARNER/S: SCHOOL:
.....

GRADE:

RELATION TO LEARNER:

DATE: SIGNATURES (P./ G.):
.....

LEARNER:
.....

APPENDIX I



P.O. Box 2318
Empangeni
3880
09 November 2012

The Principal

(SCHOOL NAME)

Dear Sir/ Madam

Application for a Permission

I hereby ask for a permission to involve your school in my educational study which I intend to run in 2013.

I would like to ascertain you that the rights of all participants, directly or indirectly involved in the study, will be respected at all times. Their right to privacy, anonymity, informed consent, avoidance of harm, confidentiality and many others will be treated with extra caution. I have attached herewith a consent form which I will ask you to sign provided you afford me the opportunity to access the school.

The aim of the study is to establish whether English tense is taught in schools and what methods or approaches are used in this regard. Moreover, the study will investigate if the teaching or non-teaching of tense would have any impact on learners' communicative competence in English.

I hope the study will benefit not only your school, but many others as well.

I trust you will consider my request.

So, may I thank you in advance.

Yours sincerely
Nkabinde W.S. (Mr)
Lecturer, University of Zululand (Department of English)
Cel.: 0823642587

APPENDIX J



CONSENT FORM (Principal)

I, (Full names), ID:
....., hereby allow Mr Nkabinde W.S. access to my school,
(School Name) in order for him to
conduct an educational research. I understand that he was granted permission by the Department of
Education.

POSITION:

DATE:
.....

SIGNATURE:

APPENDIX K



Empangeni
3880
09 November 2012

Dear Learner

May I kindly ask you to participate in an academic research I am intending to do with your school and others in your neighbourhood. What I will need from you, provided we reach an agreement, is to allow me access your academic work, especially the written one. I will check it with the intention of finding whether or not you are taught tense at school and what methods or approaches your educators use. The aim of the study is to establish whether the teaching or non-teaching of tense would have any impact on your communicative competence in English.

I would like to assure you that your rights will be highly observed. The right to privacy, anonymity, informed consent, avoidance of harm and many others will be given extra attention. The names of the participants in the study will surely not be divulged.

I have attached herewith a consent form which I request you to sign if you agree to my request.

I trust you will consider my request.

Yours faithfully
Nkabinde W.S. (Mr)
Lecturer, University of Zululand (Department of English)
Cel.: 0823642587

APPENDIX L



P.O. Box 2318
Empangeni
3880
09 November 2012

The Circuit Manager
Lower Umfolozi

Dear Sir/ Madam

Application for Research Permission

I hereby request you to allow me conduct an educational research with some schools in your circuit, Lower Umfolozi. I intend to run the said research in 2013.

The intended study is on English language. I would like to ascertain you that the rights of all participants, directly or indirectly involved in the study, will be observed at all times. The rights to privacy, anonymity, informed consent, avoidance of harm, confidentiality and many others will be observed with extra care. I have attached herewith a consent form which I request you to sign upon your acceptance of my application.

The aim of the study is to establish whether English *tense* is taught in schools and what methods or approaches are used in this regard. Moreover, the study will investigate if the teaching or non-teaching of *tense* would have any impact on learners' communicative competence in English.

I hope the study will be of great significance to your circuit, in particular, and education, generally.

I trust you will consider my request favourably.

Yours sincerely
Nkabinde W.S. (Mr)
Lecturer, University of Zululand (Department of English)
Cel.: 0823642587

APPENDIX M



CONSENT FORM (Circuit Manager)

I, (Full names), ID:

....., hereby allow Mr Nkabinde W.S. access to my circuit,

(Circuit Name) for him to conduct an educational research.

POSITION:

DATE:

SIGNATURE: