

Chapter 1: Background

This study investigates the error analysis practices of English 2nd language teachers working with English 2nd language learners. It focuses error analysis as an essential professional skill needed by township teachers in order to broaden and deepen their understanding of learners' language errors so as to give good quality feedback for learning.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Taylor (2008, p.2) states that the poor performance of South African schools compared to those in both developed and other developing countries has been established at primary and secondary levels. Taylor's statement indicates that South African teachers struggle with many challenges in assessment and these challenges impact on the quality of classroom interaction. One of the assessment challenges facing teachers is that the Department of Education is demanding evidence of teachers giving feedback on learner assessments, yet the problem is that giving feedback on learner assessment demands additional expertise on teachers. The recent move by the Department of Basic Education, which puts more accountability pressure on teachers, has been the creation of a new performance management document called "Teacher Performance Appraisal (TPA) (January 2011)". Amongst the performance standards on which teachers will be evaluated is "Learner assessment and achievement". Three out of four important criteria in this performance standard are the abilities of teachers to provide: "(a) feedback to learners, (b) to know and use a range of forms of assessment techniques to continuously maximise learner-achievement, and (c) to keep records of assessment, and use these records to adjust teaching strategies and improve learner achievement" (Teacher Performance Appraisal (TPA), 2011; p.16 & 17). The demands of this performance standard are adding difficulties and frustrations to the already embattled teacher work-force.

Recently, the Gauteng provincial government launched its Gauteng Provincial Literacy Strategy which attempts to bring effective language learning and teaching into 791 underperforming primary schools of this province. What makes matters worse is that all primary schools in Soweto are underperforming according to the results of Annual National Assessment (ANA) conducted by the Department of Basic Education. During the 2011 Soweto Education Summit, the Gauteng MEC for Education proclaimed that all primary

schools in Soweto have performed less than 35% in Grade 3 Numeracy and Literacy, less than 24% in Grade 6 Mathematics and less than 40 % in Grade 6 languages. As a language teacher, I am concerned that all primary schools in Soweto did not do well in languages. So it leads me to reflect on my own teaching.

The problem I encountered in my work is that my colleagues and I usually talk about our learners language problems without useful conclusions. All we do is to make a list of general statements such as: “learners can’t think properly, can’t write properly, can’t spell properly, do not know anything, can’t read.” We fail to reach a point of knowing how these learners’ problems can be solved. We do not realize that learner errors are sources of ‘valuable feedback’ and ‘evidence’ of language development (Raimes, 1991). Therefore, our learners’ language needs are not clearly identified and thus our strategies to remedy or rectify them are flawed.

Heritage et al (2009) alerted me to a different way of understanding the issue. They discovered that “teachers were better at drawing reasonable inferences about student levels of understanding from assessment information than they are at deciding the next instructional steps.” This reading resonated with the problems that affect me and my colleagues. But the question is: Are we, like the teachers investigated by Heritage et al (2009), better at identifying than remediating learner errors on assessment tasks? Are we also bad at deciding what next to teach in order to meet our learners language needs?

Observing my own practice after reading Heritage et al (2009), instinctively I wanted to find a ‘survival tool-kit’, i.e. a range of abilities to handle classroom learning and assessment activities. Thus I decided to investigate the extent of teachers’ knowledge and skills to accurately interpret learners’ errors as a basis for deciding on the next appropriate measures to close the learning gaps in Grade 6 English Additional Language Classrooms.

1.2 Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is two-fold. Firstly, I want to investigate Grade 6 English First Additional language teachers’ knowledge and skills of analysing learners’ errors. Secondly, I want to investigate their knowledge and skills in analysing errors and deciding next appropriate measures to close the learning gaps.

I see teacher understanding of learner errors in English First Additional language worth investigating for the following reasons:

- I believe that it is within the professional abilities of teachers to know progression in their subjects. Furthermore, deep subject knowledge helps the teacher to see the systematic gaps from learners' errors. Anecdotal evidence leads me to believe that teachers do not know progression of their English First Additional Language hence they do not know how to give appropriate feedback to learners.
- I also believe that Formative Assessment is a purposeful classroom activity. It implies acts of accurate thoughts and professional planning by teachers. From my reading in the field of assessment I have come to understand that teachers ought to know how to analyse and give feedback, as well as to plan strategies of how to deal with learner errors. As Heritage et al (2009) research findings showed that teachers found it difficult to come up with strategies of how to deal with learners' errors, I am interested to see how grade 6 teachers would respond to this aspect of formative assessment.

1.3 Research Questions

Critical Question: What do Grade 6 teachers in Soweto classes do to identify, interpret, evaluate and remediate learner errors in English First Additional Language?

Research sub-questions

1. What common errors do learners in grade 6 English First Additional Language class make?
2. What types of errors do teachers pick up on when they identify common learner errors?
3. What kind of feedback do teachers say they would give to learners in response to these errors?
4. What teaching strategies do teachers suggest for remediating these errors?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

A recent and sophisticated development in assessment has been the shift from thinking about learning, teaching and assessment as separate entities to thinking of them as an integrated system that informs the process of learning. This is what Black (2003) calls “Formative Assessment”. Through the introduction of OBE about 14 years ago, South Africa embraced Formative Assessment in the National Curriculum Statements policies. However, the integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment has brought new challenges to teachers and policymakers. Formative assessment is important in my study because of its purpose in the process of classroom learning, teaching and assessment, which is to enhance learning through a shift in teaching that arises from reflection on the results of summative assessment.

I understand the relationship between formative assessment and error analysis as follows: Formative assessment is a ‘big idea’ that informs a broad classroom practice, while error analysis is one of several smaller ideas that make up the ‘big idea’ (Black, 2003). In order to fully explore the interconnection between formative assessment and error analysis, I have found it useful to read in 4 different areas of focus:

1. The purpose of formative assessment and the demands it places on teachers
2. Theory of mistakes and errors in English language acquisition
3. Giving feedback to learners
4. Teachers’ subject-matter knowledge for English First Additional Language

Formative assessment and the demands it places on teachers provides knowledge regarding shifts and developments in the field of assessment. The theory of mistakes and errors provides knowledge from the language field regarding developments in understanding the causes and types of language mistakes and errors as well as best ways of dealing with them. The literature on feedback provides approaches to and strategies for giving feedback on learners’ written work. And teachers’ subject-matter knowledge provides an understanding of the disciplinary knowledge that shapes classroom assessment practices. Ultimately, I expect Chapter 2 to provide me with knowledge, insights, and conceptual tools for analysing my research findings.

2.1 The purpose of Formative Assessment and the demands it places on teachers

In this section I focus on the ‘big idea’, called ‘formative assessment’ (Black, 2003), as a useful frame for error analysis, because using assessment to support learning is the purpose that gives meaning to analysing errors. Olsen (1999) informs us that error analysis has traditionally been used, *inter alia*, “as an approach used for pedagogical reasons, to point out problematic areas to be focused on in teaching” (p.191). While formative assessment broadly embraces ideas that seek to foster improvement in the classroom, error analysis specifically “collects and assesses learners’ errors” as well as suggesting ways to minimize those errors (Distance Delta Book, 1998).

With regard to how teachers engage with learners’ errors, it is also important to make a distinction between formative and summative assessment. Summative assessment is concerned with judgements of subject matter acquisition or lack of it, thus judges errors to be simply wrong and incorrect. There is no need to analyse why a learner made the error and how it is incorrect. In contrast, formative assessment is concerned with classroom improvement of teaching and learning, leading to being interested in the reasons why learners made the errors and finding solutions to minimize them. The main argument I want to foreground in this section is the on-going tension between the values and purposes of summative and formative assessment.

2.1.1 The different purposes served by summative and formative assessment

The main distinction is associated with the purposes they serve. The purpose of Summative Assessment is to ‘measure attainment’ over a period of time of study (Clarke, 2005). It is also associated with tests and examinations, which are historically regarded as objective in measuring the development of intellectual abilities of individuals. The main purpose of Formative Assessment is the improvement of students’ learning through the application of on-going, informal assessment. This practice involves assessment strategies such as “questioning, feedback through marking, self- and peer-assessment, and the formative use of summative tests” (Black, 2003, p 4 -8; David and Lines, 2000; NCS, 2002, Clarke, 2005). Through research conducted by the proponent of formative assessment (Black, 1998), the

following strategies were identified: (i) Questioning, (ii) Feedback through marking, (iii) Peer and self-assessment, and (iv) Formative use of summative tests. I will give detailed explanations in the section that deals with giving feedback to learners.

2.1.2 The tension and relationship between summative assessment and formative assessment

The purpose of each assessment is one area where tension exists. Summative assessment is concerned with defining levels of achievement for the purposes of grading and selecting students, while Formative Assessment is focused on the level of achievement so as to make improvements in learning and teaching.

The use of assessment is another area where tension exists. If assessment is used by the external examiner, it creates tension because the results of an external examination have a double agenda. Firstly, a teacher would like his or her students to do well in the external examination and will thus teach-to-the-test, with the danger that knowledge which students are supposed to learn is ignored because of a focus on examination. It is not that teachers teach their students only examination-taking skills, but they get caught up in the scope of the examination. Secondly, when the results of the external examination are not good, it implies that the school is not good at curriculum delivery. The culture of labelling schools as underperforming causes tension because it is not only students' performance that is being evaluated but also the performance of teachers. As Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, 2011, states: "It is critical that ANA data be effectively utilised at all levels of the system". It becomes evident from this statement that it is not only schools that get pressure from poor results, but also district, provinces and the national level.

There are times when summative assessment and formative assessment work in harmony. Firstly, teachers use both summative assessment and formative assessment in schools. Secondly, both forms of assessment are used by teachers to give a more accurate reflection of students' performance. Black (2003) coined the term 'formative use of summative tests' which shows an interrelationship between them. If test results are used to inform teachers and learners about gaps in their learning and teaching, then the back and forth relay forms a strong bond between summative and formative assessment.

2.1.3 Formative assessment and the demands it places on teachers

2.1.3.1 Paradigm shift

Formative assessment demands change in the way teachers think about learning, teaching and assessment. It demands a shift away from thinking about learning, teaching and assessment as separate entities towards thinking of them as an integrated system that informs the process of learning. This shift comes from the progressive voices of constructivists. It is a bone of contention between teachers who believe in separating instruction from assessment and those who believe in an integrated vision of instruction and assessment. But the tension is not easily resolvable.

Shepard (2000) informs us that “assessment and instruction are often conceived curiously separate in both time and purpose”. The historical evidence she gives is the period (1980s – 2000+) which shows the strongly held paradigm that assessment and learning were separate activities. The implication was that teaching belonged to the schools while testing belonged to the education officials, policymakers and independent agents. However, the “emergent paradigm (1990s- 2000+)”, which falls within our era has caused a dissolution of the separatist views (Shepard, 2000). New learning theories challenged the principles of the old paradigm and brought new understanding of what learning is. This is what Shepard called ‘The Reformed Vision of Curriculum’. One of the fundamental insights about learning is that it is not a mechanistic acquisition of knowledge, but an active process of mental construction and sense making” (Shepard, 2000). The reformed vision of curriculum views assessment not as scientific measurement but as classroom assessment, which can no longer be treated as a specialised activity outside the ability of teachers. It makes me wonder whether there is a power struggle between teachers and policymakers regarding how assessment is shared amongst them in our era.

2.1.3.2 Change in the classroom learning environment

Formative assessment requires a change in classroom culture. Shepard (2000) quotes Perrenoud (1991) that “every teacher who wants to practice formative assessment must reconstruct the teaching contract so as to counteract the habits acquired by his pupils”. This reconstructed contract involves changing the roles played by teachers and considering learners taking more responsibility for self-assessment.

Reflecting on my own experience, I have always regarded my teacher role as central to learning. I see myself as the person who controls the time, space and knowledge of learners. However, the reconstruction demanded by formative assessment is that I need to share some powers of assessment knowledge with my learners. Formative assessment advocates for a different balance of power, one in which learners know how assessment criteria work. It should not only be the teachers who know, but also learners. If learners understand the demands of an assessment task through the set criteria, then a foundation to work towards meeting criteria would have been created. It also works to the benefit of both the teachers and learners that learners can work with their peers, have dialogue about their deepening knowledge of assessment criteria, while the teacher pays attention to those learners who need additional interventions.

One of the changes proposed by formative assessment is that teachers need to be clear about the subjects they teach and to keep on whetting their pedagogical knowledge and skills. Shavelson et al (2002) inform us that knowledge in subjects is divided into four types of knowledge: **declarative** (knowing that), **procedural** (knowing how), **schematic** (knowing why) and **strategic** (knowing when, where, and how) (p.9-11). It means that different subjects are constructed on the basis of different types of knowledge. Therefore, treating sciences, which require more procedural knowledge, the same as history, which requires more declarative knowledge, would not be in line with the new understanding of construct achievement.

For formative assessment to succeed, the lessons from the findings by Black and Wiliam (2006) can teach us something about the kind of changes required. They developed a four-component model for studying the practice of formative assessment: (a) Teachers, learners and the subject discipline; (b) The teacher’s role and the regulation of learning; (c) Feedback

and the student-teacher interaction; and (d) The student's role in learning. The following findings by Black and Wiliam (2006) describe responses to the demands of formative assessment by each component:

1st component: teachers, learners and the subject discipline

The findings by Black and Wiliam (2006) confirmed that when learning about formative assessment, the teachers became more thoughtful about the quality of the questions they asked and of their responses to students' answers. Black and Wiliam also discovered differences created by disciplines. Mathematics and Science teachers tended to "deliver" the subject matter because of the influence of the body of knowledge of these subjects that call for coverage and sequenced concepts while English teachers tended to help students to learn with understanding.

In relation to subject discipline and ways of teaching it, Bertram (2008) argued for deep teacher's knowledge of the subject and ways of teaching it. She demonstrated her argument through the empirical research of the history teaching in grade 10, following the new policy which emphasised learning history through the process of *doing* it as opposed to the process of *knowing* history. Then she discovered two contrasting practices, one being that learners were mostly required to extract information from resources rather than engaging with sources like real historians. Another finding was that learners were not required to demonstrate a strong and in-depth knowledge of history. The weaknesses of policy and classroom implementation did not promote effective learning in two of three schools investigated. So, nothing changed in these two schools. At least in one school, there was effective classroom interaction through the process of ensuring that learners know and do history. The lesson I get from Bertram's research is that teachers need to make professional judgements between what policies propagate and what they know strengthens the disciplines they teach.

2nd component: the teacher's role and the regulation of learning

The assessment initiatives Black and Wiliam's (2006) study led many teachers to think about their teaching in a new way. Teachers' thoughts shifted from what to teach and what learners need to do, towards how to teach and what learners need to learn. This involved a transition from what the teacher was putting into the process, to what the pupils were contributing. This transition was regarded as a significant sustainable change to get the pupils doing more of the thinking, and making learning more collaborative. Advantageously, the teacher spends more time looking for more ways to get pupils to take responsibility for their learning.

3rd component: feedback and the student-teacher interaction

Black and Wiliam (2006) could not provide evidence of what really changed in those classrooms in connection with feedback. So what the authors resorted to was giving advice on feedback and stating the importance of self-assessment. One important comment they made was that feedback in the classroom should operate both from teacher to student and from student to the teacher. Again, messages given in feedback are useless unless students are able to do something with them.

4th component: the student's role in learning

The findings were that students changed role from being passive recipients to being active learners who can take responsibility for and manage their own learning. There are two aspects of motivation discovered, firstly, meta-cognition, i.e. some degree of reflection by student about his or her own learning (Hacker et al, 1998 in Black and Wiliam, 2006), and secondly, the conative and affective dimensions, i.e. changes in the students' perceptions of their teacher's interest in them.

2.1.4 Conclusion

In this section I developed an understanding that the teachers' role is integrationist in the process of learning, teaching, and assessment. In the classrooms, teachers are always coaxing their way through the on-going and un-resolvable tension between summative and formative assessment. The old saying that 'knowledge is power' gives me the idea that the real change

starts with an informed mind. Another element which contributes to change is positiveness - an attitude of being ready to accommodate change.

I have also developed an understanding that the learning process becomes more meaningful when teachers encourage learners to take part in the process of assessment through peer-assessment and self-assessment. This is what Gipps (1999) finds possible and necessary if assessment aims to fulfil its promise to aid and support high- quality learning.

The other important understanding I have developed is that views about learning, teaching and assessment from separatists and integrationists since 1990 to date are still heavily contested. However, I find Gipps (1999, p. 370) useful in her argument that we need to understand education reform and change within the context of our era. The period from 1990 to date marks the era of the 'Reformed vision of Curriculum' (Shepard, 2000), which embraces the integrationist view of learning, teaching and assessment.

An indication that our SA education system learns from the global dialogue on learning, teaching and assessment is that NCS Policy documents have strongly emphasized the view that assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. Nevertheless, the school based assessment gradually decreases from Grade 1-12, indicating more powers to schools in lower grades but more powers to external examiners in higher grades. This implies that the schools cannot be trusted by the government to produce good assessment tasks, hence the introduction of ANA in the GET Band and emphasis on external examination as deciding grades for Grade 12 students.

2.2 Mistakes and Errors in English language acquisition

In this section I reflect on Error Analysis and its role in the acquisition of English language. I present the debates in the field of error analysis with regard to when it is appropriate to correct and when it is more appropriate to ignore learner errors. In addition, this section focuses on common errors that learners make when writing English as an additional language. The main argument I want to foreground is that teachers need to be able to recognize which language errors are significant and how the identified errors can be dealt with.

2.2.1 What is Error Analysis?

Error analysis is the “field of applied linguistics which collects and assesses learners’ errors in order to analyse what learners get wrong, why, and what we need to do in the classroom in order to minimise those errors” (Distance Delta Book, 1998). Olsen (1999) adds that Error Analysis has traditionally been used for three different purposes: firstly, in second language (L2) acquisition studies where the inter-language (language used by learners at a stage in learning a new language) of learners is examined for errors; secondly, as evidence of cross-linguistic influence (transfer or interference) from the first language (L1) onto the second language; thirdly, as an approach used for pedagogical reasons, to point out problematic areas to be focused on in teaching (p.191-192).

It is clear that error analysis, especially for pedagogical reasons, is one of several strategies used to enhance learning within the big idea of Formative Assessment. It is also evident that the field of error analysis developed because learners’ errors were embraced, especially in the late 1960s and 1970s, as an important evidence of learning. But the historical facts prove that a significant shift towards accepting learners’ errors and dealing with them was a serious challenge for teachers and educational policymakers. The challenges for teachers included understanding the differences between mistakes and errors, recognizing the significance of errors, knowing the causes of errors, and knowing strategies of how deal with errors (Olsen, 1999).

2.2.2 The debates in the field of Error Analysis

I start this broad sub-section by looking at the differences between mistakes and errors. I then proceed to the historical developments and debates that led to the recognition of errors as an important evidence of learners’ learning. In addition, I reflect on the causes of errors, types of errors and strategies of treating identified errors.

2.2.2 (a) Reflecting on differences between Mistakes and Errors

Corder (1967) argues that mistakes are “unsystematic errors of performance.” He goes on to say that they can be caused by “memory lapses, physical states such as tiredness and psychological conditions such as strong emotions”. He further says that mistakes do not

reflect a defect in our knowledge of our own language. We are normally “immediately aware of them when they occur and can correct them with more or less complete assurance”. He goes on to argue that it would be meaningless to state rules for making mistakes because if we are immediately aware of our mistakes and can correct them, then what would be the significance of correcting mistakes in the learning process? The implication created by Corder (1967) is that mistakes can be ignored during the process of learning.

Corder (1967) argues that errors, on the other hand, are “systematic errors of learner’s transitional competence”. The point he is bringing forward is that errors are located within the learner’s misunderstanding of the language system. The language system comprises rules of how words are pronounced, how sentences are constructed, and other areas such as idioms, proverbs, poetry, etc. While the learner proceeds to learn the language, there are areas within the language system where he or she experiences misunderstandings. It is through errors that “learner’s underlying knowledge of the language to date” can be revealed (Corder, 1967). The advantage that learners’ language errors provide is that they enable teachers to “reconstruct learner’s knowledge of the language to date” (p25).

2.2.2 (b) The significance of errors

In the 1950s and 1960s, there was a generally accepted school of thought from the behaviourists that learners’ mistakes were “bad” and thus had to be avoided. It is evident from this statement that the differences between mistakes and errors were not yet clearly defined. But the most important point I would like to foreground is the avoidance of these mistakes and errors. It is said that the behaviouristic methods such as ‘Audio-Lingualism’ propagated the idea of learning as the formation of good habits. So, it implied that any error committed by learners was viewed as “deviation from desired behaviour which, if not corrected immediately, would lead to the formation of bad habits and mis-learned information” (Distance Delta Book, 1998).

It is interesting to note that in the Audio-Lingualism approach to teaching a new language, errors were immediately corrected. The impression I get is that the teachers, because of language experience and authority over learners, would correct all the mistakes and errors. It also implies that mistakes and errors were regarded as the same and thus treated equally.

The Distance Delta Book (1998) informs us that Fries C.C. of the University of Michigan in the US developed the field of ‘Contrastive Analysis’ (CA) to investigate causes of errors in language learning. Through Contrastive Analysis, Fries compared and contrasted linguistic systems of two languages, that is, their grammatical or phonological systems. Contrastive Analysis points to the differences between the target language (TL) and the learner’s first language (Native Language/NL) as the main difficulty of learning the new language. Laroche (1983) adds that Contrastive Analysis propagated the idea that ‘close’ languages are easier to learn than ‘remote’ ones. He goes on to say that the position of Contrastive Analysis focused on the belief that second language learners’ errors are due to Native Language interference. I believe this was a good study in terms of knowing the causes of errors in additional language learning. Laroche (1983) further highlights that Contrastive Analysis does not generally get credit in current research for its prediction of errors, except in phonology (study of the speech sounds of a particular language).

The differences between mistakes and errors were clearly defined by this time, even though the practice of avoiding errors was still dominating. The understanding provided by Contrastive Analysis led to teaching practice that aimed at eliminating learners’ errors as soon as teachers could hear them in spoken language or see them in written language. So, the attitudes of teachers towards learners’ errors were “intolerant, with an understanding that the errors would disappear” (Distance Delta Book, 1998, p.?). Unfortunately, the language policies, teachers’ practice and belief in the Contrastive Analysis could not eliminate errors. Raimes (1991) adds that there was an ‘avoidance policy on error’ in the 1960s. She further says that teachers gave students tasks that were 98% certain for students to get them right. This means that teachers always relied on their language experience to predict and select easier tasks for their learners and that there were official language materials readily available for teachers to select easier tasks for their learners. It also implies that extended writing tasks were heavily controlled, to the point that learners would be given prepared text with cues and answers. Seemingly, the second language (or additional language, according to South African terminology) learning policy might have avoided learners’ free-writing exercises so that few errors could be made.

I think this might have happened because responsibility of marking learners’ work with many errors demoralised policy-makers and teachers. Instinctively, learners were also affected by many errors in their written work and might have doubted showing it to their classmates,

unless it was good enough. Furthermore, many learners' errors might have given the wrong impression to education officials about teachers' teaching abilities. Thus, in the case of additional language learning, all possible means were made to protect the genuine language from distortion in terms of incorrect structure and terminology by foreign learners. But, as years progressed and the practice of avoiding learners' errors failed to tackle their persistence, the acceptance of Fries' Contrastive Analysis became inadequate to address issues of additional language learning. Then a new understanding of the additional language learning process was needed.

From 1960s onwards, Chomsky's work rejected Behaviourism and Contrastive Analysis. Chomsky argued that learning is a cognitive activity and errors are part of a learning process (Distance Delta, 1998). A new understanding was acquired by educationists and teachers that errors were essential evidence or "windows (clues) into the mind" of a learner's learning process (Raimes, 1991). The acceptance that errors were important in the process of learning led to a new belief and approach to additional language teaching. It then meant that the notion of error avoidance and 'prediction of difficulties in acquiring' an additional language were challenged through a 'Non-Contrastive Approach' to language teaching (Richards, 1971). Instead of sticking to contrastive studies, the teaching fraternity shifted significantly towards 'cognitive approaches' to language learning, teaching and assessment (The Distance Delta Book, 1998).

In the 1970s an intensified debate between "learning and acquiring" language consolidated the view that errors are natural aspects of the learner's development, irrespective of whether it is acquired informally as a primary language or learned formally as an additional language (Richards, 1971). Then the new development of focusing on the learner's message took a centre stage in the "strong" communicative approach to language learning (Raimes, 1991). The main focus in this regard is communication and to resolve only those errors that cause a communication breakdown. So the shift of focus from grammatical errors to communication errors occurred because it is the message of the speaker (the learner in this regard) which is more important than just bits and pieces of the language. It became a common understanding that the main function of the language is communication, hence the need to foreground the message of the speaker. Yet this message can be conveyed through both verbal and non-verbal forms. That raises the question in which form correction is more meaningful? Raimes (1991) argues for correcting errors during written communication because "we produce a

visible record of what we say”, thus writing gives us an advantage to “write our ideas, then look at them, reflect, monitor, make changes, add, delete, edit” (p.55).

The significance of the debates for and against error recognition highlights globally important developments in the field of second language learning and teaching from 1950s to date.

One of the interesting arguments still resonating in my mind is the theory of ‘flux and agitation’ – meaning ‘what seemed to be well established doctrine a few years ago is now the subject of extensive debate’ (Chomsky, 1966 as quoted by Corder, 1967, p. 20).

Consequently, the acceptance of the Contrastive Analysis waned when debates about Error Analysis grew stronger and gained acceptance from the second language scholars and policymakers. However, the same waning period might have happened or may still happen to Error Analysis. Interestingly, Error Analysis largely falls within our era of understanding and practices of second language learning.

2.2.3 Reflecting on Causes of Errors

Sesnan (2005, p.261-262) argues that children all over the world often come across forms of spoken English which contain ‘mistakes’ or ‘errors’. As a result of this contact, learners learn these widespread errors. Errors which nearly everyone makes are called ‘common errors’.

Sesnan (2005) distinguishes three causes of common errors. These are:

(i) Inter-language

The author argues that when learning a second language there is a halfway type of language called ‘inter- language’. It contains errors which come from a mistaken use of rules or a use of vocabulary which is inadequate for what the pupil wants to say.

Olsen (1999) adds that through the development of theories of L2 acquisition in the late 1960s and 1970s, error analysis attained a new significance, with emphasis put on explaining the process of learning through studying learners’ errors in production of the target language. The term inter-language was introduced, defined as the language used by learners at a stage in learning a new language. He goes on to say that inter-language contains elements of L1 as well as L2, or it may include elements from neither of these.

(ii) Mother-tongue influence

Olsen (1999, p. 192) also points to the mother-tongue as one of the causes of common errors in matters of vocabulary and pronunciation. Occasionally, but not commonly, it may affect grammar as well. He adds that in the 1950s, in the days of Behaviourism, the study of negative influence from L1 on the learning of L2 was termed ‘language transfer’. Olsen goes on to say that at the end of 1960s terms like interference and transfer were abandoned after a new understanding that L2 acquisition is similar to L1 acquisition. Then in 1980s, transfer came back under a new term called ‘cross-linguistic influence’ but was understood as a creative process, much as any other part of language acquisition.

These insights from Olsen (1999) are important in terms of providing the developments in the language of change. It is interesting to see that the same thing can be termed differently due to reactions that come with sophistications of a particular time and place. For example, in the South African context, ‘mother-tongue’ was once termed ‘vernacular’, but recently termed ‘home language’.

(iii) Local dialect of English

The author argues that local dialects of English are another cause or source of errors which are now part of the English in the area where the pupil lives. One disadvantage of these errors is that they become fossilized errors, meaning expressions which are wrong but there is probably no hope of changing them. In addition, Sesnan (2005, p. 262) argues further that some errors add to the language or improve the language of the same country by creation, by ordinary people, of new terms. For example, terms like ‘bounced: in Uganda ‘bounced’ means ‘had to come back because you were not there.’ Other delightful additions to English are ‘cousin-brother’, cousin-sister, girl-friend (implying: with whom I do not have sex), girl-lover (with whom I do).

2.2.3 (a) Errors which do not affect the meaning

Sesnan (2005, p.262) argues that some errors which do not affect the meaning should not be regarded as very serious. For an example, when people say: ‘can be able’ instead of ‘can’ or ‘borrow’ instead of ‘lend’.

2.2.3 (b) Errors which do affect the meaning

Sesnan (2005, p.262) argues that teachers should reserve real effort for those errors that either cause confusion or reduce the flexibility of the language. An example given by author is: When pupils confuse 'if' and 'in case', thus: 'take these tablets in case you get malaria' means 'take them now to prevent malaria', while 'take these tablets if you get malaria' means 'take them only when you know you have malaria'.

2.2.4 Types and sources of errors

Distance Delta (1998) argues that categorising the sources of errors can help teachers to understand why the learner has made the error and thus help the teacher to formulate a strategy of error treatment (p.9). There are many different classifications of the sources of errors. Early on, Corder (1967) classified types of errors into:

- **Pre-systematic:** when a learner is ignorant of the language rule,
- **Systematic:** when a learner has found a rule but is applying it wrongly, and
- **Post-systematic:** when a learner has lapses in his /her use of the correct rule.

This is a useful generalization for teachers to keep in mind, but it might be difficult for a teacher to establish which reason applies without asking the learner to describe their understanding of the language rule.

More recently, Distance Delta (1998) presented the following sources of errors:

- **L1 Transfer:** These should be considered as transfer mistakes.
- **False analogy:** The learner has compared the language item and made untrue comparison, e.g. plait rhymes with wait.
- **Overgeneralization:** The learner applies the rule too generally, e.g. the use of will for future meaning.
- **Over-learning:** The learner may become too focused on a piece of language because it has been taught recently or because it does not occur in his or her own language and subsequently overuse it.
- **Ignorance:** The learner does not know the language.
- **Incomplete learning:** The learner has not learned the whole rule, only part of it.

Again, these are useful sources for the teacher to keep in mind, but they are generalised and do not yet help with the specifics of correction. I found the categories of errors presented by Sesnan and Olsen to be more insightful.

2.2.4 (a) Error categories presented by Sesnan

A) Consonant errors

In African languages almost every word ends with a vowel (Sesnan, 2005, p.263). This implies that some background of learners' languages is important for the teacher in order to understand the language differences to English and to find suitable ways to deal appropriately with the identified errors. In addition, Sesnan (2005) seems to suggest application of the Contrastive Approach between African languages and English language. The difference between English and African languages in this regard, is that English has more words with consonant clusters. Sesnan (2005) describes a consonant cluster as a "group of consonants pronounced without a vowel between them". It also implies that when African learners pronounce words without vowels between them, the teacher can expect errors which are a result of mother tongue influence. Though the focus in this project is on the written text rather than the spoken text, the relevance of the verbal text is also useful for the influence it may have in the written text.

Examples of consonant clusters common to English are:

- **Consonant clusters with two sounds:** 'fly', 'cry', 'spy', 'snow', 'plan', 'halt', 'catch'
- **Consonant clusters with three or more sounds:** 'extra', 'matchsticks', 'describe', 'screw'

Sesnan (2005) argues that, unless the teacher is very firm with his or her learners, they will solve their difficulty of pronouncing a cluster in one of three ways mentioned below. It seems as if Sesnan (2005, p.263) is giving examples of errors made by English second language pupils when pronouncing consonant clusters, which may be easily transferred to written work. When I look closely at the following examples, they refer more to the Foundation Phase learners' language experiences than those in the Intermediate Phase level especially the second and third bullets.

- By not pronouncing the last letter of a word, especially a consonant. Examples: 'complain' instead of 'complaint', 'promise land' instead of 'promised land'

- By adding extra vowels between consonants. Example: ‘kipilefiti’ instead of ‘keep left’
- By reversing consonants: Example: ‘aksed’ instead of ‘asked’

B) Vowel errors

English words may confuse First Additional language learners because of the length of vowels. They may mispronounce or confuse, for example: ‘live/leave’, ‘fill/feel’, ‘cat/cart’, ‘pack/park’ (Sesnan, 2005, p.263).

C) Other errors

Sesnan (2005, p. 264) says that trouble can come from the following language areas:

- tense
- confusion of singular and plural
- sentence structure
- word for word translation (‘We ate food and meat’). These errors often occur in words which describe family relationships, in food and cookery terms, and in colours
- wrong word order (‘My brother is a police traffic’)
- wrongly applying the rules for creation of new words (a doctress).

The error categories given by Sesnan (2005) focused on micro-features of the language, which are grammar and vocabulary. Consonant and vowel errors can also be viewed as a focus on the spelling of words. For Sesnan (2005) to name the third category of errors as ‘other errors’ implies miscellany, which may be regarded as paltry or the author could not find any proper concept to classify these language errors.

2.2.4 (b) Error categories presented by Olsen

Olsen (1999, p. 195-202) provides the following list of error categories:

A) Orthography(wrong spelling of words)

Spelling errors are viewed by Olsen as often, but not always, unsystematic and perhaps should have not been included in his study. However, circumstances compelled him to include orthographic errors because many learners had serious problems with spelling. He goes on to say that poor spelling caused many Norwegian learners to perform poorly in

the English language examination (p. 196).

Examples: **sence** (sense), **scateboard** (skateboard), **ciled**(killed).

The explanation Olsen (1999, p.198) gives why learners made these orthographic errors is due to phonological differences between Norwegian and English languages. He said that the letter c is rarely used in Norwegian and often in English. Therefore, many Norwegian generalise the use of letter c to replace s or k in some cases.

B) Morphology (grammatical errors on word level, such as tense/aspect, inflections, etc.)

Olsen (1999, p.198) gave the following examples on the level of morphology:

If we had not videos in Norway, willing we wish we had that.

So don't be afraid when you looking at videos.

The next day we used spending on London many parks.

I have living in New York in 5 years.

He thought it was very funny and didn't listening when I told him to stop.

The brief explanation he gives on the above morphological errors is the overuse of the present progressive. He goes on to say that the learners clearly have understood neither the form nor the meaning of present progressive, as the auxiliary 'to be' is left out or replaced by another auxiliary, and the participle is used in various contexts.

C) Syntax (word order and sentence structure)

Olsen (1999, p. 200) argued that language mixing is very frequent on the syntactic level, especially Norwegian word order and expressions. The following examples show different verbal and adjectival complementation between Norwegian and English:

Examples: John are good to skate (John er god a skoyte)

I am not so good in English (Jegerikkesa god iengelsk)

D) Lexis (wrong words)

Olsen (1999, p. 199-200) gave examples of lexis or 'language mixing' which would produce what he termed 'Norwenglish':

I go in a dark gate (Nowergian *gate* = *street*)

I could cry for times (Norwegian *time* = *hour*)

When looking at the error categories given by Olsen (1999), I get the sense that he is focusing mainly on micro-features of language, which are grammar and vocabulary. Error categories such as orthography, morphology and lexis focus on errors at the level of a word. Yet the category of syntax moves the focus to a sentence structure level.

Comparatively, both Sesnan (2005) and Olsen (1999) focused their error categories on micro-features of the language, which are grammar and vocabulary. They also used a Contrastive Analysis between English and their learners' home language. Sesnan (2005) contrasted phonological differences between African languages and English, while Olsen (1999) contrasted Norwegian language and English. Yet they differed in their categorizations. Sesnan (2005) named two language error categories as 'consonant, and vowel errors' but could not convincingly name the third error category. Olsen (1999) named four language error categories as 'orthography, morphology, syntax and lexis'. It means that Olsen (1999) gave more language error categories than Sesnan (2005).

However, the language error categories have something in common when looking at the examples given by each author. Sesnan's consonant and vowel error categories can be linked to Olsen's orthography error category. The 'other errors' category by Sesnan (2005) can be further classified and linked to at least three of Olsen's categories. For example, Sesnan's 'other errors' category examples of 'tense and confusion of singular and plural' can be linked to Olsen's error category of morphology. Sesnan's 'other errors' category examples of 'wrong word order, sentence structure and word for word translation' can be linked to Olsen's error category of syntax. And the last of Sesnan's 'other errors' category examples, i.e. 'wrongly applying rules for creation of new words (e.g. doctress)' can be linked to Olsen's error category of lexis.

The four language error categories by Olsen (1999) give a clear classification of grammar and vocabulary errors. Olsen (1999) focused more on micro-features (grammar and vocabulary) of the language than its macro- features (organisation and ideational development). The implication is that most trouble experienced by the second language learners comes from the micro-features of the language. It further implies that errors in the micro-features of the language are inescapable by second language learners and teachers need to be aware of this glaring fact.

2.2.5 Strategies for correcting common errors

When it comes to strategies of error correction, it is a highly debatable notion. There are contrasting ideas as to whether it should be done explicitly or implicitly, and should correction be made or not. In the next few paragraphs, I will be presenting some views by international researchers in the field of English Language.

Firstly the Taiwanese researcher, Truscott (2007) sees no value of error correction in writing classes. Based on his evaluation and synthesis research, he argues that the effectiveness of correction, especially with regard to correcting students in grammar errors, is overestimated. He concluded: “research has found correction to be a clear and dramatic failure. The performance of corrected groups is in fact so poor that the question “How effective is correction?” should be replaced by “How harmful is correction?” (p. 271). The implication he gives me is that error correction is insignificant because learners do not benefit from this kind of feedback. It seems as if he feels that error correction is a waste of time for both the teacher and the learner.

In contrast, the Turkish researchers, Incecay and Dollar (2011) argued for paying attention to foreign language learners’ beliefs regarding the role of grammar and error correction. Their argument upholds the interest and positive attitude towards grammar and error correction sought out by teachers and learners. They concluded that learners held beliefs that grammar is important, yet that it should be taught in a more communicative way, not in an explicit and ‘boring’ way (p.3398). The learners also believed error correction to be important. I get the sense that these Turkish researchers see the importance of error correction. But they make it conditional on being meaningful to learners, which is more likely to happen when correction is done in an implicit way. Their position implies that grammar should be taught in a manner that binds it with real life situations: such as writing a dialogue, preparing a speech, debates, a letter to a friend, etc. Their communicative view resonates well with Raimes (1991) who advocated for written communication. Raimes (1991) emphasized the importance of the speaker’s message and the record that we create for us to reflect on and improve in our quest for meaningful language learning.

Thirdly, the Iranian researchers, Varnosfardrani and Basturkmen (2009) did a study which involved fifty six intermediate level Iranian learners of English who had to read and retell a

written text. Firstly, participants were corrected on their grammatical errors implicitly or explicitly during the interview. Secondly, individualised tests were constructed and administered based on corrected errors. The results revealed higher scores for the explicitly corrected learners than the implicitly corrected ones. Further analysis showed that language features which are learned early in the developmental process of language learning are learned better with explicit correction, while language features that come later in the developmental process are learned better with implicit correction. They found errors on simple language rules easier to correct explicitly, while the more complex language rules were difficult to correct explicitly and better corrected implicitly. They go on to say that implicit correction seems not to draw the attention of the learners to notice the gaps between the target form and their existing inter-language.

These findings indicate that there is no one size fits all method in error correction. So teachers need to carefully understand the complexity of the level of the content to be taught to learners and think of ways to help them notice the gaps between the target language and their inter-language. I am finding Varnosfardrani and Basturkmen's views useful in terms of thinking about ways to help learners learn from their language errors, especially in written communication.

Fourthly, the South African researcher, Sesnan, (2005, p.264) argues in favour of error correction and advises teachers in this manner: "*Do not be afraid to correct errors. It is your job as a teacher, and the pupils will be grateful to you in later life. They will certainly not thank you if they discover, to their embarrassment, years later that you allowed them to use wrong words, expressions, or pronunciation*".

I am finding Sesnan (2005) views about teachers' attitude towards error correction to be convincing. I also feel that teachers are adult leaders who need to keep on thinking about various ways of helping language learners to listen with understanding, to write better or more accurately, and to think broadly as well as deeper. The remaining part of this section tackles different methods which teachers can use for error treatment and correction.

2.2.5 (a) Encourage learners to recognize the error

Sesnan (2005, p.264) argues that recognizing the error is the essential first step to correcting it. It implies that both teachers and learners need skills to recognize and correct errors. The following strategies suggest how both teachers and learners can engage in the process of correcting language errors.

- Teacher can say: You have just made an error in what you said. Can you identify it? Or you have two errors in that paragraph. Can you find them?
- The teacher can encourage the class to correct each other.
- Teacher and learners should have the dictionary handy to check pronunciation and spelling.

Sesnan (2005) suggests a different strategy for when the errors that are common, yet do not affect meaning. In that case, the teacher should simply teach the correct version and then correct the error when marking the composition.

2.2.5 (b) Formulate strategies for error correction and prioritising certain errors

Distance Delta (1998) suggests that once the cause of an error has been understood, teachers need to ask themselves the following questions:

- **What should I focus on?**
Should I take a completely blanket approach to error correction? Or should I focus on certain types of error (persistent errors)? Or should I vary my approach depending on the classroom activity?
- **When do I deal with an error?**
Should I act immediately? Or should I save errors for later correction? Or should I let things pass?
- **How do I deal with an error?**
Should I correct the error? Or should the student correct the error? Or should the peer provide correction of the error?

Also, according to Distance Delta (1998), it is always necessary to use a selective approach to dealing with errors if we are to make effective use of classroom time. The importance of the

error is likely to depend on the following criteria:

- The extent to which the error impedes communication. This criterion refers to the point where communication breaks down or is adversely affected by the writer's or speaker's errors.
- The level of irritation the errors cause to the listener or reader. This criterion too refers to the point where communication breaks down or is adversely affected by the writer's or speaker's errors.
- The level of the learner. We need to recognise if the error is the result of a low-level student experimenting with new language or a higher level student making a slip. This criterion refers to individual students and the extent to which the error he or she made is representative of the type of errors made by the class as a whole.
- The focus of the activity. Was the activity designed to give practice of specific language items? If so, errors within those items might be seen as important? This criterion refers to the learning aim of the class as a whole.

The strategies for correcting errors indicate that the teachers and learners are partners in this formative assessment responsibility. The strategy of letting learners recognize errors through feedback that assigns them to identify and correct or correct each other's errors, especially on written work, formatively grounds learners to become examiners of others and critics of their own work. It also means that learners will be advantaged in terms of always being conscious of errors, a very important personal development of recognizing language errors and dealing with them.

Furthermore, it is not only learners but teachers as well who acquire personal development skills for language error recognition and correction. Critically, the teachers have a leading role to play in order to get their learners interested in error correction. What seems to pave the way is the teacher's understanding of types of errors and their causes, before thinking of an appropriate approach to error correction.

2.2.6 Conclusion

In this section I have illustrated that Error Analysis is an important field in the development of language learning and teaching processes. I have also discussed the debates from 1950s to 1970s which led to the recognition of errors as important evidence of learners' levels of language learning. Importantly, it is through research contributions by scholars such as Fries,

Chomsky, Sesnan, Olsen and many others that a significant shift in approach towards mistakes and errors was achieved. Modern language classrooms can learn from the debates in the field of Error Analysis that the sources of learners' errors can be diverse. Furthermore, diverse sources of learners' language errors imply that there are similarly diverse ways of language error treatment, as suggested by Sesnan (2005) and the Distance Delta (1998).

2.3 Giving Feedback to Learners

In this section I describe what feedback is and the roles of both teachers and learners during the process of respectively giving and responding to feedback. I am particularly interested in the kind of feedback where teachers and learners create a record of evidence regarding their engagement in the process of learning. Even though I will say something about verbal feedback, my project will focus more on feedback given to learners' written work or 'feedback through marking' (Black, 2003, p. 5).

When it comes to feedback given to learners, I would like to boldly agree with Raimes' (1999, p. 55) argument that verbal communication is not the best situation for us to help students correct their errors in English, but writing provides a more appropriate setting as we produce a visible record of what we say. What I like about Raimes' (1991) argument is that it argues for the advantages of giving written feedback on written work. I think that written feedback helps both the learner and the teacher to trace back the level of target language achieved by individual learners and the support they need individually and as a group of learners. He has reservations though about the use of verbal communication when correcting learners' errors.

Raimes' (1991) argument for writing reminds me of an old Japanese saying which I learned from one educational conference almost 12 years ago, which goes as follows: 'What I hear I forget. What I see I remember. What I do I know!' I know that I may not have remembered it perfectly, but the basis of this saying has lasted long enough in my mind because of its emphasis. The significance of using the Japanese saying emphasizes the importance of learning through doing, especially writing in the language class, which contributes to developing impressions that get registered in our long-term memory. I think that the

empirical senses of hearing and sight provide the basic tools for our learning. The importance of written feedback is that learners will see and do something about it or respond to it is more important than the kind of feedback they will just hear.

I think it is commonly accepted that one of the aims of language learning is the ability to communicate effectively using reading and writing skills. I also think that learning the language through reading and writing provides teachers with a solid foundation for making inferences about learners' level of language development or 'Inter-language' (Sesnan, 2005, Olsen; 2009). Therefore Raimes' (1991) argument for written communication between teachers and learners convinces me when he says that writing gives us an advantage to 'write our ideas, then look at them, reflect, monitor, make changes, add, delete, edit' (p.55). It also does not mean that there will absolutely be no verbal communication used to clarify, demonstrate and emphasize certain points emanating from the written communication.

For this research project, I will be analysing learners' written work which includes responses that demand learners to make use of single words, short sentences and paragraphs in different sections of the paper. Though the assessment task given to learners is summative in nature, the analytic process is more of a 'formative use of summative test' (Black, 2003). Learners did not have a chance to draft an essay, give it to the teacher or peer for feedback, then make changes before writing the final essay. This research project also looks at teachers' ability to identify learners' errors based on the written summative task and provide an appropriate feedback as means of enabling learning. So this research project is treading on the grounds where summative and formative assessment work in harmony. Consequently, the main argument I want to foreground in this section is that the teachers need formative assessment skills of understanding learners' errors and giving appropriate feedback.

2.3.1 Reflecting on Feedback

In the historical background of errors and language acquisition, earlier in this chapter, feedback has been identified as an embedded meaning to learners' errors and language acquisition. This meaning attached to errors became more acceptable in the 1970s (Raimes, 1991, p. 56). The significance of relating back to the historical background of feedback lies in the intended reflection that feedback is not a new idea in the fields of language acquisition and error analysis. However, I would like to relevantly place feedback within our era so that

its description links with the current practices and understanding.

Black (2003, p.4) describes feedback as a key way through which Formative Assessment can be practically achieved. In agreement with Black (2003), Reed (2006) described feedback given during the process of learning as ‘feedback for learning.’ Both authors place ‘feedback for learning’ inside the classrooms, in the hands of teachers and learners whose business is mainly learning. Clearly, giving feedback to support learning is one of the demands placed on teachers by Formative Assessment.

With regard to my research project, I will be using feedback for learning, that is, ‘feedback through marking’ (Black, 2003, p.4-5), with reference to the assessment task written by my Grade 6 learners, marked and given feedback by 6 participating teachers. Black (2003) defines feedback as “information about the gap between” the actual level of achievement and the level that is required by the assessment criteria. The most important information in this regard is that feedback must be task-oriented, must reflect what the learner was able to do well or not and how to achieve better next time. And not forgetting the teacher’s role of using the information as “evidence to adapt teaching work to meet learning needs” (p. 3).

In agreement with Black’s (2003) definition of feedback are Raimes (1991) and Reed (2006) who say that feedback is teachers’ responses to learners’ work. They highlight that feedback is a teacher’s responsibility. Raimes (1991) further says that a teacher’s response refers to the teacher’s comments on a student’s paper (p.56). An assumption here may be that teachers automatically possess feedback skills. On the contrary, I see feedback as a difficult skill because it demands accurate error analysis as well as careful thoughts about finding a balance between negative and positive comments for learners who are not doing well. And another challenge is to find relevant comments for learners who are doing well. So, good feedback will always challenge teachers in several ways, hence there is a need of guidelines of giving feedback for learning.

2.3.2 Guidelines for Giving Feedback

The guidelines of feedback for learning which I have selected involve writings from three main authors who share a common ground in terms of promoting the purpose of formative assessment. What I have found interesting is that these guidelines list several strategies of

giving good quality feedback, comment on the roles and responsibilities, and also suggest best times of giving feedback for learning, especially in a second language class. I have divided this subsection into three subheadings: Creating a feedback culture, Pedagogical moments suitable for giving feedback and Strategies for giving good quality feedback.

2.3.2 (a) Creating a Feedback Culture

The teacher's role in the process of learning is pervasive. For it is the teacher who has powers to control learning through the plan of what and how has to be learned, classroom organization, content knowledge, assessment strategies, and so on. And thus it becomes the responsibility of the teacher to create a classroom culture that is conducive to giving and receiving feedback. The idea of creating a feedback culture is best understood as 'changing the contract of learning'. This idea was initiated by Perrenoud in 1991 and highly quoted by many authors in the formative assessment field. It says, "Every teacher who wants to practice formative assessment must reconstruct the teaching contract so as to counteract the habits acquired by his pupils" (Perrenoud in Shepard, 2000, p10). The emphasis is for teachers to create a new culture where learning, teaching and assessment opportunities are beneficial to both parties- teachers and learners. One of the beneficial opportunities for learners in the process of formative assessment is when teachers expose learners to assessment criteria which had always been regarded as a 'no-go area' for learners. Making the criteria for tasks explicit assists learners to recognize areas that still need attention so they can improve their performance.

The following two strategies are important for creating a feedback culture in a writing class:

- **'Buy-in' from learners.** The teacher is expected to firstly discuss with learners the value of drafting, crafting, trial-error-retrial and feedback that supports the various stages of this process. It means that the language teacher needs to convince learners to regard every stage of writing as individually important. Again, the teacher makes explicit the criteria for judging each stage of the writing process (Reed, 2006, p. 5).
- **Feedback as scaffolding for learning.** In this regard, learners need to decode and comprehend feedback. Reed (2006) advises teachers to avoid 'cryptic symbols, general feedback, teachers' discourses, vague or complicated feedback.' In agreement with Reed (2006), Raimes (1991, p57) argues that teachers need to let students know the system they

choose for marking errors in writing. Reed goes on to say that students have no idea of hidden messages contained in symbols such as ‘awk’, ‘frag’, ‘B’ or ‘A’. It implies that teachers need to first discuss and explicitly write the feedback before it will be understood by the learners. I think that the point stressed by both Raimes (1991) and Reed (2006) is about clear comments on how the student can improve his or her work in progress. In fact, the main aim of feedback is to allow and improve the process of learning.

2.3.2 (b) Pedagogical moments suitable for giving feedback

Black (2003) lists four types of formative assessment activities, which are: ‘Questioning, Feedback through marking, Peer- and Self-assessment, and the Formative use of Summative tests (p. 4). It is through these formative assessment activities that a new culture of feedback is practised. I will not be broadly and deeply discussing each activity but I will give highlights of what Black gives as strategies for causing thinking to happen in teachers’ and learners’ minds.

The following four activities or strategies of formative assessment are pedagogical moments suitable for giving feedback:

(i) During oral questioning

Black quotes Rowe (1974) who argued “many teachers do not plan and conduct classroom dialogue in ways that might help pupils to learn” (p.4). The result of this argument brought breaks with established habits. The following suggestions for classroom practice were given:

- More effort has to be spent in framing questions that are worth asking, that is questions which explore issues that are critical to the development of pupils’ understanding.
- Wait time has to be increased to several seconds in order to give pupils time to think and everyone should be expected to have answer and to contribute to the discussion. Then all answers, right or wrong, can be used to develop understanding.
- Follow-up activities have to be rich, in that they provide opportunities to ensure that meaningful interventions that extend the pupils’ understanding can take place.
- Pupils become more active as participants, and come to realise that learning may depend less on their own understanding”. (Black, 2003, p.5)

(ii) During marking

In short, Black argues that “a numerical mark does not tell pupil how to improve their work, so an opportunity to enhance their learning has been lost” (p.6). So his emphasis is that feedback should cause thinking to take place. He advises that no marks should be given simultaneously with comments because pupils ignore comments when marks are also given. The suggestions for classroom improvement are:

- Written tasks, alongside oral questioning, should encourage pupils to develop and show understanding of the key features of what they have learnt.
- Comments should identify what has been done well and what still needs improvement, and give guidance on how to make that improvement.
- Opportunities for pupils to follow up comments should be planned as part of the overall learning process” (Black, 2003, p.7).

(iii) During Peer- assessment and Self-assessment

Black quotes Saddler (1998) who says that learners are encouraged to “take roles of teachers and examiners of others” (2003, p.7). In this regard, learners get the opportunity to think of their work in terms of a set of goals. In addition, the teachers are responsible for giving guidance to their learners in order that good self- and peer- assessment skills can develop. Reed (2006) argues that teachers are expected to use strategies that will make feedback manageable, such as ‘peer-feedback’ and photocopied rubrics. In agreement with manageable feedback is Raimes (1991, p.57) whose view encourages teachers to use peer-assessment to share the burden of marking or ‘shift the burden of correcting errors to the students.’

According to my analysis, the formative assessment strategies of questioning, feedback through marking and formative use of summative tests put the responsibility for formative assessment on the teachers. The strategies of peer-assessment and self-assessment place responsibility on the learners. Nevertheless, the pervasive role of the teacher means that the teacher will always lead, guide, monitor and check or even moderate the assessment work of the learners.

(iv) In preparation for summative tests

The practices of self- and peer-assessment are used to prepare for examinations. An example

of classroom practice that learners can be encouraged to use is ‘traffic lights icons’ used to label their work green, amber, or red according to whether they thought they had good, partial, or little understanding respectively(Black,2003, p.8).

2.3.2 (c) Strategies for giving good quality feedback

The strategies of giving good quality feedback refer to the skills that the teacher needs in order to successfully practise formative assessment. The roles of the learners are bound up with what the teachers are advised to do. The most important message about feedback that Black &Wiliam (2006) emphasize when they discuss feedback and the student-teacher interaction, specifically the fine-grain of feedback, is: “The messages given in feedback are useless unless students are able to do something with them” (p.89). The challenge by Black &Wiliam (2006) to the teachers is that feedback needs to be understood by learners and at the same time respond to its demands for learning to take place. It also means that teachers need to possess skills of giving feedback for learning, hence the need to list several strategies or ways of giving good quality feedback.

In my readings, I have discovered two authors, Raimes (1991) and Reed (2006), who write about feedback in ways that are specifically relevant to my research. They both discuss feedback for learning in the English Second Language classroom, primarily focusing on the writing class and Reed is addressing South African teachers in particular. I will be using these two authors in conjunction with Black (2003) to interweave their arguments towards guiding teachers to the understanding and practices of feedback for learning.

Reed (2006) argues that research studies based on language classrooms, especially additional or foreign language classrooms, have found that feedback on work in progress is more useful in facilitating learners’ improvement than feedback on final products. Yet she also recognises the importance of “feedback on summative assessment to contribute formatively to whatever learners will tackle next” (p.3). Both ways of giving feedback are important to my study because language classrooms demand flexible assessment methods. Sometimes, the additional language teacher has to let go of errors that do not impede communication and focus on errors that do. It means the teacher becomes selective in his or her feedback to learners. But being selective in giving of feedback is just one of several strategies.

Raimes (1991) argues that giving feedback requires teachers to ‘examine’ their practices carefully because ‘a teacher’s response on a student’s paper is potentially an influential text in a writing class’. Raimes’ argument suggests that feedback needs to be clearly stated, discussed and understood by the learners, meaning that it should be carefully and professionally planned to make learners ‘do something’ about it (Black & Wiliam, 2006). In emphasizing formative practice for an English Second Language class, written communication is of prime importance, so it is worth looking at various ways teachers comment on learners’ written work, be it responses that involve single words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs. Raimes (1991, p. 57) proposed seven modes of commenting on students’ papers which are: “correcting, emoting, describing, suggesting, questioning, reminding and assigning”. There is an eighth technique which addresses teachers on the timing for the writing class that teachers should always keep in mind. It is important to note that these feedback techniques need teacher’s professional judgement as to which one applies better in which situation.

The short explanations I would like to give for each mode are:

- (i) **Correcting:** means that the teacher focuses on the accuracy of the language, especially grammar, and gives the correct version in writing. It also means that the responsibility for error correction lies with the teacher. However, van der Walt et al (2009, p.118) argue that research has shown that the correction of grammatical errors has very little practical value and that learners do not necessarily improve because their errors have been pointed out to them. They foreground a possible solution which involves teaching learners to edit their own work, in other words to do self-correction.
- (ii) **Emoting:** means that the teacher shares his/her emotions with the developing writer, indicating the effects of the text on the reader. Raimes gave examples of emoting such as ‘Nice!’ or ‘I’m bored here!’ Examples of emoting suggest language creativity from the teachers’ perspective, for example, instead of saying ‘I’m bored here! Teachers can say ‘I am lost here! It also means that the error correction is not prioritised for anyone. In addition, Reed (2006) says that teachers need to give ‘feedback that is affectively supportive.’ She argues that teachers are expected to begin with a focus on what learners have succeeded in achieving. The relationship between the writer and reader needs to be maintained through encouragement. So, the developing writer needs the support of the experienced writer.
- (iii) **Timing:** importantly for the writing class, teachers need in the first draft to comment

on ‘ideas and organization’, preferably on a separate sheet than writing on students’ paper (Raimes 1991, p.58). She goes on to say that in the next draft teachers need to ‘pick up recurring type of error and refer student to grammar handbook or write an explanation or arrange one-on-one conferencing’. Raimes (1991, p. 58) distinguishes between two aspects of writing: ‘**composition**’ or ‘**creating**’ and ‘**transcription**’ or ‘**criticising**’. These aspects of writing are important in the understanding two approaches that teachers can use to focus their attention on marking students’ papers. By composition or creating, she refers to the role of authors that we assign to learners. She says that we give learners an opportunity first to express their ideas in English and then to scrutinize what they have written in order to respond with guidance and constructive comments. By transcription or criticizing, Raimes (1991) refers to the practice where teachers look at the transcription and focus on the accuracy of the presentation. She says that in this practice learners take the roles of ‘secretaries’ and critics of their own work. So, teachers need to be aware of their influence on learners’ writing habits in the process of providing feedback. This is the time when teachers can work hand in glove with their learners to tackle errors in constructive ways.

- (iv) **Describing:** I see this mode linking with what Reed (2006) called ‘feedback as scaffolding for learning’- useful in terms of letting the learners decode and comprehend feedback. The teachers make errors explicit and are ‘expected to use the criterion-referenced assessment in order to avoid complicated or general feedback’. ‘Notably, the assessment criteria and rubrics tend to be used more for summative than formative purposes (Reed, 2006)’. It means that the teacher uses the set criteria to indicate the gap between the targeted outcomes and the learner’s response. It also means that the error correction is not prioritised for anyone.
- (v) **Suggesting:** Reed (2006) describes ‘suggesting’ as ‘feedback that indicates what learners could do next’. Teachers are expected to offer suggestions without being prescriptive. Using questions seems to be an effective way to the next step with learners, for example: ‘How will energy crisis change our modern lifestyle? Or See if you can answer the following question: How will energy crisis affect agricultural production, industry and personal comfort? (Reed, 2006, p.10). In this mode the teacher does not prescribe what the learner has to do, but suggests ways the learner can improve or what he or she can do next. In this regard, the teacher begins to shift the responsibility of error correction to the learner to start doing something about the messages of feedback (Black & Wiliam, 2006).

- (vi) **Questioning in relation to the error:** There is a strong link between questioning in relation to the error and suggesting modes because they support each other in the process of giving feedback. It means that the teacher can use questions to suggest the next step that the learner needs to follow in order to meet the demands of the task. It also suggests that the teacher can engage the learner through questions based on the information that requires clarity from the learner. Again, the teacher is shifting the responsibility for error correction to the learner.
- (vii) **Reminding:** This mode can be linked to what Reed (2006) called ‘feedback as scaffolding for learning’ – useful in terms of letting learners decode and comprehend feedback. It means that the teacher uses the task-oriented criteria to remind the learner of what he/she could have done. Again, the rules that have been learned are referred to or highlighted for the learner to review and apply. In this regard, the teacher gives the responsibility for error correction to the learner.
- (viii) **Assigning:** It means that the teacher gives the learner the work that is aimed at paying attention to particular aspects of the work in progress. If a grammar problem has been identified, then the teacher provides input (passage to read or listen to) which illustrates the correct use of particular point of grammar (Van der Walt, Evans and Kilfoil, 2009). If learners are writing the first draft of an essay, then it would depend on the learner’s need whether the focus should be on content or organization. In this regard, the teacher puts the responsibility for error correction on the learner.

2.3.3 Conclusion

In this section I have described feedback for learning and also mentioned different modes of commenting on learners’ written work. It emphasizes useful strategies and skills needed by the teachers in order to be able to give good quality feedback for learning.

The feedback for learning is an important part of formative assessment. Its place is in the classrooms where teachers and learners interact over language subject matter in this regard. The feedback is like a fuel that keeps the lamp of learning burning for both teachers and learners to see the way forward. It is crucially through teachers’ understanding of different strategies of giving good quality feedback and techniques of commenting on learners’ written work that learners’ errors can be effectively dealt with. Therefore the demands of the formative assessment include, inter alia, teacher’s professional development.

2.4 Teachers' Subject-Matter Knowledge of English First Additional Language

In this section I am attempting to explore the subject matter knowledge of teaching English as a school subject, especially where it is taught as a second language or first additional language. The significance of this exploration will assist me to better understand the link between second language curriculum focus and second language errors that are worthy of analysis and correction. The assumption is that knowing the curriculum focus of second language teaching will influence the selection of errors to be corrected. It further implies that the selection of errors needs to be in alignment with the knowledge that the learners are intended to master.

The structure of this section begins with the exploration of the developments of teaching English home language to the “Native English Speakers” (Murray and Christison, 2011). This is necessary because the curriculum models for English language teaching to native speakers' influence the trends in second or first additional language teaching curricula. So it will be interesting to find out what and why the dominant and influential models are in the South Africa's English Second language curriculum for the Intermediate Phase, especially Grade 6, my target grade.

The next step will be the exploration of the approaches to teaching English as a second language. I will be highlighting some important and globally recognized skills that are foundational in the teaching and learning of English as a second language. I will cover two main issues, namely, the teachers' subject-matter knowledge or what English teachers need to know about second language processes and development; and the teachers' pedagogical content knowledge or methods in second language teaching. I hope to deeply understand the overarching perspective on the subject of second language teaching and learning.

The main argument about the relationship between English subject-matter knowledge and Error Analysis I want to foreground is that teacher's subject –matter knowledge of the English First Additional Language teaching will deeply influence which errors they look out for. The assumption I have is that subject-matter knowledge provides teachers with cognitive tools for error recognition, error analysis and effective feedback. Shavelson et al (2002)

argued; ‘if teachers are not able to diagnose errors or metacognition, their feedback will not be effective’. So, according to Shavelson et al (2002), the teachers’ ability to diagnose errors is crucial to the quality of feedback given to learners and finding effective ways to remediate errors. More importantly, it is the prime objective of my study that L2 teachers need to use subject-matter knowledge of English second language teaching and learning to recognise errors, diagnose and analyse the cause of the errors and give quality feedback, i.e. to effectively deal with errors.

2.4.1 Curriculum Models for the subject matter knowledge of School English Home Language

Christie and Macken-Horarik (2007) have categorised the development of school English into seven “models of curriculum from its inception in the nineteenth century till the early 21st century”. The significance of these English curriculum models is that they expose us to the general understanding of the English home language features or literacy skills. Each curriculum model provides its objectives, emphases of literacy skills and pedagogical approaches. Furthermore, these English home language curriculum models provide us with the framework to compare and contrast them with English second language curriculum models. I assume that some second language curriculum design features may reflect one English home language curriculum model or a unique combination of some.

The following summaries of seven models of English home language curriculum are arranged by Christie and Macken-Horarik (2007) according to the chronological order of emergence from 1800-2001:

(1) Basic Skills: Emerged in the 1800s during a time of increased provision and regulating of elementary education by the government in England to the poorer classes. Acquiring basic literacy competence through large numbers of graded school readers, spelling books, grammar books, dictionaries, and some composition books. The significance of Basic Skills or Basic Literacy Competences was to use the language that builds discrete skills for basic reading and a little writing (p.159 & 168).

(2) Cultural Heritage: Emerged in 1896-proposed by Arnold, poet and school inspector who argued for the teaching of poetry or ‘great literature’ to children because of its civilizing

influence, that is contributing to achieving order and harmony required by a modern society. It was articulated more fully by F.R. Leavis, influential at Cambridge after the First World War, who proposed an emphasis on children learning the cultural heritage of the country and suggested a number of great works of literature for study (e.g. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Keats, Austen, George Eliot and T.S. Eliot). The focus of this model is on 'close reading' and seeing literary texts as the expressions of universal truths which the discerning reader could establish, thereby achieving 'culture' and 'sensitivity'. The significance of Cultural Heritage or Cultural Literacy was to use the language that interprets and creates fictive worlds and literary sensibilities through novel, poetry, drama and interpretive essays (p.160/1 & 168).

(3) Personal Growth: This focus emerged in the 1960s in response to progressivist (Dewey) and constructivist (Piaget, Vygotsky & Stenhouse) curriculum models. The ideology imagined an individual learner on a personal journey of discovery. Dixon's *Growth through English* (1967) involved children using their 'own' language for self-expression and personal discovery. The following theories are associated with progressivist and constructivist models: 'pupil-centredness', 'learner empowerment', 'activity-based learning', 'inquiry learning', process approaches to learning' etc. The classroom practice promoted teacher facilitation rather than instruction. Basic Skills and Cultural Heritage were greatly reduced or downplayed. Grammar was taught at a point of need. The significance of Personal Growth or Personal literacy was the use of language that is close to 'self' through journals, dialogues, personal letters, imaginative reconstruction of literary texts and emails to friends (p.161& 168).

(4) Functional Language Studies: This curriculum model emerged in the late 1960s, following the teaching of English works (*Functional Language Studies*) of Halliday, McIntosh and Stevens (1964). The focus is on the knowledge about spoken and written language; analysis and production of texts in a range of social contexts. This is achieved through texts such as narratives, expositions, and multi-literate text analysis and text interpretations. Functional Language Studies adopts a functional orientation, proposes a social semiotic-negotiation, ordering and structuring of experience, and the functional grammar is a fundamental tool for the analysis of texts. It further proposes teaching knowledge about language (KAL) explicitly. It is more interventionist in its pedagogical principles. The teacher is actively directing and guiding students' learning. It argues that

enhanced discourses for subject English can point to new directions for the design, scope and sequence of the language curriculum across the years of schooling. It is also significantly known as the 'Powerful Meta-literacies' (p.163 & 168).

(5) Cultural Studies: This curriculum model emerged in the later part of 20th century, as part of post modernism. It incorporates and valorises the texts of popular culture, a range of reading and subject positions and emphasises interrogating values and ideologies (subjective positions) embodied in the text, i.e. critical analysis. The tools for interrogating texts were taken for granted, hence it is criticised for its invisible linguistic skills. The focus is on physical and/or imaginative journeys for students to compose a narrative text (New South Wales-year 12, 2005-to date).The significance of this model is the use of language that identifies and challenges ideologies enshrined in texts. This is achieved through deconstructive essays, evaluations, satires and spoofs. It is also significantly known as "Multimodal texts and multi-literate practices" (p.164 & 168).

(6) Multi-literacies: This curriculum model for teaching English as a home language emerged in the late twentieth century and is associated with *1996 Manifesto of the New London Group in Harvard Educational Review*. It has a close relationship to Cultural Studies and proposes a wide variety of texts, verbal and visual, popular and otherwise, spoken and written. Espoused are functional grammar and communication. It is best understood as a 'dialect' of Cultural Studies or part of Functional Language Studies, which are two different pedagogic subject positions.

(7) New Literacy Studies: Associated with the works of Street (2001) who is an anthropologist interested in non-western societies' literacy events, concepts and social models. He differentiated between conventional 'autonomous models' of literacy, which involved teaching basic skills in an unproblematic manner and 'ideological models', which involved teaching literacy as part of a social practice bound with values and meaning. The significance of New Literacy Studies is the use of language that is localized and particular to social events. This is achieved through a variety of texts, valued for their relevance to immediate setting. It is also significantly known as the "situated literacy practices", (p.168).

Christie and Macken-Horarik (2007) have highlighted that these seven curriculum models of

English are historically “incommensurate and even contradictory”. The authors go on to say that there is no necessary relation between what is learned in different segments or models. Another critical factor highlighted is the tendency to “diminish the status of overt teaching of knowledge about language, while promoting various valued subject positions”. They advocate that the Functional Language Studies model has helped to make English more accessible to teachers and more visible to a greater number of students. Furthermore, the authors suggest that the meta-language of Functional Language Studies (SFL) “can be used to outline a scope and sequence for progressing learning in English at both primary and secondary levels”.

After learning about the seven curriculum models of teaching English as a home language and the idea that Functional Language Studies can be used to outline a scope and sequence for progressing learning in English at the primary school level, I was intrigued to look at the content of the South African Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for Grade 6 English First Additional Language. According to my analysis, the overarching perspective of the South African CAPS Grade 6 English First Additional Language curriculum contains a combination of features adapted from the seven curriculum models of school English for home language speakers.

2.4.1 (a) Analysis of CAPS, Grade 6 English First Additional Language in relation to School English Curriculum Models

The overtly dominant curriculum model of school English in the South African CAPS Grade 6 English First Additional Language is ‘Basic Skills’. According to the summary on Basic Skills curriculum model, the learners acquire basic literacy competences such as basic reading and a little writing through graded school readers, spelling books, grammar books, dictionaries, and some composition books.

When I read the overview of language skills, content and strategies for CAPS Grade 6 English First Additional Language, the following basic skills for second language learning are explicitly emphasized in the curriculum: “listening and speaking, reading, writing, language structure and use” (p.5). The emphasis on the basic skills suggests that the objective of the CAPS document is to lay a strong English language foundation through knowledge of ‘grammar’ which is implicitly coded in the ‘language structure and use’ skill, as well as ‘a

little writing' explicitly encoded in the 'writing' skill. Evidently, the Basic Skills curriculum model is used as an organizing principle for specifically learning and teaching English First Additional Language in the Intermediate Phase.

Interestingly, some features of the other 6 curriculum models of school English are integrated implicitly through acting as a relay system, i.e. they become modes through which to develop basic or foundational literacy skills. For example, in developing language structure and use, learners encounter different text types such as: "personal recounts, factual recounts, story and plays, poems, etc., (CAPS English FAL, Gr.6 2011, p. 12)". When different texts are used, it gives me the idea of multi-literacies inherent in Cultural Studies and Functional Language Studies curriculum models. Again, the use of the texts that refer to personal accounts draws in the Personal Growth curriculum model because of the use of language close to 'self', while the use of poems draws in the Cultural Heritage curriculum model for implicitly developing the language that 'interprets and creates fictive worlds' (Christie and Macken-Horarik, 2007).

I have also realized that some features of the other 6 curriculum models of school English are used as points of arguments for promoting a particular basic literacy skill. For example, the CAPS Gr.6 English FAL argues that "a good vocabulary and grammar provides the foundation for skills development (listening, speaking, reading and writing)". Furthermore, it argues that learners will "develop a shared language for talking about language (meta-language), so that they can evaluate their own and other texts critically in terms of meaning, effectiveness and accuracy" (p.11). In their advocacy of the Functional Language Studies curriculum model, Christie and Macken-Horarik (2007) are striving for the same integration. They inform us that the principles of Functional Language Studies curriculum model are, inter alia, 'knowledge about spoken and written language, analysis and production of texts in a range of social contexts, teaching knowledge about language (KAL) explicitly, etc. There is an interesting link between what CAPS and Christie and Macken-Horarik are presenting. The arguments for grammar or knowledge about language in the CAPS resonate with the principles of the Functional Language Studies curriculum model. The CAPS reference to grammar providing the foundation for skills development shows how valuable explicit knowledge about language (KAL) is, as drawn from the Functional Language Studies curriculum model.

2.4.2 Curriculum approaches to the subject-matter knowledge of teaching

English as a Second Language

The second language literature informs us that a variety of L2 teaching approaches have been introduced and tested for their effectiveness in teaching second language learners. When a variety of approaches are involved in L2 pedagogy, it means that the curriculum dimension of pedagogy becomes a highly contested matter. Critically, during the last half century there is no single L2 approach that has had widespread and consistent acceptance, but they are all part of continued “hypotheses” into L2 learning and teaching (Hinkel, 2011). The implication is that there is no single most powerful pedagogical approach to L2 teaching and learning. Therefore, L2 teachers need a ‘veritable armamentarium of alternative forms of representation’ (Shulman, 2004, p.203) to make L2 learning and teaching comprehensible. Nevertheless, there are some predominant L2 approaches that the literature has identified, which include ‘Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)’, the ‘Content-based Method’ and the ‘Genre-based Method’ (Hinkel, 2011; Littlewood, 2011; and Ur, 2011). These approaches differ with regard to the objective each aims to achieve and with regard to their methodological approaches, which are “distinct in regard to what type of curricular and instruction best serves the needs of L2 learners” (Hinkel, 2011).

The objectives of the **Communicative Language Teaching** are explicitly identified through its name, i.e. effective communication through “linguistic competence, discourse competence, pragmatic competence” and more (Littlewood, 2011). For effective communication learners do communicative tasks which include “extensive reading, storytelling, role play, problem solving” and more (Ur, 2011). The **Content-based method** is commonly found in US-based curricula. Its objectives of “L2 reading, writing, and language instruction are integrated together with that of content, while grammar and vocabulary play the role of attendant foci. L2 reading and writing play a central role” (Hinkel, 2011, p.533). The **Genre-based method** is prevalent in the UK, Australia, and New Zealand. Its objectives seek to “enable L2 learners to analyse academic discourse while reading and to produce academic writing that adheres to the sociocultural norms of a particular academic (or professional) genre (narrative, exposition, or argumentation)” (Hinkel, 2011, p.534).

The diverse methodological approaches for L2 teaching and learning have always tried to satisfy the needs of the L2 learners. However, the teaching of English in a wide range of

socio-cultural contexts has ensured that no L2 approach has been without controversy. For example, many experts in L2 teaching and learning believe that genres and their linguistic features may be subjective, culture-bound, vaguely defined, or even irrelevant to the diverse types of ESL/EFL learners (Hinkel, 2011, p. 534). The issue of contextual factors becomes an important influential aspect of L2 language teaching and learning. So teachers' understanding of the difficult system through which English Subject –matter knowledge is acquired and nurtured seems necessary.

2.4.2 (a) Analysis of CAPS, Grade 6 English First Additional Language in relation to Curriculum Approaches for Second Language

The general aims of the South African curriculum for First Additional Language include the “idea of grounding knowledge in local contexts while being sensitive to global imperatives”, as well as intending to produce learners that are able to “communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and or language skills in various modes” (p.2 & 3). In the South African context, CAPS has adapted two first additional language teaching approaches: The **Text-based approach** and the **Communicative approach** (p.14). The text-based approach has the purpose and function to “enable learners to be competent, confident and critical readers, writers and viewers of texts” (p.14). The communicative approach has the purpose and function to generate “a great deal of exposure to the target language and many opportunities to practise or produce the language by communicating for social practical purposes” (p.15). Interestingly, both approaches share a common purpose in the following functions of developing literacy skills: “producing different kinds of texts for particular purposes and audiences” (text-based approach) and “doing a great deal of reading and learn to write by doing a range of writing” (communicative approach).

The CAPS First Additional Language approaches thus link with the second language approaches found in other parts of the world, especially countries like UK, US, Australia and New Zealand. The **text-based approach** may be linked to the **genre-based method** through the common purpose of enabling learners to analyse text and produce academic writing. There seems to have been no local way to adapt or change the **communicative approach** and this makes the link much clearer between the CAPS communicative approach and this universal L2 approach dubbed **Communicative Language Teaching**. The general aims of the CAPS First Additional Language which I have reflected above are significantly consistent

with its search for grounding knowledge in local context while being sensitive to global imperatives. This view is evident in the naming of ‘text-based approach’ adapted from genre-based method, an indication that our education embraces global trends in terms of content and pedagogical developments.

2.4.3 Teacher’s Subject –Matter Knowledge (SMK)

Shulman (2004) describes subject-matter knowledge as the “amount and organization of knowledge per se in the mind of the teacher” (p.201). He further clarifies that teachers need to understand the structure of the subject they teach, which includes facts, basic concepts, principles and rules. There is thus a need to specify the explicit knowledge systems that English Second Language teachers need to know. According to Murray and Christison (2011, p.69-121) English language comprises the following four specific knowledge systems:

- (1) The **sound system**: Knowledge of voice apparatus, phonemes, graphemes or letters, etc.
- (2) The **system of words**: Knowledge of morphemes, open-word classes: e.g., nouns; verbs; adjectives and adverbs, closed-word classes: e.g., conjunctions and prepositions, word family, etc.
- (3) The **sentence system**: Knowledge of simple, compound, complex sentences.
- (4) The **spoken and written language**.

The sound, word and sentence systems form the “micro features (grammar and vocabulary) of L2 writing” (Hinkel, 2011, p.529). The spoken and written language form part of “macro properties of L2 discourse (structuring and ideational development)” (Hinkel, 2011, p.526-527). The significance of categorizing knowledge structures helps teachers with knowledge of where errors are most occurring and also with devising measures for the future elimination of such errors. If most errors occur at the micro level, then the teacher will know that learners need support on aspects of grammar and vocabulary. However, the teacher will also love to see learners doing well at the macro level where grammatical or language knowledge is used to generate a more demanding macro level of discourse structuring and ideational development. I seem to get the idea that the L2 micro level is a preparatory level for the macro level. So the L2 teachers and learners should not be stuck for too long at the micro level but should rather aim at more experience at the macro level for serious and worthy language development.

Importantly, the above language knowledge systems provide basic and explicit grammatical knowledge of the language. They also provide “specialized content knowledge which involves knowledge of the concepts and the structure of the subject” (Shulman, 2004). Again, the grammatical knowledge is very important to L2 teachers and learners because it aims at leading the students to “produce grammatical features in their output accurately and appropriately” (Ur, 2011, p. 510). However, grammatical knowledge lays the foundation for accurate expression but not yet for extensive language development.

When L2 teachers have a good understanding of the language knowledge systems, it gives them an overview of the language content that L2 learners need to gradually master according to the demands of learners’ curriculum level or grade and they are able to recognize, categorize, and analyse the language errors made by their learners. The second language literature reveals that the development of second language competence and skills is a complex cognitive process that teachers need to know about. L2 skills such as ‘speaking, listening, reading, grammar and writing’ are identified as essential and underpinning its learning (Hinkel, 2011). I have noticed that the CAPS English First Additional Language document (2011, p.7-12) has embraced and emphasized the development of these globally recognized L2 essential skills. For example, writing is described as a “powerful instrument of communication that allows learners to construct and communicate their thoughts and ideas coherently” (CAPS, p. 10). Again, the power of writing is highlighted in its ability to draw together other skills such as reading, grammar, spelling and it also “encourages learners to process language, speeds up acquisition and increases accuracy” (p.10). Interestingly, the issue of accuracy highlights the implicit intention to let teachers keep on assessing, especially formatively so as to ascertain how far or close to the target language the learners are. In short, the L2 teacher in South Africa is expected to know these essential skills and different approaches of developing and ways of assessing them as these are enshrined in the national curriculum document (CAPS).

The understanding of subject matter knowledge as conceptualised by Shulman (2004) highlights that although teachers’ content knowledge of the subject discipline is essential, it is not sufficient for their profession because teachers also need to have knowledge of how the content can be mediated to learners. He named the knowledge of how English Second Language content is mediated to L2 learners, the pedagogical content knowledge. Shulman (2004) argues that pedagogical content knowledge “goes beyond knowledge of subject matter

per se to the dimension of subject matter knowledge for teaching” (p.203). He further says that PCK includes “an understanding of what makes the learning of specific topics easy or difficult”. In agreement with this, Andrews (2003, p. 87) quotes Shulman describing PCK as “that special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding”. Furthermore, it “represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized and represented for instruction”. Andrews (2003) further clarifies that PCK additionally involves knowledge of learners.

Importantly, the subject-matter and pedagogical content knowledge are necessary to the profession of teachers. However, teachers’ educational biography shapes their ability to teach, assess and do error analysis. So, the next section seeks to highlight the influences that shape teachers’ classroom practice.

2.4.4 Teachers’ Educational Biographies and Experience

Shulman (2004) has emphasised the importance of subject-matter knowledge and the pedagogical content knowledge in the professionalism of teachers. Indeed, teachers need both kinds of knowledge. However, Borg (2003) takes the teachers’ knowledge further by highlighting the factors that can influence teachers’ abilities to teaching, asses and do error analysis. So, what Borg (2003) emphasises is that we need to always be mindful of contexts that can inhibit or expand teachers’ abilities such as the educational biography and experience.

Borg (2003) mentions four important aspects that shape teacher cognition in language teaching, these are: schooling, professional coursework, contextual factors, and classroom practice (p.82). The significance of these four aspects of teacher cognition is to highlight the complex nature of acquiring English subject-matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge.

The teachers’ road to a professional teaching career starts when they are learners at school. It is at school level where “beliefs, knowledge, theories, attitudes, images, assumptions, metaphors, conceptions and perspectives” are formed and shaped. The next step is undergoing professional coursework for English L2 teaching. It is at the teacher training

institution where “knowledge about teaching, teachers, learning, students, subject matter, curricular, materials, instructional activities, and self” are acquired and shaped for professional practice (Borg, 2003). Later, it is contextual factors which are influential in modifying subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge to meet the needs of L2 learners. It is at the level of classroom practice that the ‘interaction of cognitions and contextual factors is defined’. Borg (2003) argues that contextual factors influence practice either by modifying cognitions or else directly in which case congruence between cognition and practice may result (p.82).

The system through which L2 teachers obtain their English subject matter knowledge is complex. Critically, the English home language curriculum models influence the English second language curricular designs and pedagogical approaches in a complex way. The knowledge of what should be taught to English home language learners seems to be less problematic than how English second language learners should be taught. The biggest ‘hypotheses’ over the past half century, influenced by research, have been on different approaches that best satisfy the acquisition needs of L2 learners. However, the influential socio-cultural contexts have made it difficult to find an L2 methodological approach that is universally applied, hence the L2 teachers’ educational biographies are shaped by different approaches particular to their context.

2.4.5 Conclusion

In concluding this section, the teacher subject-matter knowledge is essential to their professionalism. However, subject-matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge of English First Additional language are mediated by a number of factors such as the seven curriculum models (Christie and Macken-Horarik, 2011), different approaches to second language learning and teaching, educational biographies and experience (Borg, 2003), and different socio-cultural contexts.

The influence of English Home language curriculum models on English second language curriculum has had differentiated impact on curricular and pedagogical models. The brief analysis I made of the CAPS English First Additional Language document indicated that it has strong links to the Basic Skills curriculum model. An interesting but critical point about the Basic Skills is that the principle of “a little writing” has a strong influence and dominant

presence. The principle of a little writing continues to impact on L2 learners' writing development as research currently revealed that "English L2 writers undertake less discourse planning, reviewing, and revising than English L1 writers" (Hinkel, 2011). This finding on the development of L2 writers raises a red flag to English L2 teachers to stop and reflect if they want robust writing development of their learners.

The research into L2 teaching and learning has identified that methodological approaches such as communicative method, content-based method and genre-based method continue to be the major 'hypotheses', critically shaped by the socio-cultural contexts (Hinkel, 2011). Currently, the Functional Language Studies or 'genre-based method' predominant in the UK, Australia and New Zealand' seems to grab the attention of language scholars, policymakers and teachers because of its power in making language accessible and visible to L2 teachers and learners, inter alia, through multi-literacy, analysis and interpretation of text (Hinkel, 2011, Christie and Macken-Horarik, 2007). Again, the L2 research also gives an indication that the influence of different socio-cultural contexts impacts on the teacher subject-matter knowledge of English second language teaching. Teacher competence is also an influential factor in the light of Shulman's (1987) claim that it is "in the capacity of a teacher to transform the knowledge he or she possesses into forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variations and background presented by the students" (Andrews, 2003, p.87). So the highlight I would like to make from Shulman's (1987) quotation is that the teacher subject-matter knowledge of English second language teaching has an aspect of 'situated nature' or enhanced reflections of their teaching and understanding of the context in which they work (Andrews, 2003). So the teachers' educational biographies and experience, as critically shaped by contextual factors and classroom practice, crucially impact on their understanding of subject-matter knowledge of English Second language teaching.

2.5 Overall Conclusion

The overall conclusion for this chapter focuses on error analysis and its processes. Importantly, I am discussing error analysis in relation to the English Second Language or First Additional Language learning and teaching. There are three aspects being discussed: i) Subject-matter knowledge of error recognition, (ii) Pedagogical content knowledge of error treatment, and (iii) Teachers' educational biographies.

2.5.1 Subject-matter knowledge of error recognition

The process of error analysis demands teachers to work on a formative mind-set. It implies that a teacher who has subject-matter knowledge of error recognition also possesses diagnostic tools to recognize and make decisions about how to correct errors. The importance of subject-matter knowledge of error recognition is that it is deterministic in terms of knowing that not only errors occur during learning, also mistakes do occur. It implies that teachers need to know the distinction between a mistake – what learner knows and can fix, and an error- what learner does not know and requires teacher intervention to explain or reteach. Also among errors there are **global errors**- those which impede our comprehension and thus require teacher's intervention, and **local errors**- those which do not affect our comprehension and might be easier for learners to fix.

Another important aspect of subject-matter knowledge of error recognition relates to two main language features which are: **Micro features**- spelling/orthography, lexis, grammar/morphology, and syntax. **Macro features**- discourse structuring and ideational development (Hinkel, 2011). The choice of focus, in terms of language features, by teachers will implicitly depend on curriculum model and language teaching approach.

2.5.2 Pedagogical content knowledge of error treatment

As I have noted above that the process of error analysis demands teachers to work on a formative mind-set, the pedagogical content knowledge of error treatment also requires a formative assessment paradigm. I regard this aspect of error analysis as a crucial decision-making process for the teachers. The teachers need to carefully decide on effective ways of treating errors. But the decisions are informed by the diagnostic subject-matter knowledge of error recognition. Also, there are implicitly influential contexts such as curriculum models and language approaches.

The trends regarding second language practice and research indicates that for second language teaching, it is pedagogy which is more contested than content. The second language approaches and their principles are a driving force into second language teaching and learning. When a teacher recognizes something is incorrect in learner's written language work, the first decision he or she has to make is whether it is a mistake or an error. If it is a mistake then it can be highlighted for the learner to correct or simply be ignored. If it is an

error, the teacher still needs to decide whether it is global or local. The global errors are very crucial because they need teacher's intervention for them to be corrected.

Another decision that needs to be taken before correcting the identified errors is whether to make them implicit or explicit. The important approach which is said to be beneficial to the English second language learners is to make errors explicit. Making errors explicit requires meta-language and thus error correction is done within the target language. The teacher can either use contrastive analysis- L1 transfer or error analysis- inter-language to reconstruct learner's language development.

2.5.3 Teachers' educational biographies

The teachers' educational biographies are a critical factor into second language teaching and learning. The type of basic knowledge teachers receive in the primary and secondary schools forms part of teachers' strategic knowledge. It means that teachers' schooling experience is the initial and crucial level that shapes their subject-matter knowledge of language teaching and learning. The next level becomes the 'professional coursework' or training to be a teacher (Borg, 2003, p.82). It is at this level that the curriculum models and approaches are emphasised. Teachers are trained to know about 'teaching, teachers, learning, students, subject-matter, curricular, materials, instructional activities, and self' (Borg, 2003, p.82). However, the teachers' professional coursework transforms as new and higher levels of study are considered.

The importance of teachers' educational biographies is that they highlight the influential contexts through which teachers' subject-matter knowledge of teaching English second language gets impacted upon. The classroom practice is further impacted upon by both the implicit curriculum models and second language approaches. So, the teachers' choice to focus more on language micro-features than macro-features depends on the influential schooling and professional coursework that the teachers have undergone.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter focuses on the methodology I used for this study. I describe the qualitative research approach, the target group, the place where this study took place, the process of data collection and analysis as well as the permissions which I applied for and subsequently acquired from different institutions and individuals for me to do this study.

3.1 Approaches to Research

McMillan and Schumacher, 2010, distinguished three research approaches:

- Quantitative research
- Qualitative research
- Mixed Method research

This study uses a qualitative approach to research as it is concerned with “understanding the social phenomenon from the participant’s perspective” (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010, p.12). This study follows the principles of qualitative research. Some principles of the qualitative research include: “using real people in real settings”, “moving from the particular to the general” (Lichtman, 2006, p.49 & 50), “process-oriented”, “open-ended”, etc., (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010, p. 64). As a qualitative researcher, I am interested in studying classroom assessment and teachers. Reflectively, what intrigued me about classroom assessment and teachers raises the same questions about my own practice. In order for me to get the answers to my questions, I needed to study through the teacher participants “why and what works” for the English First Additional Language classroom (Lichtman, 2006, p.50). The teachers are “real people in real settings” and I wanted to understand some ‘general ideas’, specifically the assessment practices that the teachers generally uphold through the study of error analysis (p.51). So the error analysis journey that I have taken reflects an “inductive approach- moving from the particular to the general” (Lichtman, 2006, p. 49). I particularly investigated data of teachers’ analyses of language errors and their ability to decide on strategies to remediate learning based on errors identified. And in terms of the outcome of this study, I did not have predictions but I was “neutral with respect to what would be learned”, thus making it “open-ended” and “process-oriented” (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010, p. 64).

It is not Quantitative Research because the study that has been undertaken was not looking at the statistical value of the sample. However, I used some numerical presentations where the learners' errors and teachers' feedback units were counted. Importantly, the numbers were used as a stepping stone to move from the particular data to describe and understand the general idea showed by the findings. I did not have a predetermined instrument that I had designed and used to "confirm" the outcome (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010, p.64). I analysed the teachers' corrections of learners' written task and their individual interview data in order to develop the understanding of the relationship between what and why of teachers' shared classroom assessment experiences. It means that I maintained using the logic of a "continual process of inductive reasoning", one of the qualitative research principles (p.64).

It is not a Mixed Method research because this study did not include "substantial contributions using both qualitative and quantitative approaches", (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010, p.396).

3.2 Sampling

3.2.1 Population/Target Group

The target group for this study are 6 teachers working in Soweto township primary schools. These teachers were selected on the basis that they specifically taught Grade 6 English First Additional Language in 2011. There are several reasons why Grade 6 English First Additional Language teachers are important in this study.

The first reason is that I am a Grade 6 teacher. Grade 6 teachers in Soweto schools share common experiences in terms of language teaching and assessment. Thus it was a convenience sample for me to contact colleagues who teach the same grade as I do.

Grade 6 is an important grade for the government because it is evaluated nationally through common assessment tasks for languages and mathematics. The reason is that teachers who teach English First Additional Language in grade 6 are in the implicit spotlight of the government evaluations. So, the government's system of declaring schools that did not do well in the common tests as 'underperforming schools', obviously puts pressure on language teachers and schools in general to find ways of moving out of the underperforming label.

The third reason is that English First Additional Language is the subject written by the largest number of learners more than any other subject.

3.2.2 Convenience sampling

This study used convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is also called ‘available sampling’ (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010, p.137). Through convenience sampling I was able to work with available participants who are teachers in primary schools of Soweto. I had several advantages for doing my research in the areas of Soweto.

The first advantage I had was that I am a widely known teacher in Soweto because of sporting, music and union activities which have given me access to many schools. I found it easy to identify and locate schools for my research purposes because of my knowledge of many townships and primary schools of Soweto.

The second advantage I had comes from my involvement in a Masters’ research in 2006. I was one of the three teacher participants from different schools in Susan Harrop-Allin’s Masters’ research into music development in primary schools. Susan Harrop-Allin is an Arts and Culture lecturer and did her masters’ music development research in three Soweto primary schools through the University of the Witwatersrand. An important advantage I gained during Harrop-Allin’s research is the establishment of long-lasting relationships with co-participants.

When I did my Honours research I worked successfully with 6 individual teachers from 6 Soweto primary schools in Tshiawelo, Protea North, Protea South and Protea Glen. These 6 teachers were all teaching grade 6 English First Additional Language in 2009. I thought that it was appropriate to go back to some of these schools and other new ones.

The experiences I have just reflected on displays how some activities have made it possible for me to access some schools and establish relationships with teachers.

I finally worked with 6 teachers from the Soweto areas of Jabavu, Protea Glen, Protea North and Tshiawelo. I did not have special expectations in terms of the teacher abilities and location of their schools. The age of the township and its socio-economic conditions did not matter much, as these are all residential areas of Soweto. I also believed that the teachers share so much in common regardless of differences in home languages, distances between

their schools, years individual schools were established, leadership of female or male principal, English First Additional language teachers' gender, and learner population whether from the shacks or bond houses. The point which I am trying to emphasise here is that the teachers working in old townships were not expected to experience different classroom assessment problems than those working in the new townships. The common experience is that these African teachers are teaching the subject English First Additional Language to the African grade 6 learners in township schools. Furthermore, these ordinary teachers are a small sample who might illustrate tendencies that are representative of a larger group of Grade 6 English FAL teachers in the townships.

3.3 Data Collection

What data did I collect?

1. Grade 6 English First Additional Language learner responses to a written assessment task

I collected an English First Additional language assessment task written by my grade 6 learners. The assessment task that I administered to my grade 6 learners was extracted from the national Basic Education Department's English Language workbook 1 for grade 6, 2011, (p. 104 – 111). The task comprises a short story, story sequencing instructions, multiple-choice questions, short answer questions, affective questions, and extended writing where learners used a flow chart (but described as a mind map in the task) to plan for writing their own stories on the topic: "Last night I dreamed that...", as well as writing a complete narration of their stories. (See Appendix 'A' for a copy of the assessment task and memorandum)

I marked the assessment tasks of all the learners in my class. I took the marked scripts to my supervisor and together we selected appropriate learner scripts to be used for language error analysis. We selected significant evidence of errors from different ranges of learners, specifically strong, medium and weak achievements.

The copies of the same learners whose scripts had been selected were used for distribution to teacher participants. I gave each teacher three scripts, one each of strong, medium and weak achievements.

2. 6 Teachers' corrections of 3 learner responses each

Each teacher participant marked the scripts of three learners apportioned to him or her. One more thing important is that I gave each teacher participant a copy of the set task, a mark memorandum and instructions for marking. Each teacher was given two weeks to mark and give feedback. (See **Appendix 'B'** for a copy of instructions for marking).

However, I had no control over how long they would spend on the task and did not ask them how long it took them to mark this assessment task. One more thing is that this marking activity was done as a favour to a colleague from another school, so the performance stakes were low. In other words, there was no advantage to be gained from marking differently than usual. I assume that teachers' corrections were a fair representation of what they would normally do. Possibly it could be the best practice as participating teachers were presenting their work to a colleague from another school.

3. Recorded interviews with 6 teachers

I designed an interview schedule which had five questions. (See **Appendix 'C'** for the Interview Schedule) The interview questions were given to each teacher participant well in advance, at the same time with marking instructions, the memorandum and 3 learner scripts. According to the marking instructions each teacher was expected to: (1) identify language errors, (2) give reasons why the learner made those errors, (3) evaluate learner performance, (4) give feedback, and (5) suggest strategies of remediating those errors.

The interview schedule worked successfully. Each teacher was contacted by means of a phone and visited to his or her school, sometimes meeting him or her at a convenient place and time. The recorded interview data was then sent to a professional transcriber. The individual teacher interview transcriptions are attached, see **Appendix D1-D6**.

3.4 How did I collect the Data?

3.4.1 Case Study

Cohen et al (2008), describe the advantage of case study research as it involves typically observing the characteristics of an individual unit- a child, a clique, a class, a school or a community. They go on to say that "the purpose of such observation is to probe deeply and to analyse intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the unit with a

view to establishing generalizations about the wider population to which that unit belongs” (p.258).

Schumacher and McMillan (2010) add to my understanding of a case study by saying that it ‘examines a bounded system, or a case, over time in depth. They go on to describe a ‘case’ as a program, an event, an activity, or a set of individuals bounded in time and place (p.344).

This research used a case study of one assessment task that was written by grade 6 learners from my school. It also used 6 township teachers who were selected on the basis that they were teaching and assessing English First Additional Language in grade 6 classes in 2011. Aspects of the teachers’ assessment practices, specifically marking and feedback for an English First Additional language written task were analysed and conclusions made on the findings.

3.4.2 Interview Schedule

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) describe interviews as an ‘essentially oral questionnaire’ which is also ‘flexible and adaptable.’ The understanding fore-grounded by the authors is verbal and non-verbal communication between the researcher and the participant during the interview, especially face-to-face contact rather than telephonic one. It implies advantages of engaging further with the participant where ‘responses can be probed, followed up, clarified, and elaborated to achieve specific accurate responses’ (p.205).

In collecting data from teacher participants, I conducted interviews with each of the 6 teachers in their schools. The interview schedule comprises ‘semi-structured questions’ which are ‘open-ended but fairly specific’ in their intents, (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010, p.206). The interview for this study focused on four tasks that teacher participants had to perform, which comprise ‘identifying learners’ language errors’, ‘interpreting why learners made those errors’, ‘evaluating performance and giving feedback based on errors identified’, and ‘suggesting strategies to remediate learning based on errors identified.’ During the interview schedule, I used a voice recorder to capture the data. I also kept a notebook for any important information such as non-verbal cues or discussion before or after recording the interview.

3.5 Data Analysis

For my research project, I used ‘inductive analysis’, which means that I moved from ‘specific data to general categories and patterns’ (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010, p.367). Firstly, I prepared data by ‘transcribing, coding, and categorising’ (using mostly the categories that emerged from the literature review chapter, as well as some categories created by supervisor and me). Secondly, I interpreted the data and provided explanations of themes that were emerging from it. Importantly, my data was put in tables so that I could compare and contrast data within or among categories. I developed tables for different data categories such as orthographic errors, morphological and syntactic errors, and teachers’ feedback strategies. I have found tables to be user- friendly, especially when dealing with single words or short statements. There were more sub-headings that I could link at once in one table. For an example, I initially developed tables that focused on individual learners’ errors only. But I realized that the data was scattered, also leading to many tables for one heading and thus needed to be linked. Then I had to develop subheadings to link similar information of the data. I ended up having comprehensive tables for each data category.

The literature review on error analysis gave me terminology to categorise the language errors. I also learned to fuse two potential categories into ‘morphology and syntax’ category after realising that morphological errors occur within the level of a sentence structure. I have also learned from the literature that the second language error analysis has a long history, internationally. So the lessons from the international second language research can give us diagnostic tools and an insight to the language problems of our era. Ultimately, I discussed the findings and drew conclusions based on the research questions.

3.6 Ethical considerations

The process for ethical considerations demanded applications and granting thereof to different institutions and individuals before I could start with my research. The important information and ethical assurance such as the study to be undertaken, benefits, confidentiality and protecting participants’ anonymity that the application forms from the Wits Ethics Committee and the Gauteng Provincial Department of Education required had to be aligned with the letters to the relevant institutions and individuals.

The first step for ethical considerations was to apply for permission from the Wits Ethics Committee and to do research. I also applied to the Gauteng Provincial Department of Education for permission to do research in schools within its jurisdiction. **(See Appendix E1 & E2 for the permission letters I received)**

Regarding applications to schools I wrote letters to the principals and their grade 6 English First Additional Language teachers, made follow-ups through phone calls and personal visits in order to get access and work with one teacher. I also wrote letters to learners' parents whose children's scripts were selected for use in my research. I made follow-ups through letters, phoned some of the parents to explain the research and the importance of getting permission from them and their children too. The individual learner's letters were also written and issued simultaneously with parents' letters. I had an advantage to explain verbally to the learners the content of the letter as they were in my school. The principal of my school also received an application from me asking for permission to work with six grade 6 learners in her school.

I acquired permission and informed consent from all the concerned institutions and participants. I have kept the records for administration purposes. **(See Appendix E3-E6)** for the consent forms I received from school principals, teachers, parents and learners)

Chapter 4: Presentation and Interpretation of the Data

This chapter seeks to present data for the following four research sub-questions:

1. What common errors do learners in grade 6 English First Additional Language class make?
2. What types of errors do teachers pick up on when they identify common learners errors?
3. What kind of feedback do teachers give to learners in response to these errors?
4. What teaching strategies do teachers suggest for remediating these errors?

The first research sub-question seeks evidence and general overview of English First Additional Language errors made by learners in grade 6 in relation to the written assessment task analysed in this study. The second question relates to the first question above, seeks evidence of categories of language errors from the analysis of teachers' responses to the learner assessment task which was given to them for marking and comments. The third question seeks evidence of the feedback comments that teachers made in learners' scripts or in a piece of paper addressed to the learner or about the learner to the researcher. The fourth and last question seeks evidence of teaching strategies suggested by the teachers. So this chapter has three sections that respond to the foci of research sub-questions.

The learner assessment task and the interview are the two sources of data that I used to analyse and subsequently discussed the findings. In each section I describe the content, present and discuss the evidence.

4.1: Common Learner Errors in grade 6 English First Additional Language class

Sesnan (2005) described common errors as the errors that almost everyone makes in a particular group of people. In the light of Sesnan's description of errors this study sought to find common errors that the grade 6 English First Additional Language class made. As this

study uses a qualitative approach, it is not only common errors that matter but also individual learner's errors are important in terms representing learners out there who have the same language problems. Though the study was more on teachers' abilities to understand and handle learners' errors, the foundational understanding begins with examples of different learners' errors.

Olsen (1999) mentioned the following four categories of second language errors made by the Norwegian learners:

- i. Orthography – learners made language errors at a word level, i.e. wrong spelling of words.
- ii. Morphology – learners made language errors at a word level, i.e. wrong tenses, inflections, etc.
- iii. Syntax – learners made language errors at the level of a sentence, i.e. wrong word order
- iv. Lexis- learners made language errors at a word level, i.e. wrong word.

In the light of the information of language categories by Olsen (1999) and language features by Hinkel (2011), (see **chapter 2, sections 2.3.5 (b) and 2.5.4**) this study found the following categories of errors made by the grade 6 English First Additional Language: (i) Orthographic errors, (ii) Morphology and Syntactic errors, and (iii) Paragraph Structural errors

In summary, Olsen's (1999) three categories were identified in this study, though making two categories because morphology and syntax were conflated. Importantly, **morphology** (grammatical errors at a word level such as tense, aspect, inflections, etc.) and **syntax** (word order and sentence structure) were combined to show that the wrong tense, aspect, and word order take place within the sentence structure. Realising that the categories I had only responded to the micro-features of the language (grammar and vocabulary), the paragraph structural errors category was identified by the researcher (me) to respond to the macro-features of the language (structural and ideational development). One more thing is that some teachers ignored while others identified certain errors but found them difficult to correct. It became an interesting clue as to why teachers struggled to correct most of these errors. I realised that there were difficult errors for teachers to comprehend. I described these errors as 'orthographic, morphological and syntactic errors difficult to comprehend. I made an elaborate discussion of one learner, i.e. B3, so as to illustrate the complexity encountered when trying to diagnose the errors at the end of this section.

The learners' errors that teachers picked up on make up two categories, namely; (i) Orthography (spelling of words), (ii) Morphology and Syntax (tense, inflections, word order and sentence structure). Below I present a description, a table of examples and discussion of each learner error category.

4.1.1 Orthography (spelling of words)

There were 65 spelling errors that the teachers picked up on. However, I also categorised the spelling errors into three sub-categories: vowel errors, consonant errors, and a combination of consonant and vowel errors (**see appendix F**)

The significance of sub-categorising spelling errors was to get the essence of what is involved in making these errors. In some instances, I realized that there were spelling errors easy to recognize and fix but others were difficult to fix. I did not create another table for easy and difficult to correct spelling errors because fixing them was part of teachers' marking.

Table 4.1 in the next two pages provides information of orthographic errors reflecting individual and collective teachers' pickings.

Table 4.1: **Focus on Orthographic Errors (Spelling)** –Teachers’ count of errors identified.

Teachers → Boys ↓	Sipho	Gabriel	Nimrod	Total Error Count identified by Teachers	Researcher’s Count	Comments
B1	anithing, seing, fust (3)	anithing, seing, sudenly (3)	seing. (1)	4	4 (All identified)	Collectively picked up on all errors, but individually only picked up on some.
B2	Disapeard (1)	----- (0)	Thos (1)	2	3 (gararge - not identified)	Only one teacher did not pick up on any spelling error. One spelling error was either ignored or not seen because of a single consonant added and too close to correct spelling.
B3	ales, andiew, balea, blena, clthechs, crelhet, habi, heah, pegt, ranty, redng, red, salea, setraia, solme, suhe, ta, taent, ting, uiand, ares, fuiall, heng, lengie, ratsi, setraia, takets, vitis. (28)	ales, andiew, balea, clthechs, crelhet, habi, heah, pegt, ranty, redng, red, salea, setraia, solme, suhetaent, ting, tnad, uiand, aie, grede, pat, tina. (23)	andiew, blena, pegt, ranty, redng, red, ta, ting, tnad, muish. (10)	33	35 (Tame, Nunel- not identified)	Collectively teachers picked up on most spelling errors. Two words were either ignored or assumed to be names of people.

Table 4.1 (continued)

Teachers → Girls ↓	Margaret	Mothubi	Theresa	Total Error Count identified by Teachers	Researcher's Count	Comments
G1	belive, gang, lough, loughing, noty, shot. (6)	belive, gang, lough, loughing, noty, perent. (6)	belive, gang, lough, loughing, noty. (5)	7	8 (flamingoes not identified)	Collectively picked up on 7 out of 8 spelling errors, but individually only picked up some.
G2	read off (instead of rid of), scarde, woutch. (4)	read off (instead of rid of), scarde, woutch, where (instead of were), here (instead of hear). (5)	Scarde, woutch. (2)	6	6 (All identified)	Mothubi picked up on all spelling errors while the other two teachers individually only picked up some.
G3	barth, becouse, dishis, freind, stated (instead of started), sow (instead of saw), waring, crocodi, fell (instead of felt), mothe. (10)	barth, becouse, dishis, freind, stated, sow, waring. (7)	barth, because, dishis, stated, waring, now (instead of know), raning, whe. (8)	13	16 (ball, bushme, childrens – not identified)	Collectively picked up on 13 spelling errors out of 16, but individually only picked up some.
Total	(52)	(44)	(27)	(65)	(72)	

Table 4.1 refers us to teachers' count of errors identified individually and collectively as according to the Boy learners (B1, B2 & B3) or Girl learners (G1, G2 & G3) apportioned to them.

The purpose of Table 4.1 provides information that all the 6 learners made orthographic errors. It also indicates in bold print the spelling error(s) picked by that particular teacher that other two teachers in a group of 3 did not identify. The words in brackets represent the correct spelling of the words and or intended expression after them. There is a spelling count allocated to each group of words under individual teacher and the collective error count for each learner by a group of 3 teachers. Importantly, the same learner's spelling errors are counted as one unit, but indicated under all teachers in a group for the purpose of comparing and contrasting individual teacher's identified or ignored number of errors. The researcher's count and comments reflect on the individual and collective teachers' responses to spelling errors.

Now turning focus onto teachers, two groups of teachers indicated in table 4.1 were created to summarise their responses to orthographic errors. Below I discuss table 4.1 regarding the information it provides us.

The teachers' recognition of English Spelling errors is relatively high in Table 4.1. The table shows that the first group of teachers (Sipho, Gabriel and Nimrod) collectively picked up on 39 spelling errors out of the total of 42 made by learners B1, B2 and B3. While Sipho and Gabriel picked up on 32 and 26 spelling errors respectively, Nimrod is noticeably less concerned about spelling errors than the other two teachers.

However, in cases where these teachers found it difficult to understand or guess what a learner was trying to say such as B3 'Tame' and 'Nunel', they would ignore the error. Looking at: 'Tame' and 'Nunel', we might think they stand for names of people or places because they start with capital letters. In fact, they are not the only words that start with capital letters. Words such as: 'Lengie', 'End', and 'Love', start with capital letters and are in the middle of sentences but not referring to proper nouns. So when it comes to B3, there is absolutely nothing we can be sure of or take for granted because his poor spelling and lack of grammatical knowledge destroy meaning and also teachers' interest in reading his essay. On the other hand, the spelling error of 'gararge' might have eluded teachers because it is too close to the correct word.

Table 4.1 shows that the second group of teachers collectively picked up on 26 spelling errors out of 30 in total made by learners G1, G2 and G3.

However, it happened only once that an individual teacher picked up on all spelling errors (Mothubi on G2). The tendency to ignore some of the spelling errors is evident in words such as: ‘ball, bushme, and childrens’. It might mean that teachers are simply ignoring some spelling errors if there are too many. It might also mean that it is better to ignore the spelling error if it is too difficult to correct, or interferes with meaning, for example: ‘I will **ball** raning away to call my mother’, or too close to the correct spelling of words, for example: ‘bushme and childrens’.

Sometimes a spelling error can elude teachers such as the spelling error of ‘flamingoes’, which is in the plural form. This spelling error may be easily associated with words that end with vowel ‘-o’ such as ‘potato’, ‘mango’, etc., whose plural form adds the (inflection) suffix ‘-es’ to have ‘potatoes’, ‘mangoes’. It could be that teachers might have not realized that the plural form of ‘flamingos’ is an exception to the rule of adding suffix ‘-es’.

In summary, teachers focused on correcting spelling. They indicated most of the spelling errors that were made by the learners. However, teachers showed a tendency to ignore spelling errors which are too difficult to correct, especially the ones that interfere with meaning. They also ignored or were eluded by the spelling errors which were too close to correct spelling of those words.

4.1.2 Morphology and syntax (tense, aspects, word order and sentence structure)

This category of errors combines **morphology** (grammatical errors at a word level such as tense, aspect, inflections, etc.) and **syntax** (word order and sentence structure). Another point is that the morphology and syntax can also be understood as ‘sentence structure’, which describes the level where these errors take place. Important to note is that the Table 2 below is not a complete or full version table but a ‘select version’ table that contains examples primarily for discussion.

Table 4.2: **(Select Version) Morphology and Syntax** (Focus on Grammar and Sentence Structure -Tense, Word Order, Omissions, Punctuation, etc.)

Teachers → Boys↓	Nimrod's correction	Sipho's correction	Gabriel's correction	Error Type	Teachers' error count	Researcher's Count and Comment
B2 error 1. I ended up getting a shortcut and the dogs never saw me again.	1. It ended up getting a shortcut and the dogs never saw me again.			1. B2 responded well to a flowchart prompt: 'How the dream ended'	1	0 Only Nimrod sees an 'error' while Sipho and Gabriel find no error. Nimrod makes an error when he substitutes the subject 'I' with 'It'. The message is lost as to whom 'it' stands for and how it links with the object adjunct-'me'.
B3 errors 1. Yes. He dream are Fuiall 2. I go to vitis my Mme.		1. She dreamed or Her dream was. 2. I go to visit my Mme.	2. Felt or did?	1. Lack of Comprehension, Vocabulary, Tense, Subject 2. Lack of Comprehension, Tense, Vocabulary	3	23 Collectively picked up on 3 sentence errors, but individually only picked up some. 20 errors ignored. Nimrod and Sipho seem to focus more on B3 language accuracy or grammar knowledge while Gabriel is focusing more on meaning and understanding.

Table 4.2 (Select Version continued)

Teachers → Girls ↓	Margaret's correction	Mothubi's correction	Theresa's correction	Error Type	Teachers' Error Count	Researcher's Count
G1 errors 11. I ran as fast as I can.	11.	11.	11. I ran as faster as I can.	11. Tense	16	16 Collectively teachers picked up on all sentence errors, but individually only picked up on some. Theresa makes an incomplete correction of sentence number 10. She also makes an error at sentence number 11 by adding suffix '-er' on 'fast', indicating a comparative degree instead of changing the tense of 'can' to could or at least using a simile that compares fastness to lightning or cheetah.
G3 errors 3. I eat and watching the TV at 08:00		3. I eat and <u>watching</u> (watch) the TV. æ 08:00	3. I ate and watch the TV at 8:00. (Tense and Punctuation)	3. Tense, Omission, alternative conjunction (while)	11	11 Collectively teachers picked up on all G3 Sentence errors, but individually picked up some. Mothubi makes grammatical errors in sentences number 1, 3, and 5. Theresa makes grammatical errors in sentences 3, 4 and 5.

Table 4.2 provides information on learners' errors and teacher's corrections. The information for all 6 learners' morphological and syntactic errors made nine pages. The full version of this table is in the appendix (**see appendix-G**). There is a total 8 out of the possible 26 boy learners' errors and a total of 38 girl learners' errors that the teachers responded to.

The morphological and syntactic learners' errors made were both simple and complex. Simple errors were punctuation marks, tense and omissions of words. Complex errors were lack of comprehension, vocabulary and wrong word order. Looking at sentence structure made it easier to identify grammatical errors. Below is a list of some simple and complex morphological and syntactic errors that the learners made:

- i) I saw a big hole and I fell in it. (simple morphological error)
- ii) I felt scared and cold i did not understand why my granny did not help me. (simple morphological and syntactic errors)
- iii) Mother asked her why was the floor wet. (complex syntactic error)
- iv) becouse she sow the flamingos is his dreams. (complex morphological errors)
- v) The dream ended when I was died and my family dead all. (complex morphological and syntactic errors)
- vi) Yes. He dream are Fuiall. (complex morphological and syntactic errors)

Now turning focus onto teachers' responses, the two groups of teachers were created to summarise the morphology and syntactic errors in Table 2. The information in Table 2 is specifically selected to represent the examples for the discussion to follow.

Table 4.2 shows three important issues:

(a) *Teachers generally find it easy to identify sentence structure errors but they struggle to correct them.*

There are learners' errors that teachers find easy to spot but very difficult to correct. For example: Table 2, B3 sentence: **'Yes. He dream are Fuiall'**. Siphon's correction of this sentence is incomplete because he could not understand or guess what 'Fuiall' means. Nimrod and Gabriel simply ignored it.

Another example: Mothubi and Theresa identified G3 sentence number 3 error; **'I eat and watching the TV at 08:00'**. G3 was responding to a flowchart prompt: 'What I did before I

slept'. Both teachers' corrections of this error varied, meaning one making it worse and the other making it incomplete thus: "I eat and watch the TV (Mothubi)", "I ate and watch the TV at 08:00 (Theresa)". Mothubi's correction is without past tense, while Theresa's partially uses past tense. Mothubi and Theresa struggled to correct the error. Mothubi made the learner's error worse by misrepresenting the child's routine, removing 08:00 and failing to give correct tense. Theresa missed on the tense of the second verb in the sentence, making correction incomplete.

It is also interesting to see that not only learners are making errors, teachers are making them too. For example: Table 4.2, B2 sentence: '**I ended up getting a shortcut and the dogs never saw me again**'. Nimrod attempts to correct the sentence by changing the 'I' to 'It'. But then the sentence loses its meaning. Another example: Table 2, G1 sentence no.11, Theresa makes an error when she attempts to correct the following sentence: "**I ran as fast as I can.**" She writes the following 'correction': '**I ran as faster as I can.**' She makes an error by adding suffix '-er' on 'fast', indicating a comparative degree. She also did not notice that the tense of 'can' needed to change.

(b) Teachers approach learners' errors differently

Table 4.2 shows that teachers approach learners' errors differently. Nimrod and Sipho focused more on language accuracy or grammatical errors, while Gabriel focused on learners' understanding. It is interesting to realise that change to B3 sentence number 2 incorrectly responded to a flowchart prompt: 'How I felt during the dream'. Because Sipho was so immersed in correcting spelling errors, he did not see whether B3 appropriately responded to the prompt or not. Instead he simply corrected the spelling error of vitis. But Gabriel saw that B3 did not respond correctly. Then he asked B3 a question: 'Felt or did? He wanted the learner to realize that his response did not consider what the prompt was asking.

(c) Teachers generally ignore more than half the number of sentence structure errors

Table 4.2 (**see appendix-G, full version**) shows the following: Nimrod, Sipho and Gabriel collectively identified 8 out of the possible 26 Boys' sentence structure errors, Nimrod ignored 3, Sipho ignored 5, and Gabriel ignored 7. Out of 38 Girls' sentence structure errors which they collectively identified, Margaret ignored 19, Mothubi ignored 21, and Theresa ignored 27.

4.2 Orthographic, Morphological and Syntactic Errors

difficult to comprehend

Most of the spelling and sentence structure errors listed below were sourced from answers to the flowchart and essay questions written by B3. I am presenting an elaborated example from one child so as to illustrate the complexity encountered when trying to diagnose the errors.

B3's responses to the flowchart activity and essay

The flowchart preceded and prepared learners for the essay topic: “Last night I dreamed that...” It instructed each learner to write a description of a dream or a nightmare that she/he had. It had five prompts which provided a logical sequence.

B3's responded to the flowchart prompts as follows:

What I did before I slept = **I andiew the TV.**

How the dream started = **I crelhettherclthees.**

How I felt during the dream = **I go to vitis my MMe.**

How the dream ended = **I go to pat.**

When I woke up = **I go to school and I tina my MMe.**

It is not clear whether or not B3 understands the questions. Evidently, he lacks the vocabulary to express his ideas. For example, his word: ‘**andiew**’. Given the context of an evening in front of the TV and the sound of the word, B3 could be conflating ‘**Enjoy**’, and ‘**View**’. Maybe he wanted to say that he enjoyed viewing television. So, he seems to understand the demands of the prompt but lacks the vocabulary to express his action.

B3 also presents difficulties in the ordering of his ideas. For example, B3 seems to suggest that he went to visit his ‘**Mme**’, which means: ‘**Mother**’ in Sotho or Tswana Language when he responds: ‘**I go to vitis my MMe**’ to the flowchart prompt: How I felt during the dream. So his response is difficult to comprehend because instead of telling how he felt during the dream, he talked of visiting his mother. It appears as if he was not responding to this particular flowchart prompt. Adding to his comprehension problem is that he could not make

any sensible links within the flowchart prompts as well as between the flowchart and the essay. So the flowchart did not prepare him for writing the essay.

B3's Essay

Learners were also instructed that after writing their main ideas on the flowchart, they would need to write an essay of three or four paragraphs about their dreams. Here is B3 essay:

“I go to school and redng my book and I ranty test and heah the blenaratsi I go to tnad the food and I go home. And I redting the homework ta home heng my Lengiesetraia and I suhe on TV and I go to pegt hand Thabiso Tame and habi go to baleasolmesalea and the End of my story. And takets to sinale Nunel. She is he ales and I Love he and she a muis she and she taent uiand SS and Eng and she is aie gredeThe end of my story.”

My explanation why B3 could have made the errors

B3 has a problem with spelling English words. He seems unable to get the sounds right. For example, in the first line of the essay he could not spell simple words such as ‘hear, write, reading’, correctly but instead wrote **‘heah, ranty, redng.**

When I read his essay for the first time I imagined a learner who had just come to South from a Portuguese or Spanish background. Surely, I am not saying that the Portuguese or Spaniards write English the same way as B3 had done. It is just my imagination. The point I am raising is that B3 finds English extremely foreign and difficult to write and speak. It could be that he has a hearing defect, which affects his spelling. It could also be that B3 is dyslexic. In addition, a general contributory factor to his problems could be a lack of reading opportunities.

The significance of B3’s struggle with spelling shows how badly spelling interrupts meaning. As I read B3’s essay I struggled to understand his message. So I started reading his work aloud so as to work out what the individual words could mean. Initially I was also stunned

what did B3 mean when he wrote: ‘**heah the blena ratsi**’? The most difficult words to understand are ‘**blena**’ and ‘**ratsi**’. Again, given the context of his writing I think ‘**blena**’ could refer to a ‘**bell**’, while ‘**ratsi**’ refers to **noise**, or rather to ‘**raas**’, the Afrikaans word for noise. Because this phrase is written as part of describing the school culture, that is; ‘reading books, writing tests, **blena ratsi**, eating food and going home. It is possible to understand the phrase as ‘**bell ringing**’.

Yet the spelling of ‘**ratsi**’ is confusing. In Soweto we use ‘**raas**’ a lot when we refer to a noise. When a kombi is honking a hooter we normally complain and say in Zulu: Le khumbi iyarasa. B3 makes things difficult when he transforms the spelling of ‘**raas**’ to ‘**ratsi**’, adding an additional consonant not in the sound of the Afrikaans/Zulu word. This error is adding evidence to my suspicion or worry regarding B3’s hearing.

Towards the end the essay B3 also wrote the sentence: ‘**She is aie grede**’. It seems to suggest: ‘She is in our grade.’ The spelling of grade is so close to the correct one that it only has one vowel misspelt. Again given the context of his writing, the school culture encourages boys and girls to work and sit together. And preceding this sentence, he gives the message that he loves this girl in his grade. It seems as if his dream ends when he falls in love with the girl in his grade.

What is the significance of Spelling and Sentences difficult to comprehend?

The B3 presentation shows how important meaning is in the academic world, including primary schools. Clearly, meaning gets lost when spelling and grammar errors are prevalent. In addition, teacher’s interest in reading the work with many spelling errors gets lost.

B3’s poor spelling and grammar raises many complex issues such as contrastive study of his language to English, checking his hearing defects, as well as dyslexia. One more thing is that the teacher’s knowledge of language errors is challenged by learners like B3. If the teacher’s knowledge of language errors is not deep and broad, then learners like B3 can be frustrating. It implies that the teacher’s frustration may lead him or her to use wrong strategies in an attempt to remedy the learner’s errors or simply ignore these errors.

4.3: The Teachers' Feedback

This section describes the categories of teachers' feedback comments made on learners' scripts or written on pieces of paper (see **Appendix H**). Five teachers addressed their feedback comments to the learners but one teacher decided to write feedback comments about learners addressing them to the researcher. This teacher's feedback is accepted in the same light as the other teachers' feedback because he could have used the same mind-set to address the learners. So the feedback comments addressed to me will be distinguished from the feedback comments given to learners in order to ascertain the impression they generate.

The discussion of the teachers' feedback include the order from most to least used by the teachers. Below I present 5 categories of feedback.

4.3.1 Describing categories of feedback

4.3.1.1 Feedback that gives a correct version

Feedback that gives a correct version refers to an action taken by a teacher to model the answer for a particular learner. A teacher may opt to give a correct version of a single word, phrase, sentence or paragraph.

In this project, there were 51 units of Feedback that gives a correct version. The table below gives an example of this type of feedback.

Learner's Error	My Analysis of Learner Errors	Teacher's Feedback	Teacher's Choice of Error to correct
I read a Zulu about a noty boy who is the same as his father when his father was young. (G1)	1. Word missing ; 2. Spelling ; naughty 3. Expression : (same as) behaved like/looked like. (Sentence structure)	I read a Zulu about a <u>noty(sp)</u> boy who is was the same as like his father when his father he was young. (Mothubi, Flowchart)	1. Crossing out words , 2. Tense ; was, 3. Substitution : like, he

The significance of this table indicates that the teachers' processes of feedback that gives a correct version included crossing out some words, modelling the morphological and syntactic errors by substituting some words and changing the tense. G1's errors indicate the struggle she has with grammar, sentence structure and vocabulary to express clearly her ideas.

Why would teachers use the feedback that gives a correct version? There might be several reasons why teachers use this category of feedback. In my experience, teachers in the primary school hold the belief that learners are still young and unable to respond to a comprehensive and corrective feedback.

Yet if teachers only use feedback that gives a correct version, they do not help learners to review their errors. They may also deny learners the responsibility of making corrections or a second chance to think through their errors and work out solutions.

4.3.1.2 Evaluative Feedback

Evaluative Feedback refers to comments and judgements made by teachers on learner's work. It is the type of feedback that relies on numbers and levels before comments and judgments can be made. Teachers use comments such as: 'Good, Fair, Poor, Well Done, and so on to sum up the progress of a student in a particular task.

In this project, there were 23 instances of Evaluative Feedback. However, not all the Evaluative Feedback instances were directed at the learners. Thirteen instances were directed at the learners by four teachers (Margaret: 1, Nimrod: 1, Mothubi: 2, Theresa: 3, and Siphon: 6) while 10 instances were directed at me by Gabriel. Gabriel knew that his feedback was not going to reach the learners apportioned to him. So he decided to give feedback about learners to the researcher. Below I present a list of four examples of the evaluative feedback:

- | | | |
|------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| i) | Not clear!!!! Half a page!!! | (B2,Siphon, Essay) |
| ii) | No sequence of events. | (G3, Mothubi, Essay) |
| iii) | I picked nothing on the story. | (B3, Siphon, Essay) |
| iv) | noty(sp) | (G1, Mothubi& Theresa, Flow chart) |

The significance of the first comment made by Siphon to learner B2 on the essay indicates that the teacher could not understand what the learner was trying to say. Instead of using words

like poor, fair and others, he opted to indicate that there is a serious difficulty to understand due to unclear message. In addition, he indicated that the learner did not write enough.

Below I present three examples of the evaluative feedback that the teacher directed at the researcher:

- i) This learner was greatly challenged by this activity that she/he only got 2 out of 6.” (B2, Gabriel, Story Sequence)
- ii) The learner is in a maze of confusion. (B3,Gabriel, Flow Chart)
- iii) This learner fully grasps the concept of mind-mapping.(B1&2, Gabriel, Flow Chart)
- iv) The learner is greatly challenged by the choice of the alternative answers. (B3, Gabriel, Multiple -Choice)

The comments which Gabriel wrote to the researcher indicate that he would have used the same mind-set to inform the learners of their performance. Noticeably, Gabriel makes positive and negative comments to conclude learners’ performances. He uses negative statements such as ‘greatly challenged’ and ‘maze of confusion’ for poor learner performances. The positive comment, i.e. ‘fully grasps’ concludes a learner’s good performance of a given task. Gabriel is careful with the choice of words and also reminds the learner about the focus of the task.

4.3.1.3 Feedback that gives a rule for self-correction

Feedback that gives a rule refers to comments and action taken by a teacher to inform, remind and advise a learner about specific procedures and skills that should always be observed or obeyed. Rules may include simple to complex instructions such as learner’s prior and current knowledge of punctuation marks, sentence structure, paragraph structure and more.

In this project, there were 5 examples of this category of feedback.

- i) ‘I’, is always written in a capital letter. Put a full stop at the end of each sentence.
- ii) Never start a sentence with “Because.
- iii) Do not start a sentence with a conjunction.
- iv) Create spaces between words.
- v) Use capital letters for proper nouns and punctuation where necessary

The teachers appear to presume that learners should know these rules and apply them at all given times.

4.3.1.4 Feedback that gives instructions for how to self-correct

Feedback that gives general instructions for self-correction refers to comments and action taken by a teacher to indicate to a learner what and how it should have been done. General instructions may include what learners presumably know from classes before or what they have just learned in the current class.

In this project there were 5 examples of this category of feedback.

- i) Use your dictionary to check spelling.
- ii) Check your spelling.
- iii) Consult a dictionary for spelling.
- iv) Use correct tenses to write your work.
- v) Read your work after writing.

This category of feedback is focusing on learner's individual development. It gives power to the learner to do his or her own work in order to improve the quality of subject content and skills. The word 'general' might be a disadvantage as it suggests that there is no specification of what and how to do. It implies that teachers should find better ways to make instructions explicit.

4.3.1.5 Descriptive Feedback

Descriptive Feedback refers to the comments which state clearly what the problem is or what the learner was able to do well, as well as offering suggestions of what to do in order to improve in that area or section of the subject. In fact, Descriptive Feedback takes into account the criteria which have been set for that task. When criteria are set for descriptively judging the performance of learners, it enables teachers to make extended comments that specify areas of need as well as achievement. Descriptive Feedback supports learners' efforts by comparing them to a set of criteria.

In this project, there were 10 examples of Descriptive Feedback though most of them (9) were given by one teacher (Gabriel) and one by one teacher (Sipho). Below are five examples of Descriptive Feedback:

- i) The answer was not convincing to give you full marks. Sentence construction not clear. But the answer was so close. (B1, Sipho)
- ii) This learner substantively understands and masters the chronological arrangement of the story.(B1, Gabriel)
- iii) The learner did not grasp the fact that some questions are compound and have to be answered fully, not partially. (B1, Gabriel)
- iv) The story flows. The learner even uses the figure of speech called personification. This beautifully ties up with the fact that it was a dream with some fantasy thrown in. (B2, Gabriel)
- v) The learner experienced a complete black-out. There is a lack of comprehension skill. Not a single question was correctly answered.(B3, Gabriel)

In short, Gabriel is the only teacher who was able to give Descriptive Feedback more than once. He describes learners' performance to the researcher and in the process using the language that learners would not understand, i.e. appropriate to the researcher. So this points out how difficult it is to give level-appropriate descriptive feedback.

4.3.2 Discussion of Teachers' Feedback

The teachers' individual comments on learners' scripts are summarised in the table below, giving us an overview of teachers' feedback foci.

Table 4.3: *Numerical Presentation of Teachers' Feedback Strategies*

	Margaret	Gabriel	Theresa	Mothubi	Sipho	Nimrod	Total
Feedback that gives a correct version	24	0	8	9	4	6	51
Evaluative Feedback	1	10	3	2	6	1	23
Descriptive Feedback	0	9	0	0	1	0	10
Feedback that gives instructions for how to self-correct	2	1	2	0	0	0	5
Feedback that gives a rule for self-correction	3	0	1	1	0	0	5
Total Feedback instances	30	20	14	12	11	7	94

The feedback given by the six participating teachers covered five strategies of feedback, which are arranged from most to least frequently-used.

The Numerical Presentation of Teachers' Feedback Units gives us the following information:

4.3.2.1 Most frequently used strategies of feedback

Feedback that gives a correct version is the most frequently used category of feedback with 51 of 94 instances, accounting for more than half (54%) of all feedback given. Evaluative Feedback is the second most frequently used type of feedback with 23 of 94 or (24%), i.e.; it is used considerably less frequently.

The significant finding is that feedback that gives a correct version is the most frequently used type of feedback by teachers. This finding implies that the teachers believe that the

learners in grade 6 cannot understand teachers' comments and implement them and that it requires teacher corrections to help learners see their errors. It could also imply that the teachers find it easier to correct than to explain.

4.3.2.2 The least frequently used feedback strategies

Descriptive Feedback is used least frequently with 10 of 94 instances. Feedback that gives instructions how to self-correct and Feedback that gives a rule for self-correction were used 5 times each.

Collectively, these three types of feedback were used 20 times out of 94 units or (21%) of the total.

4.3.2.3 Reflecting on the significance of Frequency of Occurrence

Reed (2006) argues that feedback (i.e. response) to learners on their work should enable them to move forward and to achieve satisfaction in their learning. Reed (2006) emphasises that feedback should be aimed at causing learning to take place. It implies that learners are made aware of their learning deficiencies. It further suggests that not only identification of their errors is important, but more important is indicating, without being prescriptive, what learners could focus on or could try in order to improve.

However, it is interesting to see that the most frequently used feedback was giving a correct version and evaluative feedback. One of the reasons why teachers make such use of these strategies of feedback might not be that they are not aware of their lack of value for learning. Another reason might be hidden beliefs about what feedback means to them. For example, giving feedback that gives a correct version suggests that the teacher believes modelling the answer for learners will improve their learning. Yet reading for this research has made me aware that is not the case. If correction is overwhelmingly done by the teacher, then what will be the responsibility of a learner towards improving own learning? I think the same goes for evaluative feedback. Evaluative feedback suggests a belief by the teacher that commenting on the basis of what marks are saying to the learner will lead to self-correction and improved learning.

The six participating teachers' focus on feedback that gives a correct version and evaluative feedback signifies their default strategies or what comes easily to them.

4.3.2.4 Describing individual teachers' feedback tendencies

Margaret gave the most feedback, a total of 30 instances. The majority of her feedback is feedback that gives a correct version. It is interesting to see that Margaret used the correct version 24 times or (80%) of her total of 30 instances. It means that she focused more on errors of language accuracy, i.e. spelling, morphology and syntax than meaning.

Gabriel came second with 20 instances. Gabriel wrote comments for the researcher, not for learners. He knew that the scripts were not getting back to learners. The majority of Gabriel's feedback is evaluative and descriptive feedback. Interesting about Gabriel is that he did not use feedback that gives a correct version at all. Another interesting point is that 9 of the total of 20 feedback instances, i.e. almost half, are descriptive feedback. The significance of Gabriel's descriptive comments of questioning in relation to the error and describing what the problem is refocuses on the demands of the task, an essential step towards feedback for learning.

When looking at Theresa, Mothubi, Sipho and Nimrod, their feedback tendencies have much in common. Together they accounted for 27 instances or 53% of the total of 51 feedbacks that give a correct version and 12 instances of the total 22 evaluative feedback. It suggests they spend most of their marking time correcting errors and giving marks.

4.4: The Interview Data

The interview data covers teachers' responses to the following questions (see **appendix C**):

- (i) Which task was easiest to mark and why?, Which was the most difficult?, (ii) Which of the errors that you noticed, would you say are common and typical for your learners?, (iii) How would you normally deal with these kinds of errors when your learners make them?, (iv) Which kinds of errors do you find easy and which ones do you find difficult to correct? Why? (v) What do you think are the reasons why learners are making these common errors?

I have arranged the interview data according to the order of questions. The interview data creates the links between teachers' ideas about error analysis and practice and what worked for them as they responded to the learners' written assessment task. Each interview question has a table of responses (see **Appendix I-1 to I-5**) and a discussion (see below) which attempts to analyse and summarise the findings.

4.4.1 Teachers' responses to the 5 interview questions

4.4.1.1 Which task was easiest to mark and why? Which was the most difficult?

I categorised teachers' responses according to each question they had individually declared either easiest or difficult to mark (see **Appendix I-1**). When I analysed the category of easiest questions to mark, the following response patterns of teachers occurred:

All the teachers (6) found *Multiple –choice* easiest to mark. 4 out of 6 teachers found *Story sequence* another easiest question to mark. They commented that these questions were not demanding in terms of language errors, saying; these questions 'had nothing to do with writing', they 'just checked the correct number or answer' and that the answers were readily available for learners to choose the correct ones.

When I analysed the category of most difficult question to mark, a varied teachers' response patterns occurred in the following questions and manner: *Short answer questions* was chosen once (1 of 6 teachers), *Mind map* chosen 3 times (3 of 6 teachers), and *Essay*: chosen 5 times (5 of 6 teachers).

Gabriel, instead of naming one, found three questions difficult to mark. Margaret also found both the flow chart and essay difficult to mark. Most teachers (5 of 6 teachers) found the essay most difficult to mark, while (3 of 6 teachers) struggled with the mind map. Importantly, all these questions involved learners' written responses and they demanded teachers to read and identify language errors. Teachers commented that questions that require learners to produce a written text are never easy to mark because of learners' work is full too many spelling errors, wrong tense, poor punctuation and poor sentence construction, making it difficult to understand what learners are trying to say.

4.4.1.2 Which of the errors that you noticed, would you say are common and typical for your learners?

Table 6 (see **Appendix I-2**) indicated four important issues that emanated from the analysis of teachers' responses to the 2nd interview question.

A) Teachers identified two categories of errors

The teachers' responses collectively identified two categories of errors, namely; orthographic errors and morphological/syntactic errors.

i) Orthographic errors: All the teachers identified wrong spelling as a common error.

ii) Morphological and Syntactic errors: Teachers mentioned punctuation, wrong tense, nouns, pronouns and sentence construction.

Interestingly, 5 of 6 teachers found spelling while 3 of 6 teachers identified morphology (tense and punctuation) and syntax (sentence construction, nouns and pronouns) common and typical to their learners' mistakes. Thus the teachers find the micro-features of the language, i.e. spelling and grammar, giving their learners problems and in need of the most attention.

B) A Paragraph Structure was identified

When it comes to the paragraph structure, it was only Nimrod who mentioned the issue of 'organising ideas into paragraphs' as common and typical mistake of his learners.

C) Teachers gave reasons and processes instead of identifying errors

When answering questions some teachers did not focus on the common and typical errors of their learners but gave reasons why learners are making these errors, as well as processes that learners would habitually follow.

Gabriel focused on the lack of reading, lack of vocabulary and no comprehension. Sipho also mentioned reading, complained about learners' bad hand writing and failure to write properly. Theresa complained about learners' habits such as starting a sentence with a conjunction, failure to create spaces between words and cancelling words. Importantly, learners' abilities to recognize sounds of the words are essential to language and literacy. But the teachers were raising significant concerns at the wrong place and time. It implies that the teachers got an opportunity to clear their consciences of the concerns they had and thus lost focus of what the question wanted.

D) Teachers gave examples of errors which they had expected

Some teachers did not give examples of errors that were identified in the learners' work but gave examples of what they had expected to find. Margaret mentioned the struggle that the learners have when required to distinguish between pronouns and nouns. She claimed that learners start the sentence with a subject reflecting both the proper noun (Sipho) and subject adjunct (He). The same point was raised by Theresa, that learners like repetition-using a noun and pronoun at the same time. The use of noun and pronoun in the morphological and syntactic errors was not established as common in this study of six learners. Importantly, using noun and pronoun simultaneously is a common L1 and L2 inter-language error.

4.4.1.3 How would you normally deal with these kinds of errors when your learners make them?

The teachers' responses to the 3rd interview question are presented in Table 7 (see **Appendix I-3**). The table contains pseudonyms and individual teachers' responses wherein teachers were expected to give strategies for responding to spelling errors of how they normally deal with their learners' errors.

When I analysed the individual teachers' responses, three categories of strategies were identified: strategies for responding to spelling errors, strategies for sentence structure and strategies to improve reading. Below is a presentation and discussion of the three identified strategies:

A) Strategies for Spelling Error Treatment

When correcting spelling errors Gabriel reminds his learners of the difference between informal and formal language writing to discourage habits of sms and facebook spelling. Margaret instructs her learners to use imagination, writing a word in the air, and also to use a dictionary, as well as writing tests every Friday. Mothubi recommends Phonic Charts for learners to do sight reading on teachers' guidance. Nimrod organizes extra lessons for learners with severe spelling problems. Sipho groups learners according to spelling ability and drills them on spelling. Theresa focuses on doing corrections to help learners recognize their spelling errors.

In summarising the above spelling strategies, all six teachers propose re-teaching.

B) Strategies for Sentence Structure

Only Mothubi described a strategy for correcting sentence structure: "We normally ask them a question, then underneath we have a space where now we as teachers we are trying to guide them how to respond. What is your name? Then you say my name is... so that now they should also know of a sentence, like a phrase that leads them then they complete the phrase with their own phrases."

C) Strategies to improve reading

Only Gabriel responded with a strategy for improving reading - he makes use of the weekly community newspapers, seemingly brought to school by the learners, for reading purposes. Learners work in pairs, read to each other and test each other's understanding through questions related to the story.

In concluding the responses to the 3rd interview question, it is evident that most of the teachers' strategies focussed on spelling errors. Most teachers lacked strategies to improve sentence structure and reading, only one teacher per strategy responded. One more thing is that teachers mentioned re-teaching strategies such as learners instructed to write the word in the air, to practise reading together and extra classes for those with severe spelling problems.

4.4.1.4 Which kinds of errors do you find easy and which ones do you find difficult to correct? Why?

The teachers' responses to the 4th interview question are presented in Table 8 (see **Appendix I-4**). Below is a presentation and discussion of the responses in the table.

The information in Table 8 presents the kinds of errors that the teachers found easy or difficult to correct.

Errors teachers found easy to correct

(Tenses) - Theresa was the only teacher who said that tenses were much easier to correct.

(Punctuation) – Two teachers indicated that punctuation was easy to correct.

(Spelling) – Three teachers indicated that spelling was easy to correct.

A contradictory response

(Sentence Construction) – Nimrod initially claimed that sentence construction is easier to correct when doing punctuation, but immediately finds it 'a bit difficult' for the learners who are still adapting to the shift from writing in point form to writing in paragraphs and struggling with second language.

Errors teachers found difficult to correct

(Spelling) – Three teachers found incorrect spelling difficult to correct.

(Sentence Construction) – Three teachers found sentence construction difficult to correct.

(Essay) – Three teachers mentioned that essay was difficult to correct.

The teachers indicate that spelling and grammar are easy to correct. They also indicate that spelling and grammar is difficult to correct. It means that the teachers are generally struggling to correct errors whether single words or sentences. An essay is most difficult to the extent that three teachers were brave to say that essay was difficult to correct while the other three teachers did not even mention it. It is interesting to see that Gabriel whom I have regarded to be knowledgeable did not find any 'easy' learners' mistake to deal with. Gabriel's situation indicates that there is nothing easy to correct for the teachers.

4.4.1.5 What do you think are the reasons why learners are making these common errors?

Table 9 (see **Appendix I-5**) gives a full version of the teachers' responses to the 5th interview question. The teachers' responses to this question were categorised into reasons within and outside the school system and then subdivided into who or what the causes were attributed to.

Reasons within the school system

A) Four teachers attributed the errors to learners, for example;

- "...it is because some of the learners don't read. Because if now you don't read books and newspapers, then you are not exposed to the language structure or even spelling mistakes."

B) Two teachers attributed errors to teachers, for example;

- "Partly there's an element of laziness and perhaps we as teachers should actually admit to the fact that we don't mark regularly enough, and quickly enough, so that the learners will get feedback while it is still fresh on their minds."

C) Five teachers attributed errors to curriculum in practice, for example;

- "In the foundation phase they are used to being with one teacher, so when they come to the intermediate phase, they find that they are meeting different teachers and these teachers teach them different learning areas. And learning areas are too many for them. That confuses them."

Reasons outside the school system

A) One teacher attributed the errors to the lack of culture of literacy

- "...we the Africans are more of oral people..."

B) Another teacher attributed the errors to family background

- "...most of the learners in our school don't want to read. Their family background also contributes, because most of them stay with their grannies. They don't stay with their biological mothers..."

C) Third teacher attributed the errors to the changes in curriculum policy

- “...our government just took this OBE from overseas. It’s failing us. We can’t teach learners something that we don’t understand. Even us the teachers, we are confused. Even now I’m confused. I don’t know what to teach.

The picture that the teachers seem to paint is that they see more problems caused by curriculum issues, as well as learners, but less problems caused by teachers themselves.

When analysing the reasons outside the school system, there were only three reasons given, each from a different teacher. Gabriel attributed learners’ language problems to the African oral tradition which generally conflicts with the Western culture of reading. Mothubi attributed learners’ language problems to the context of the elderly people learners live with, whom he implies that they are unable to help learners with reading skills. Sipho advocates for radical curriculum policy changes that will assist teachers know explicitly what to teach.

The reasons for learners’ language problems indicate that most teachers’ views see the factors inside of the school system carrying the heavier responsibility than the ones outside. It implies that the teachers are undoubtedly part of the problem and the solution. However, only 2 of the 6 teachers pointed at themselves as the major contributors to the learners’ language problems.

4.4.2 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the teachers found it easy to recognize errors. The teachers found it very difficult to deal with errors they had identified. The varied strategies which they used to correct errors showed limited skills for feedback for learning. It was evident that the teachers were using strategies for feedback of learning through the dominant instances of feedback that gives correct version and evaluative feedback. The error analysis process of prioritizing errors for correction was not part of their conception. The findings that teachers struggled with error correction are indicating that teacher development is an urgent need in the English First Additional Language. What is more serious about teachers’ struggle with error correction is that teachers, in the process of correction, made learners’ errors worse. It means if nothing is done urgently to address this issue, the errors will accumulate for both teachers and learners and make English a difficult subject to teach and learn.

Chapter 5: Analysis of the Findings

This chapter seeks to answer the critical research question: What do Grade 6 teachers in Soweto classes do to identify, interpret, evaluate and remediate learner errors in English First Additional Language? Through the lens of this question, I cast the focus back to chapters 2 & 4 to develop the understanding of the findings more deeply. The findings were presented in three sections: teachers identifying and correcting errors, teachers giving feedback to learners, and teachers discussing their marking. This discussion chapter interweaves a different set of findings. I have structured the discussion in the form of 4 claims which explore the understanding of the teachers' formative assessment abilities through the analysis of the summative assessment task and interview data.

Claim 1: Teachers were generally capable of recognizing errors

The findings in this study indicated that teachers' error recognition was relatively high. It was generally easy for the teachers to recognize or identify the errors. For example, teachers collectively picked up on 65 orthographic errors out of the possible 72 errors, and 51 morphological and syntactic errors out of the possible 64. Yet as individual teachers they ignored or missed a substantial number of errors.

Sesnan (2005, p.262) argued that recognizing the error is the essential first step to correcting it. The teachers' skill of error recognition resonated well with Sesnan's first step to error correcting.

The significance of this finding is that the essential first step towards error correction was relatively easy for the teachers. However, I still do not know what exactly made teachers find it easy to identify errors- I am not sure whether it was teachers' subject matter knowledge, or their pedagogical content knowledge or just experience of teaching the subject, I still do not have clear indicators in this regard. In chapter 2 I learned about sources of errors and error categories which were insightful in terms of error recognition. I think that teachers can easily identify 'errors' without understanding the distinction between mistakes and errors because of experience of long exposure to the English language.

My comment is that error recognition is insufficient if the error categories and general sources of the identified errors are not known by the teachers because teachers' knowledge of error categories and sources enable the interpretation of why learners made the errors or mistakes. Knowledge of error categories and sources also enable teachers to develop a selective approach at the error recognition level.

Claim 2: Teachers struggled to correct the identified errors

The teachers in this study struggled to correct the identified errors. With regard to spelling, morphological and syntactic errors that the teachers found easy to identify, it is interesting to note that they had serious difficulties with the correction of many errors. There were four aspects of teachers' struggle to correct errors: firstly, they generally ignored more than half of the errors, secondly, they missed spelling errors too close to the correct words, thirdly, they focused more on spelling than meaning and fourthly, in a few cases, they made some learners' errors worse.

I see Sesnan's (2005) second and third steps of error correction mentioned under challenging critically the teachers' subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge. Looking at the second step of error correction, it demands teachers to know the difference between local (do not affect meaning and learners can fix these) and global (do affect meaning and need teachers' intervention) errors. The second step is very important in terms of helping teachers to decide on the approach to apply such as selecting chaff from wheat or focusing on very serious errors that affect meaning and need teachers' intervention. Regarding the errors that do not affect the meaning, the teachers still need to decide what to do with them. Do they indicate the local errors for learners to correct? Do they let things pass, meaning to ignore them? Teachers' professionalism and judgements are vital at this stage of error correction.

The third step demands teachers to think of an activity in focus and link the error correction strategy to the aim of the current activity. Sesnan (2005) advises teachers that the selective approach is useful for paying attention to errors made against the targeted outcomes of the work in progress. Raimes (1991) encourages teacher-learner partnership in error correction and teaching learners the responsibility to become critics of their own work and examiners of their peers.

The significance of the teachers' struggles with error correction indicated that there was a disjuncture between teachers' strategies and Sesnan's (2005) second and third steps of error correction. Of course, they were not exposed to Sesnan's (2005) steps of error correction. However, using Sesnan's ideas helped me to understand what might have made teachers struggle with error correction. The decisions that teachers took to ignore errors were generally informed by the difficulty of an error rather than the error being local or global. The struggle to recognize spelling errors that were too close to the correct words indicates that not only error correction was difficult but also error recognition. Meaning is another aspect of teachers' struggle in this project. Importantly, teachers were so immersed in correcting spelling that they lost sight of meaning in some instances. Interestingly, one teacher (Gabriel) showed signs of sophistication by recognizing and engaging with the learner's error that required meaning. The last interesting teachers' error correction struggle was with the learners' errors which they attempted to correct but made them worse. If teachers make learners' errors worse, then the situation becomes a comedy of errors. I have a strong feeling that it was not teachers' intention to make learners' errors worse but a reflection of how difficult error correction can be if it is done by those who normally don't do enough of it.

The general understanding on teachers' struggles with error correction is that the strategies teachers applied indicate a lack of knowledge of the selective approach-which errors to prioritize and which ones to ignore. The errors that the teachers made when they attempted to correct learners' errors were an indication that a cycle of making errors existed between teachers and learners. The recognition of the existence of language error-making cycle raises a red flag for teachers to reflect on their assessment abilities and seek ways for improvement in this regard. It appears that teacher development in error analysis is an urgent need but a long way to go.

Claim 3: Compared to the ideal of formative feedback, teachers in this study were still working in a summative mind-set.

The teachers in this study used Feedback that gives a correct version most frequently with 51 of 94 instances, accounting for more than half (54%) of all feedback given. Evaluative Feedback was the second most frequently used type of feedback with 23 of 94 or (24%).

Descriptive Feedback was used least frequently with 10 of 94 instances. Feedback that gives instructions for how to self-correct and Feedback that gives a rule for self-correction were used least frequently with 5 instances each. The findings on teachers' feedback have many implications for the feedback for learning.

The structure of my discussion under this claim aims to show the impact and value of good quality feedback in relation to the findings on teachers' feedback. I listed several strategies or ways of giving good quality feedback. I also summarised the feedback strategies or techniques of commenting on learners' work by Raimes (1991) in the table in the next page. The aim of this table is to show the guide that I followed to analyse teachers' feedback, create and rate teachers' feedback strategies that appear on the second table. See tables 5.1 and 5.2 in the next two pages.

Table 5.1: Feedback Strategies as described in the literature and their used by teachers in the study

Technique (Following Raimes, 1991)	Description (following Raimes, 1991, Reed, 2006 and Van der Walt et al, 2009)	Teachers' use of these feedback strategies
1. Assigning	If a learner's problem such as grammar has been identified, then the teacher provides input (passage to read or listen to) which illustrates the correct use of particular point of grammar (Van der Walt et al, 2009).	No instances
2.Reminding	Relative to describing. Teacher uses task oriented criteria to remind the learner	10 instances
3.Questioning in relation to error	Can use question to suggest the next step for learner to follow. Teacher asks for clarity.	1 instance
4.Suggesting	Offering suggestions, not prescriptions, of what learners could do next, using questions.	No instances
5. Describing	'Scaffolding for learning' (Reed, 2006). Errors are made explicit and use criteria-referenced assessment to avoid complicated feedback.	2 instances addressed at learners 9 instances addressed at the researcher
6. Timing	Knowing when the writing class becomes critics of their own work.	No instances
7. Emoting	Teacher shares emotions, indicating the effects of the text on the reader	No instances
8. Correcting	Teacher focuses on the accuracy of the language.	51 instances

Table 5.2: Feedback categories that arose from the data, rated here from most to least useful for learning

Rating of the category	Feedback Categories that arose from the data	Description of the category	Summary of data for the feedback category
1	Descriptive feedback (Describing, and Questioning in relation to the error)	Teachers take into account the criteria which have been set for that task. They make comments which state clearly what the problem is or what the learner was able to do well, as well as, offering suggestions of what to do in order to improve in that area or section of the task.	10 instances
2	Feedback that gives a language rule for self-correction (Reminding)	Teachers inform, remind and advise learners about specific procedures and skills that should always be observed or obeyed. Rules may include simple to complex instructions such as learner's prior and current knowledge of punctuation marks, sentence structure, paragraph structure and more.	5 instances
3	Feedback that gives instructions for how to self-correct. (Reminding)	Teachers indicate to learners what and how should have been done. Instructions may include what learners presumably know from classes before or what they have just learned in the current class.	5 instances
4	Feedback that gives a correct version (Correcting)	Teachers model the answers for learners. Correct version is given on a single word, phrase, sentence or paragraph.	51 instances
5	Evaluative feedback	This involves marks, ticks and crosses. It is the category of feedback that relies on numbers and levels before comments and judgments can be made. Teachers use comments such as: 'Good, Fair, Poor, Well Done, and so on to sum up the progress of a student in a particular task.	23 instances

Table 5.1 above contains eight techniques that I discuss and compare to the ideal of formative assessment. The most important message about feedback that Black & Wiliam (2006) emphasized in the paragraph above drives the course of the discussion. The most important message about feedback that Black & Wiliam (2006) emphasize when they discuss feedback and the student-teacher interaction, specifically the fine-grain of feedback, is: “The messages given in feedback are useless unless students are able to do something with them” (p.89). The challenge by Black & Wiliam (2006) to the teachers is that feedback needs to be understood by learners and at the same time respond to its demands for learning to take place. It also means that teachers need to possess skills of giving feedback for learning, hence the need to list several strategies or ways of giving good quality feedback.

In my analysis, the following Raimes (1991) techniques do not give learners the responsibilities to do something with feedback messages: **correcting** (teachers do the corrections) and **timing** (is a teacher’s professional judgement of the writing class levels, i.e. transcription or criticizing). Both correcting and timing tend to be summative in approach as teachers’ assessment powers are not shared with learners. Again, the criteria for deciding to correct certain errors or declare the level of a writing class are teachers’ businesses. However the following techniques: **emoting, describing, suggesting, questioning in relation to the error, reminding and assigning** encourage learners to think and or act on their feedback messages. Importantly, the summary of data on teachers’ use of these feedback strategies indicates that most teachers’ focus was on the technique of correcting.

Table 5.2 rates the feedback categories according to most and least useful for learning. Another point is that the feedback category guides learners to do something about feedback messages.

Table 5.2 indicates that Descriptive feedback is the most useful category for learning and it combines five of eight Raimes (1991) techniques as listed under the category. It is interesting to see that the teachers gave least instances of Descriptive Feedback. Feedback that gives a language rule for self-correction and feedback that gives instructions for how to self-correct making learners lie respectively in the second and third places of categories most useful for learning, interestingly, also least used by teachers with 5 instances each. The teachers still gave the second least instances of feedback to these categories. The feedback categories rated

1, 2 & 3 resonate well with Black & Wiliam's (2006) argument that effective feedback should let learners do something about it.

The last two feedback categories: Feedback that gives a correct version and Evaluative feedback, rated 4th and 5th respectively, do not give roles that learners ought to play in the feedback messages. Both categories indicate that teachers are responsible for feedback and messages are not aimed at making learners do anything, hence viewed least useful for learning. The teachers gave 51 instances of Feedback that gives a correct version and 22 instances of Evaluative feedback.

Analysing the information on Table 5.2 and the findings on teachers' feedback, it is like a table turned upside down or an inversion. The teachers mostly used feedback categories that I have rated least useful for learning. It is interesting to see that the three feedback categories I have rated most useful for learning were least frequently used by the teachers. The understanding I have gained through the analysis between the findings and table 5.2 is that the most frequently used feedback categories by the teachers indicate that they do not know the value and effects of feedback they give to their learners. The other point could be that teachers are cultured to the feedback for summative purposes that the Department of Basic Education prefers for accountability.

Claim 4: Teachers are insecure about their abilities to deal with English First Additional Language errors

The teachers' marking and responses to five interview questions consistently indicated lack of confidence to deal with learners' language errors. The two findings that illustrate this phenomenon are summarised as follows:

- i. As indicated by the interview responses, teachers' confidence to mark and correct certain types of assessment task questions was relatively low.
- ii. Inconsistencies and /or contradictions existed in teachers' responses indicating uncertainty, insecurity and lack of experience.

Regarding the first finding, it was interesting to see that the teachers' confidence to mark story sequence and multiple –choice was very high. It means that the teachers are happy to

mark objective questions where learners only use numbers to arrange the story sequence or select the answers from distractors. However, the teachers' confidence to mark the questions where learners wrote single words phrases, sentences and paragraphs essay was low. Firstly, the finding that half of the 6 teachers (3) found spelling easy to correct while the other half (3) had found spelling difficult to deal with prompted me to ask myself the following question: If spelling was difficult to correct, what else was easy for these teachers? Why? The idea I get from the finding is that the teachers generally found nothing easy in questions where learners had produced own language outputs. It means that teachers find learners' writing too difficult to correct because of many spelling errors that are normally too difficult for them to understand.

Secondly, the teachers found short answer questions difficult to mark. Considering that the short answer questions and the mind map needed learners to respond mostly in one sentence per question or prompt, it is cause for concern. The following question sums up my concern: If sentence structure was difficult to mark, how much more difficult is an essay? Then it means paragraphs were not part of their conception. The significance of this finding indicates how difficult learners' morphological and syntactic errors were to the teachers. It means that the more the words learners write to form phrases and sentences the more complicated it becomes for the teachers.

Now turning focus to the second finding, namely that inconsistencies and contradictions were found in the teachers' responses. Firstly, teachers gave reasons and processes such as lack of reading and starting sentences with conjunctions, instead of identifying errors and also gave examples of errors which they had expected. Secondly, Nimrod's contradictory response that sentence construction was both easy to deal with and difficult to correct. The significance of these inconsistencies is that the teachers were indicating uncertainty in their responses. They were looking for answers from their personal experiences and what concerns them with their learners' mistakes. Thinking of their learners' mistakes might have sparked the lack of experience or difficulties in dealing with them and caused feelings of insecurity thus producing inconsistent and contradictory responses.

In my analysis of teachers' responses to learners' errors and giving feedback, I found Gabriel to be the most sophisticated teacher. Interestingly, the interview data quotes him often saying that marking is difficult. I initially interpreted this as inconsistency, but it actually makes

sense when I consider Sesnan's (2005) second and third steps of error correction that all the 6 teachers in this study struggled to cope with. So Gabriel is more aware of the more complex errors to correct and has more effective ways of correcting yet he finds it difficult to do. Because he is at a higher level of skill in ability to correct for learning, he is also more aware of the difficulty of the task. Feedback for learning is demanding of teachers because it is not just the ticks, crosses and marks but the inferences teachers must make after understanding the learners' language needs. I see feedback for learning and error analysis as missing paradigms for teacher development in language assessment.

5.2 Conclusion

This study foregrounds error analysis for pedagogical reasons as an essential skill that teachers should have. Teachers learn two skills when they do error analysis. Firstly, teachers develop diagnostic skills for recognising, analysing the errors and formulating strategies to meet learners' language needs. Secondly, they develop formative assessment skills of giving good quality feedback for learning.

It was interesting to find out that error recognition, an essential first step towards error correction, was easy for teachers. However, the second step of error prioritization and third step of error correction were very difficult for teachers. It implies that when something goes wrong with diagnosis, and so does correction. The teachers also struggled with giving the feedback for learning. Clearly, teachers have serious deficiencies in skills for error analysis. This is an indication that the second language teaching and assessment in township schools pays little or no attention to error diagnosis, error correction and feedback for learning.

The difficulties that teachers had with error correction and feedback suggest that error analysis is a complex skill. It further suggests that error analysis is not a natural or instinctive skill but a skill that needs to be learned. The teachers generally used natural skills to correct identified errors and give feedback to learners thus their strategies showed limited understanding and experience of error analysis. It implies that teachers do not do enough of error analysis and feedback for learning. So the teachers' struggle with error analysis spreads to the learners' struggle with English First Additional Language learning and assessment. It now makes sense why the township learners are generally not doing well in the second language Annual National Assessment (ANA). The findings in this research also highlight

that the poor performance of township learners in ANA indicates that these learners are not operating at the expected curriculum and grade level. So the struggle that the six participating teachers in this research had with too many errors that one wouldn't know where to start marking, let alone which errors to prioritise, is also an indication that these learners were struggling to meet the language demands of their grade.

In addition, my insight that the cycle of errors is recurring between teachers and learners indicates how unaware second language teachers might be of their contribution to fossilized language errors. It means that teachers are implicit formal sources of language errors. This research study has thus provided not only insight into teachers' skills (or not) of error analysis, but has also provided a glimpse into an error accumulation process.

Chapter 6: Conclusion, Limitations and Directions for the future

In concluding my English First Additional language error analysis project, the following three aspects are essential to reflect on: i) Heritage et al (2009) research findings, ii) My own recommendation, i.e. ‘a survival tool-kit’, and iii) The extent of teachers’ knowledge and skills to accurately interpret learners’ errors and deciding on the next appropriate measures to close the learning gap. The significance of the aspects mentioned above is that they respond to the main research question: What do Grade 6 teachers in Soweto classes do to identify, interpret, evaluate and remediate learner errors in English First Additional Language?

Heritage et al’s (2009) research findings indicated that teachers were better at drawing reasonable inferences about student levels of understanding from assessment information than they were at deciding the next instructional steps. This finding was inspirational to my error analysis project. It led me to investigate the teachers’ abilities to accurately interpret learners’ errors and deciding on the next appropriate measures to close the learning gap. Interestingly with my project, the teachers were better at recognizing errors than correcting and giving feedback on the identified errors of the learners’ written assessment task. Heritages et al’s (2009) project and my project differ in terms of time, country and subject of learning. However, the findings led to the same conclusion, namely that teachers have assessment skills for recognising learner errors, are less good at correcting errors and struggle when required to remediate the errors, which is the level where it matters most. It is an indication that locally and globally teachers struggle with assessment for learning. It further indicates that teachers are so much used to the systemic summative assessment that too little formative assessment is practised.

When teachers can identify errors but struggle to correct and give good quality feedback, then it is an indicator of the need for language teacher development in the analysis and strategies of error correction. The ‘survival tool-kit’ which I recommended instinctively in chapter 1 becomes clear now that it is the teachers’ ability to bridge the gap between error recognition and error correction through skills learned when doing error analysis. I have a vision of teachers who master language rules and are equipped with error correction strategies. I also

see learners' survival in learning a good quality English First Additional Language resuscitated by the teachers who are able to build a bridge between error recognition and error correction.

At this juncture, the teachers in the Soweto townships are better at identifying errors but struggle to remediate them. The implications for this teachers' struggle to bridge the gap between error recognition and error correction are worrisome in that learning and teaching English language will become more difficult. The majority of learners in Soweto primary schools are generally from the working class families and thus rely heavily on teachers for good quality English language learning. So when teachers are the official contributors to English language errors, then English language learning is at risk of becoming too difficult due to the accumulation of fossilized errors that the learners carry with them to the higher grades of the education system.

Limitations

There are two limitations of this study that I can see. Firstly, the small sample of 6 Soweto primary school teachers do not represent all the English First Additional language teachers from different contexts such as rural, semi-rural, and multi-grade schools. Secondly, the focus on one language whereas there are 10 more official languages in South Africa limited the study. However, this may also be strength in that English language sets the tone for what teachers can possibly do or adapt to other languages.

Directions for the future

Gipps (1999) argues that our era requires teachers who are able to develop an "interpretivist approach in assessment". She goes on to explain that it is important to acknowledge the complexity of interactions among students, teachers and assessment (p.385). She also suggests a solution to meet the demands of the interpretivist approach in assessment, namely, that a key direction for the future lies in the development of teachers' classroom assessment skills (p.387).

Reflecting on Gipps' suggestion above, what do teachers stand for if not for improving classroom assessment, and to demand more development? This leads to two areas which according to my research findings need urgent attention: i) To improve teachers' knowledge on assessment for learning in English First Additional Language and (ii) To strengthen teacher collaboration for enhanced learner benefits.

The ideals of formative assessment include on-going teacher development and meaningful student-teacher interactions. An urgent need for township primary school teachers is to get in-service training or regular (quarterly) workshops on assessment for learning. Evidently, assessment for learning is least understood by the teachers in terms of the value and the impact it has on learner performance. Critically, the analysis and interpretation of learners' language errors and strategies for error correction is the most difficult. Another point is that error analysis can be learned by all teachers for subject specific error analysis skills. Teachers are also connected to schools, district offices and book publishers who need to respond by meeting teachers' needs through resources such as articles, books and experts on assessment for learning.

Regarding ways to strengthen teacher collaboration on assessment for learning, the English professional learning communities within schools and at cluster levels need to identify problematic assessment areas and collectively plan strategies towards improvement. Teacher collaboration not necessarily for accountability purposes is more relaxed and enhances teacher confidence to open up and learn from networking with colleagues.

Lastly, Hinkel (2011) mentioned two language features, i.e. micro features (vocabulary and grammar) and macro-features (structuring and ideational development) of which L2 curriculum needs to make a paradigm shift. L2 curriculum is heavily influenced by the Basic Skills curriculum model which focuses more on micro-features than macro-features. A critical point about the Basic Skills is that the principle of "a little writing" has a strong influence and dominant presence in L2 curriculum, including CAPS English First Additional Language. The principle of a little writing continues to impact on L2 learners' writing development as research currently revealed that "English L2 writers undertake less discourse planning, reviewing, and revising than English L1 writers" (Hinkel, 2011). This finding on the development of L2 writers raises a red flag to English L2 teachers and researchers to reflect and influence a significant shift towards the macro-features.

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