# THE USAGE OF VERBS IN ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS: A CASE OF SELECTED GRADE 7 ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN MVUDI CIRCUIT, VHEMBE EAST DISTRICT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE

by

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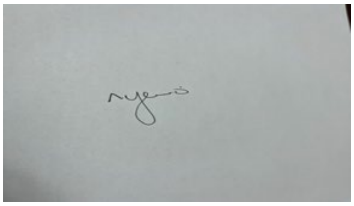
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## DECLARATION

I, Nyarhi Olgah declare that: Usage of Verbs in argumentative essays of English First Additional Language learners: A case of selected schools in Mvudi Circuit, Vhembe East District, Limpopo Province, is my work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. This research proposal has not been previously submitted for any degree at the University of Venda or any other institution.

Nyarhi Olgah **03rd 04 2025**



**Signature** **Date**



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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful husband, Dr. Musa Michael Nyarhi, for his support throughout the years of this study, both mentally and emotionally, as well as financially.



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Firstly, I want to thank the All-Mighty God who gave me the strength and wisdom during my struggle in writing and successfully completing this study. It was not a simple journey, but by the Grace of God, I finally made it.

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**ABSTRACT**

The study examined the usage of verbs in argumentative essays of selected English First Additional Language (EFAL) Grade 7 learners. It aimed to provide practical guidance for educators to enhance verb usage, highlighting common pitfalls and best practices for teaching argumentative writing. The study adopted document analysis to qualitatively analyse the use of verbs in Grade 7 learners' argumentative essays in selected schools in Mvudi Circuit, Vhembe East District, Limpopo Province. The sample of the study comprised 36 essays from three primary schools. Sampling was done using purposive sampling method. Document analysis using a thematic approach was done. The findings highlight that Grade 7 English FAL learners use a variety of verbs in argumentative essays writings; there is variability in the argumentative verbs used across the three performance categories used in the study; the errors committed in the essays are more prevalent in the below- average category. These include, among others, concord, vagueness, and spelling errors. The recommendations included the teaching of vocabulary, with great focus on argumentative verbs to equip learners to make strong arguments, and raising awareness on the need for learners to develop critical thinking skills, and the responsibilities of different stakeholders in assisting teaching and learning.

**Keywords:** *English First Additional Language; Argumentative essays; Grade 7 learners, verbs*



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAPS Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement

EFAL English First Additional Language

ESL English Second Language

LOTL Language of Teaching and Learning

GET General Education and Training

NCS National Curriculum Statement

FP Foundation Phase

IP Intermediate Phase

SP Senior Phase



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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Understanding English First Additional Language (EFAL) learning is critical, mainly when English is not the native language but has to be used for tuition, communication, and business correspondence (DBE,2020). In South Africa, English has a dual purpose: it is a language of tuition. It is also offered as a subject that learners do, with core competencies varying across grades and phases in line with learners' cognitive development.

In South Africa, Grade 7 is the final year of primary school, which is also an entrance grade to the Senior Phase (SP), which extends until Grade 9. The preceding grades, categorised into the Foundation Phase (FP) and Intermediate Phases (IP), were designed for Literacy Fundamentals and are aimed at enabling learners to make sense of sound patterns (DBE, 202I).. In essence, the Foundation Phase emphasises helping learners develop phonemic awareness, which entails understanding sounds in words, recognising and reading high-frequency words, and building vocabulary and comprehension skills through listening to and reading stories (Pretorius,2016). Regarding writing, the Foundation Phase emphasises practising letter formation and handwriting and writing simple sentences and short paragraphs while encouraging creative writing and storytelling (DBE, 2022).. Foundation Phase teachers in most underdeveloped areas often experience challenges in developing learners' writing proficiency. These include overcrowded classrooms, lack of parental involvement, limited time to teach writing, and resources (Dagada, 2022).

In keeping with the learners' cognitive development, the Intermediate Phase takes it further with subsequent higher-order levels of language-related competencies. These include, among others, helping learners develop fluency and accuracy in reading, expanding their vocabulary and understanding of more complex texts, and analysing and interpreting different genres of literature (Collins & Brook,2015). As far as writing is concerned, at this phase, learners are expected to write competently in their longer and more structured texts like essays and reports and be fluent with grammar, punctuation,



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and spelling, and demonstrate a heightened level of critical thinking skills and the expression of ideas through writing (Dagada, 2022).

The core competencies addressed above are critical for overall learners' language development. However, a study by Brokes, et al, (2022) has shown that although concerted efforts are made by teachers and curriculum advisors alike, learners across the Provinces of South Africa generally underperform with varied competencies reflecting the geopolitical dynamics, socio-economic complexities, and linguistic variabilities.

The challenges EFAL Grade 7 learners face in mastering the complexity of verb usage are multifaceted. These challenges may arise from differences between their EFAL and the complexities of tense, mood, voice, and lexical choices inherent in argumentative writing ( Seo & Oh, 2024).

Additionally, Grade 7 learners may grapple with the nuanced application of verbs to express modality, certainty, or persuasion, which are essential for constructing compelling arguments. Moreover, the ability to construct persuasive arguments is a transferable skill that extends beyond academic settings. Proficiency in argumentative writing is valuable for success in various career paths and is a cornerstone for effective communication in the globalised world. Thus, research in this area has implications for EFAL learners' future academic and professional endeavours.

## 1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Grade 7 learners, according to the NCS, are at their exit level of the Senior Phase. At this stage, they are expected to have secured adequate knowledge of language structures, which should be evidenced in the correct choice, arrangement, and ordering of verbs in written form. However, there is a growing sense of discontent with high school educators conceding that ill-prepared learners at the primary level may be unable to contend with the intensity of language demand in subsequent grades (Vanbuel, 202l). The current study examined the use of verbs by Grade 7 learners in their argumentative essays. The findings are expected to serve as a base for corrective feedback in English Second Language (ESL) teaching and core curricula core competency development.



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## 1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aims to explore the usage of verbs by Grade 7 English First Additional Language Learners in their argumentative essays.

### 1.3. 1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To evaluate the selected Grade 7 English First Additional Language learners' usage of verbs in their argumentative essays.
- To examine the choice of verbs used by Grade 7 learners in their argumentative essays.
- To determine the correctness of verbs used by Grade 7 learners in their argumentative essays.

## 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do Grade 7 English First Additional Language learners use verbs in their argumentative essays?
- What type of verbs are commonly chosen by Grade 7 learners in their argumentative essays?
- How appropriate are the verbs used by Grade 7 learners in their argumentative essays?

## 1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study explores the usage of verbs by Grade 7 EFAL learners who are in their exit grade, The findings may provide assistive data to profile learners in their areas of strength and weakness. Curriculum advisors responsible for developing and evaluating EFAL delivery may have access to empirical data on teachers' and learners' challenges in teaching and using verbs, respectively. The study's findings will contribute to new knowledge in EFAL epistemologies and pedagogic practices.



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## 1.6 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

According to Creswell (2014), delimitations are the precise boundaries or restrictions placed within a research project to focus and restrict its reach. Numerous factors, such as the population under study, the study's location, time frame, research strategy, and data collection techniques or instruments, might influence delimitations.

The study will be delimited to selected Grade 7 EFAL learners based in Vhembe East District, Mvudi Circuit, of Limpopo Province of South Africa.

## 1.7 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 introduces the study and outlines the background and rationale behind the study. It also offers the statement of the problem, aim, and objectives of the study, as well as the research questions that the research seeks to answer.

Chapter 2 presents literature relevant to the study.

Chapter 3 specifies the research design adopted.

Chapter 4 presents the qualitative data gathered from the study participants.

Chapter 5 continues by offering an interpretation of the findings in line with the Theoretical Framework (TF) underpinning the usage of verbs in argumentative essay writing.

Chapter 6 summarises the main findings, recommendations, and conclusions.

## 1.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced the study and discussed the background, problem statement, aim, objectives, research questions, and significance of the study. The chapter also outlined the organisation of the study. The next chapter reviews literature related to the study.



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# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Gant, Guerra, and Zimmerman (2018) define a literature review as a description, summary, and critical evaluation of scholarly works on a topic. A literature review combines a summary and synthesis of that information that reflects the approach to a research problem. (Wilkin, 2025) defines a literature review as a 'systematic, explicit, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesising the existing body of completed and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars, and practitioners.

This chapter focuses on the literature related to argumentative writing, particularly regarding Grade 7 learners. Argumentative writing should be understood within the context of essay writing, which is one of the most demanding skills involving planning, prewriting, drafting, editing, and final drafting or publishing.

Some rules and patterns underlie the development of sentences. This helps in understanding what phrases are grammatically correct and which are not, and anticipating how new sentences might be developed (Worcester, 202I). As a result comprehension of these concepts, gives researchers insights into how children acquire and apply the rules and structures underlying sentence creation (Winitz, 2020).

There is a causal relationship between vocabulary depth and communicative competency in either oral or written form. Learners with adequate vocabulary depth and size often display competency in various activities. These include, among others, their comprehension aptitude (Dabbagh & Janebi, 2022) and improved summary writing skills underpinned by their ability to rephrase concepts using their own words as well as with a demonstrated ability to recall facts with minimal effort (Khazaal, 20I9).

Studies on language acquisition have demonstrated that language competency begins at the word level. When this is fully developed, learners are exposed to the syntactic rules governing the choice, arrangement, and ordering of verbs for communicative purposes



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(Robin, Stevens, Frances, & Martha, 2013). So, any written task could serve as a mirror reflection of a learner's productive vocabulary base (Garcia &Rodriguez, 2022).

In their argumentative writings, Grade 7 Learners learn English as a first language frequently and utilise verbs to convey ideas, bolster assertions, and influence readers. A range of verb forms is taught to them, such as action verbs to highlight their points and modal verbs (such as "should," "must," and "can"), Kumar & Rajesh (2014), to denote necessity or potential. A modal verb like "must" may, for instance, be used to express urgency and commitment in lines such as "We *must* protect the environment to ensure a better future," Verbs like "argue," "claim," "support," and "refute," are equally expected to be used in persuasive writing.

## 2.2 ESSAY WRITING

Essay writing is very important in Second Language learning and requires effort and constant practice. DBE (202I) defines essay writing as a process that involves the organisation of ideas into a coherent and structured format. Typically, an essay comprises an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. An essay is widely known as a paper consisting of several paragraphs systematically discussing a topic. Some experts (such as Oshima & Hogue, 2006) have defined an essay as a long piece of writing with several paragraphs about one topic with content generally divided into three parts: introduction, body, and conclusion. Albright & Langan (2020) refer to an essay as simply a paper of several paragraphs, rather than one paragraph, that support a single point. They add an important consideration for the writers in essay development: determining the point of view. There are three points of view. They are the first-person approach, the second-person approach, and the third-person approach. Abdallah (2015) further mentioned that an essay can discuss a subject directly or indirectly, seriously or humorously.

The introduction presents the topic and the writer's thesis or main argument. The body develops the thesis with evidence, examples, and analysis, organised into paragraphs, each with a clear central idea. The conclusion summarises the main points and restates the thesis in light of the evidence presented (DBE, 2020)



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**Table I Size of vocabulary at Grade 7**

The CAPS document links reading and writing. According to (CAPS,2011), the size of the vocabulary a Grade 7 learner is expected to have is specified as follows:

| Grade 7 - | Term 1 | Term 2 | | Term 3 | Term 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Vocabulary | 5000-5500 | 5500-6000 | 6500-600 | 600-7000 | |
| (New words) | 100-300 | 100-300 | 100-300 | 100-300 | |

CAPS lists five essay types: narrative, argumentative, discursive, descriptive, and reflective.

The CAPS document provides rubrics for assessing writing tasks, such as essays and transactional writing, across all grades. These rubrics specify the levels of competence and the descriptors teachers use to guide them in assessing the learners' written texts. The analytic rubric is used. It focuses on panning, content, language, organisation, and structure. Marks are allocated to these categories. An analytic rubric is inclusive and looks holistically at the essay so that no one element unduly outweighs other aspects. It tends to be democratic and fair in assessing a number of qualities of the essay.

There is literature to support the teaching and learning of argumentative writing. Dhuli, Lamo, & Larsari (2023) support this; thus, “writing is a tool for academic success of any professional individual.” This places a high premium on the indispensability of vocabulary. Sibeko (2020) further emphasises that marking is desirable feedback given to learners so that they can realise their strengths and shortfalls. This helps learners to move on with their learning (DoBE 2020:11).

There are rubric principles used when assessing and marking written tasks. These include consistency, reliability, validity, levelness, transparency, and inclusivity (Sibeko, 2020:152). The main advantage of a rubric is its uniformity, and it can encompass all six principles listed above. As a result, specific aspects should be penalised or rewarded



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consistently, and some items should be treated the same throughout the essays. Marks should be reliable and not subjective, and different markers should give similar marks to similar essay qualities. The rubric allows for consistent marking for similar aspects. Valid aspects should be assessed, and the marking should be of the right level. Generally, a good rubric allows for different levels of abilities to be assessed (Yulianto, 20I8,). The analytic rubric allows teachers to give multiple marks to judge a single performance.

Inclusivity involves deploying a variety of methods for assessment so that the same learners are not always disadvantaged (Sibeko, 2020:153). Therefore, a good rubric assesses multiple aspects, which caters to inclusivity. Assessment is useful for pointing to what matters most, informing the learners how they spend and will spend their time, and also what kind of learners they are.

Furthermore, teachers should use correction codes. These, together with the rubric, should help learners in their writing. Teachers, however, mark using their personal pedagogical systems, beliefs, knowledge, theories, assumptions, and attitudes. (Sibeko, 2020:157). Rubric keeps teachers focused on the assessment of similar features in the performance to avoid favouritism and to focus only on the value, quality, and relevance in the arguments. This ensures acceptable consistency for each teacher and agreement between different teachers.

Literature identifies writing as one of the most difficult skills to acquire, requiring several linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural competencies (Ostrosi, 2022:1; Vogelin, 2020; Dhuli et al, 2023). It is both a physical and mental act as it represents language by means of signs and symbols. We express thoughts and feelings and convey various messages and attitudes to the readers. For this purpose, the correct choice and usage of verbs is of critical importance. According to Payne (2018), essay writing allows demonstrating a wide range of skills.

Learners can engage with, identify, and prioritise materials, understand, and evaluate the material. They can also select and apply the most relevant material, construct an effective argument, and arrive at a well-thought-through and thorough conclusion. Essay writing



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also allows the learners to consolidate and make sense of what they have learned and organise their thinking on a topic. Limited by work and time, learners are unlikely to produce a precise, concise, and clear piece of writing (Payne, 2018).

### 2.3 Usage of verbs in argumentative essays

Saniago &Tira (20I9) argue that vocabulary contributes to language skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening, and Grade Point Average. Roche & Harrington (2013) found that vocabulary is related to writing and Grade performance. Mastery of vocabulary has been seen to increase other language abilities.

Saniago & Tira (20I9:5) postulate four reasons for arguing that language is a reflection of social reality: (1) it is a system that expresses meaning; (2) it allows interaction and communication; (3) language reflects functionality and communicative utility; and (4) grammatical and structural features are for functional and communicative purposes. Language symbols represent human thought and feeling. As a result, words show social background and human feelings.

Second language users with limited exposure ultimately have limited vocabulary to express their thoughts. As a corollary, learners with limited verbs struggle with the thought.

Nuray & Vedat (2020:11) argue that “vocabulary knowledge plays a crucial role for both efficient second language comprehension and fluent language production… and “learners fail to express themselves properly if they do not have sufficient vocabulary knowledge”. Hedgcock & Ferris (2009: 284) note that vocabulary knowledge is the backbone of language learning and that it should be “the essential constituent of the L2 literacy curriculum”. This is supported by Krashen (1989) who argues that a large vocabulary is crucial for mastery of a language.” (Nuray & Vedat, 2020:9). Moekong (20I7) argued that argumentative writing requires higher order thinking skills for planning and organisation, and they should also cautiously apply lower level skills of spelling, using punctuation, word choice, and handle many other grammatical problems.



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Verbs play a pivotal role in structuring academic writing by expressing actions, events, and states that form the basis of argument and analysis. According to Zaniar, Authar, Aquariza, Rihlah, & Sucita (2024), accurate verb usage is crucial for developing clear, persuasive, and academically sound texts, particularly in argumentative essays. Similarly, Khanetnok, Chaichompoo, & Setwibandit (2023) emphasise that the effective use of verbs enhances coherence and clarity by connecting ideas and signalling logical relations. Aslamiah (2020) also points out that verbs do not merely convey time or action but reflect the writer's stance and intention in academic discourse. This section discusses six key types of verbs: action verbs, linking verbs, auxiliary verbs, modal verbs, stative verbs, and phrasal verbs, highlighting their functions and relevance in academic writing.

### 2.3.1 Action Verbs

Action verbs express activities or processes carried out by the subject of a sentence, including both physical acts such as "run" and "eat," as well as mental processes such as "think" and "believe." Murphy (2019) explains that action verbs, also known as dynamic verbs, describe what the subject actively performs or undergoes. Carter & McCarthy (2017) note that action verbs often appear in continuous tenses and play a central role in narrative and descriptive writing because they drive the sentence forward. These verbs can be transitive, requiring an object, or intransitive, which do not take a direct object. Examples of action verbs include "write," "run," "jump," "think," "draw," and "explain."

Several studies have highlighted how ESL learners over-rely on simple action verbs in their writing, leading to repetition and a lack of variety, including the studies by Yulianto, (20I8) found that learners frequently used high-frequency action verbs such as *go*, *make*, and *do*, and avoided more expressive or discipline-specific verbs. Similarly, Darus and Subramaniam (2009), in their error analysis of Malaysian ESL students' essays, observed that learners struggled with verb tense consistency and often misused irregular action verbs, reflecting limited exposure to more complex verb forms.

### 2.3.2 Linking Verbs



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Linking verbs, unlike action verbs, serve to connect the subject of a sentence with a subject complement, often an adjective or noun phrase that describes or identifies it. According to Yulianto,(20I8), linking verbs, also referred to as copular verbs, establish a state of being or condition rather than an action. Yule (2017) elaborates that these verbs function syntactically as the bridge between the subject and its attribute. Common linking verbs include forms of *be*, is, are, was, and *were*, as well as verbs like *seem*, *become*, and *appear*. Examples include *is*, *are*, *seem*, *become*, *appear*, and *remain*.

Studies in second language, such as Kahraman & Subasi,(2020) show that learners often misuse linking verbs or omit them altogether. They argued that  that intermediate EFL students tended to confuse linking verbs with action verbs, especially in cases where a verb like *feel* can function as either, depending on context. Al-Fadda (2012) also observed that many students' essays lacked proper subject-complement agreement, often due to confusion about how linking verbs behave syntactically, particularly in the past tense and with abstract subjects.

### 2.3.3 Helping Verbs (Auxiliary Verbs)

Helping verbs, or auxiliary verbs, support the main verb by expressing grammatical aspects such as tense, voice, modality, and emphasis. Biber, Conrad, and Leech (2021) define auxiliaries as functional verbs that include *be*, *have*, and *do*, along with modals like *can*, *should*, and *might*. These verbs are essential in constructing progressive, perfect, passive, and interrogative forms. Also, Sah & Zaidi, (2025)noted that auxiliary verbs operate as part of verb phrases and are a key feature of sentence complexity in academic writing. Murphy (2019) highlights their importance in forming questions, *Do you know?* and negatives, *she did not go*, which are structurally different from affirmative sentences. Examples of helping verbs include *is*, *was*, *have*, *do*, *can*, *must*, *should* Sah & Zaidi, 2025)

Helping verbs pose significant challenges for ESL learners. Overgeneralisation is one of the problems often experienced by English First Additional Language learners., Rezvani and Zamani (2012) observed that Iranian high school students overgeneralised the use of *do* and *does*, resulting in grammatically incorrect constructions such as *She does not*



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*go*. These errors were linked to both first language transfer and inadequate practice with English auxiliary verb structures. The findings suggest that mastery of helping verbs requires explicit instruction and consistent exposure, especially in writing contexts where students are expected to form complex verb phrases accurately.

### 2.3.4 Transitive Verbs

Transitive verbs are verbs that require a direct object to complete their meaning. Without an object, the sentence becomes incomplete or ungrammatical. Murphy (2019) explains that transitive verbs "carry" their action across to something else, an object. For example, in the sentence *She reads a book*, the verb *reads* is transitive because the action affects the object - *a book*.. Carter and McCarthy (2017) distinguish between non-transitive, taking one object, and ditransitive verbs taking two objects, such as *give* in *She gave him a gift*. Some examples of transitive verbs may include *eat*, *bring*, *write*, *buy*, *want*, and *need*.

Studies by Wulandari (2020) have shown that transitive verb use can be problematic for second-language learners, especially when learners omit necessary objects or confuse verb complementation. Chinese ESL learners often produced incomplete sentences, such as *She explained* without including what was explained, indicating a gap in understanding transitivity. Similarly, Wulandari (2020) observed that Indonesian high school students frequently struggled with verbs that can function as both transitive and intransitive, such as *open* and *move*, leading to inconsistent usage in writing.

### 2.3.5 Intransitive Verbs

Intransitive verbs, by contrast, do not take a direct object. These verbs express actions or conditions that are complete in themselves. Yule (2017) defines intransitive verbs as those that do not need an object to make sense, often describing states or one-part actions. For example, in the sentence *He sleeps peacefully*, *sleeps* is intransitive; it does not act upon anything. Yulianto, (20I8) explain that many intransitive verbs are used to describe movement (*go*, *arrive*) or conditions (*exist*, *happen*). Examples of intransitive verbs include *sleep*, *arrive*, *go*, *exist*, *occur*, *cry*.



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Learners sometimes attempt to follow intransitive verbs with objects where none are needed, resulting in grammatically incorrect constructions. Al-Fadda (2012) identified frequent misuse of intransitive verbs among Saudi university students, especially in translating ideas directly from their first language. Moreover, Ngangbam (2016) found that learners tend to overuse certain intransitive verbs like *go* and *come* in ESL essays, suggesting limited lexical variety and a reliance on safe, familiar verbs due to a lack of input exposure.

### 2.3.6 Modal Verbs

Modal verbs are auxiliary verbs used to express possibility, ability, permission, necessity, and obligation. Hall (2016) states that modal verbs modify the main verb by adding nuance related to mood and intention. Common modals include *can*, *may*, *must*, *should*, and *might*. Biber et al. (2021) highlight that modals are especially important in academic and persuasive writing, where hedging (*might suggest*) or asserting obligation (*must be considered*) is often necessary. Examples of modal verbs include *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *must*, *shall*, *should*, *will*, and *would*.

Findings from ESL research reveal that modal verbs are frequently misused by learners due to their syntactic irregularities and complex pragmatic functions. A study by Alsamadani (2010) showed that EFL learners often confused the meanings of modals, e.g., using *can* when *should* or *must* was contextually appropriate. Similarly, Rakhmawati (2017) found that Indonesian students used modals inconsistently in argumentative writing, frequently omitting them in expressing obligation or possibility, which weakened the persuasive force of their essays.

Verbs play a crucial role in argumentative writing by linking different parts of the argument and signalling relationships between ideas. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), verbs contribute to the logical organisation of texts by establishing connections between processes, evidence, and claims. In particular, academic verbs such as *demonstrate, illustrate, prove, suggest, and imply* are commonly used to connect supporting evidence to overarching arguments.



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Verbs in argumentative writing can also be classified based on their rhetorical function:

- Explanatory verbs (*explains*, *clarifies*, *elaborates*) are used to unpack complex ideas or make concepts more accessible to the reader.
- Analytical verbs (*evaluates*, *assesses*, *contrasts*) reflect critical thinking by highlighting comparisons, judgments, or distinctions (Swales and Feak, 2021).
- Persuasive verbs (*argues*, *supports*, *validates*) reinforce the central argument by aligning evidence with reasoning.
- Contrastive verbs (*refutes*, *counters*, *disagrees*) allow the writer to acknowledge and challenge opposing views.
- Evidence-based verbs (*proves*, *demonstrates*, *shows*, *illustrates*) are used to substantiate claims with factual or empirical support.
- Neutral verbs (*states*, *explains*, *describes*) present information straightforwardly and objectively, often in literature reviews or background sections (Keny, 2008).

The choice of verb also reflects the writer's stance. Strong verbs such as *argue, contend, and assert convey confidence and authority, while more cautious verbs like suggest and imply* indicate a tentative position. Additionally, verbs such as *leads to*, *results in*, and *causes* are instrumental in expressing cause-and-effect relationships, thereby clarifying the logical flow of the argument.

**Enhancing Persuasion**: Using powerful and precise verbs can make your writing more persuasive. Verbs such as "validates," "substantiates," and "corroborates" strengthen your argument by showing that your claims are well-supported (Vogelin, et al., 2020, Muttaqin, 2024). Writers use evaluative verbs to convince the reader of their view. This is usually supported by evidence such as statistics or reference to previous research findings to give credibility to the foregoing argument or claims. This is further supported by a firm writer's visibility as the writer establishes a stance (Cvikic and Ordulj, 2021).

Verbs can be used for different purposes. When narrating an event, action verbs are often used to portray how characters executed a given task. Vivid scenarios are often depicted or portrayed using strong action words that not only explain what happened, but also



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capture the tone of the writer as well as the atmospheric scenery. Readers may also be directed to react in a given way depending on how verbs are chosen in line with intentionality (Agbaglo, 2017). Below are of the functionalities that verbs can be used for in argumentative writing:

**Showing stance**

Cvikic & Ordulj (2021:1) define the stance of a writer as the position one takes to establish visibility. This involves acquiring linguistic features, register, and style related to text type. There are instances where writers may need to evaluate specific propositions on the basis of their strength, plausibility, and potential to achieve a given communicative intention. Argumentative essays, in their own nature, are assessed on the basis of the writer's ability to present a proposition and provide evidence, factual or statistical, to reinforce an idea.

**Introducing ideas**

Introductory verbs are verbs that are used to introduce an idea or a view in an argument. Agbaglo (2017:51) defines introductory verbs as those verbs that 'help authors to refer to the disciplinary community to which they belong and also to indicate the writer's understanding of previous works. (Yeganeh & Boghayeri, 2014). Loan & Pramoolsook (2015) indicate that citation has a complex communicative function with syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic variations. Generally, citations are made using reporting verbs (RVs), and RVs are known as one of the ways by which writers establish the credibility or otherwise of the cited information.

Verbs are also used to introduce an idea. Common examples are reporting verbs, which in academia are also used to introduce in-text citations, marking the writer's voice at the same time, indicative of the writer's. Reporting verbs that are misplaced may not only reduce the strength of the argument, but they also make the sentences sound vague, clumsy, and incomprehensible.

Ramchad (2008) noted that learners may use verbs to express their opinions and standpoints. Commonly used verbs include "believe," "think," "feel," and "argue." For



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example, the verb “believe “in the sentence: I believe that school uniforms should be mandatory because they promote equality, expresses the writer’s standpoint or conviction on the significance of uniforms at school. The supporting sentences that come after this proposition can be used to evaluate the compatibility of a given verb as used in each paragraph or text**.** According to Bagbaglo (2017:51), English authors show a tendency towards “Think” verbs as their second priority, while native Persian writers are more oriented towards the use of “*Find* “verbs as their second priority. This result corroborates Hyland’s (2002) study, where the percentage of *Discourse Acts* verbs, an equivalent of *Argue* verbs, is higher in the social science than in the natural science. Finally, it was found that for both corpora, there is considerable use of reporting clauses with a that-clause complement in reporting others’ research. Similarly, in a more recent study, using Thompson & Ye’s (1991) classification of RVs, Jafarigohar & Mohammadkhani (2015) examined the differences in the use of reporting verbs in linguistic articles written by native and nonnative speakers in English.

It is also noted that verbs like” believe” fall under commonly used action words. Variation of usage could be attributable to vocabulary depth, discipline specificity, and exposure. If learners are exposed and have a significant vocabulary depth, it is quite likely that variation of usage would be a normal conventional practice; conversely, poor vocabulary can be used to account for usage and misplacement of verbs in argumentative essays (Damayanti, 2021).

In their academic journey, learners need to pass examinations that involve essay writing (Ariyanti & Fitriana, 2017). It promotes critical thinking and analytical skills, and creativity is required - generating ideas and making a convincing argument. This is done through supporting these views. Learners need a wide range of vocabulary in order to express their ideas convincingly. There is a need for a transition from one paragraph to another with coherence and cohesion.

The five stages of writing are planning, drafting the final text (Abas & Abd Aziz, 2018). Writers re-plan, draft, re-plan, and re-edit until the final document or text is finalised.



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Others (Abas et al, 2018) have divided the writing process into eight stages, namely, pre-writing, planning, drafting, pausing, reading, revising, editing, and publishing.

## 2.4 ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY

According to Valero Haro, Noroozi, Biemans, Mulder, and Banihashem (2024), an argumentative essay is a form of academic writing that requires learners to construct a well-reasoned position by presenting claims, supporting them with evidence, and addressing counterarguments. Valero Haro *et al.* (2024) emphasise that this genre involves critical thinking, the organisation of ideas, and the ability to engage with multiple perspectives to build a coherent and persuasive argument.

Argumentative writing, also known as a position paper, is used to state and defend a thesis through argument (Rustandi 2021:212). Furthermore, the linguistic features of an argument include generalized participants, a variety of verbs, the timeless present voice, connectives associated with reasoning, and emotive words and modal verbs. Khatter (2019: 365) points out that there are too many categories of errors of competence and errors of performance. Errors of competence include a lack of knowledge of L2 caused by reliance on L1. Abbas & Herdi (2018) stress the importance of writing by contending that essay writing is one of the skills that should be mastered by all learners. An argumentative essay attempts to persuade the reader to the writer's point of view (Latief,2012). The approach is to take a stand on an issue and use evidence to back up the stance. The writer must choose a side, make a case for it, consider and refute alternative arguments, and prove to the undecided reader that the opinion it presents is the best one (Tindale,2017).

Two skills should be considered. These are the writing process and the micro and macro skills, which include correct diction, grammar, and mechanics (Abbas & Herdi, 2018:40). The mechanics of writing refer to aspects such as capitalisation, punctuation, and spelling. The writing process involves pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Good writing should have unity and coherence. Unity is achieved by having a single idea in a paragraph. Making an argument is a lifelong skill. It is the skills of argument that help



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people resolve controversies. It is also plausible to consider thinking as an argument. Meral, Kayaalp & Namli, (2022:143). In addition, in an argumentative essay, the authors provide justifications for or against a position while also seeking to convince the readers with arguments and objections. (Oshima & Hogue, 2006).

The purpose of argumentative writing is to generate a composition that can convince and persuade the audience to embrace the writer's point of view or to act. Argumentative writing is an important skill that requires a mastery of analytical skills, evaluative skills, and critical thinking skills to predict the response of the audience (Fei-Wen, 2010). Persuasive and well-structured argumentation may also indicate a high level of learner autonomy in writing (Januin, 2007). There is a need to critique and defend in an argument, which is a part of the higher-order thinking skills, Jamaluddin, Ho & Chee (2007). This is because to persuade a reader, a writer must present a strong argument of the issue or topic. Imtiaz & Mahmood (2014:96) describe writing an argumentative essay as the "art of persuasion with responsibility".

Grade 7 Learners should consider the following when writing an argumentative essay:

- The essay should start with the writer's view of the topic in an original and striking way.
- The writer should give a range of arguments to support and substantiate his or her view.
- The writer focuses on points for OR against a statement.
- An argumentative essay can be subjective, and strong opinions are expressed. A variety of rhetorical devices and persuasive techniques should be used.
- The language used is emotive and can be emotional, but should not be rude.
- The conclusion should be a strong, clear, and convincing statement of the writer's opinion (DBE, 2020).



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## 2.5 APPROACHES TO WRITING

Teaching writing is a rewarding enterprise. It depends on teacher beliefs and teaching contexts, learner differences and preferences, teaching resources, and school climate.

### 2.5.1 The product approach

The product approach was used for speaking, so it was not highly considered. This disregard of the writing process was influenced by structural linguistics, behaviourism, and grammar translation at that time. The focus was on imitating good models of texts, focusing on layout, organisation, accuracy of grammar, and the mechanics of writing.

### 2.5.2 The process approach

The product approach was replaced by the process approach, which considers writing as a process and not an end in itself. It is conceived of as a thinking process. So, the emphasis shifted from accuracy and the mechanics of writing to content and message. So, learners could prewrite, draft, rewrite, edit, and publish. The teachers and peers give feedback for the improvement of the essay.

### 2.5.3The Genre approach

Holiday developed the genre approach to describe the functions of language. The theory focuses on social context and the purpose of the texts; writing should be socially meaningful.

### 2.5.4 The Integrated approach

The integrated approach combines the product approach, the process approach, and the genre approach to produce high-quality texts. Learners can employ the techniques of brainstorming, mind-mapping, and free-willing to generate various ideas. (Sibeko,202:159). These days, technology such as Endbrains can assist with generating ideas. The incorporation of technology in the classroom motivates, increases learner engagement, and productivity. (Panagiotis, Krystalli & Arvanitis, 2018).



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## 2.6 CHALLENGES IN ESSAY WRITING

Writing is a demanding skill that requires good linguistic competency; otherwise, numerous mistakes will be made in grammar, syntax, spelling, and punctuation (Al-Gharabalhy, 2015). According to Ostrosi (2022:1), Learners make mistakes regarding grammar, spelling, vocabulary, and punctuation, as well as paragraphing. The learner's L1 may have an influence on writing. Reznitskaya, Anderson & Kuo (2007: 450) point out that research has consistently documented a lack of proficiency in argumentation by the majority of students.

Apprehension can affect learners' performance, and across the world, learners face the same challenges. These include psychological factors such as lack of interest and motivation, institutional aspects such as inexperience of teachers and lack of writing practice, and sociocultural factors such as taboo topics that may hinder learners' writing. Some learners have problems understanding the topic and are unaware of the writing process. The research of Sogutlu & Ostrosi (2022) found that 44,8% of the learners planned their essays, while 29,8% did not follow any strategy and began writing straight away.

Generally, writing is not easy because it involves many aspects. This is supported by Khatter (2019:6), who noted that "learning to write fluently and expressively is the most difficult of the macro skills for all language users regardless of whether the language in question is a first, second, or foreign language". Learners find it difficult to produce a coherent, cohesive, well-organised piece of writing. This challenging task is compounded by the fact that the rhetorical conventions of English texts, such as the structure, organisation, lexis, and grammar, differ from those in other languages.

## 2.7 ERRORS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

Errors are inevitable. Andrian (2015) categorises errors into competence and performance errors. Competence errors emanate from the incorrect application of the language rules by first-language (L1) learners. These rules do not correspond to the norm of the (L2). Errors of performance result from a mistake in language use and present



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themselves as repetition, false starts, corrections, or slips of the tongue. In other words, performance errors are instances of unintentionally deviant language and are self-corrigible.

Making errors is a natural language developmental process; learners' errors are reliable resources critical in both teaching and learning (Nguyen, 2025). Errors are important in three ways: they give information to teachers about the extent to which the objectives have been achieved, and also what part remains to be covered; they also provide useful evidence of how language is learned and also the type of strategies the learners are utilising; errors are an integral part to the learners for making errors can be viewed as a device for learning a language.

Errors are to be viewed not as negative phenomena. On the contrary, errors are indicators of a learning process that is in place. As a result, they should be carefully considered. The duty of a teacher is to observe, analyse, and classify these errors in order to have a clear picture of the errors the learners make.

The factors that impact language learning are social and cognitive in nature: The motivation of learners is linked to success and failure in using the language. When they succeed, the learners will have a positive attitude and reinforcement of their goals in learning the language. On the contrary, when they experience challenges in using the language, they are frustrated.

According to Alobo (2015), sources of error are the learners, teaching materials or methods, and the complexities within the language. The other sources are the interference from LI and L2, and the use of L2 in the community. At the learner level, the errors emanate from the innate ability to learn a language from hypothesis testing, which presents itself in the formation of wrong analogies. The teaching process can lead to errors, especially in the material and methods employed. The nature of the language and the perceptions users have about the language can be one of the difficulties in learning a second language. There is the myth that some languages are difficult.



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Han & Hiver (2018) claimed that some of these difficulties emanate from teachers of EFL or ESL who usually put great emphasis on concentrating more on teaching grammar and language structures. It could be argued that the educational system also contributed to the students' common problems in their writing. The problems include a lack of evaluation of assumptions, little argument-building practice, weak supporting arguments, haphazard thinking and presentation, a lack of development and integration, and a lack of critical evaluation. Hynninen (2018), on the other hand, delineated the point of view that these problems prevent students from developing their interaction in the classroom as well, and that these problems obstruct them from having active learning in writing. He also asserted that issues should be addressed by offering them more training classes to assist them in the process of learning writing.

## 2.8 FACTORS AFFECTING LEARNERS' WRITING

Several factors impact the writing of an essay.

Brown (2000) stated that learners' writing results could be identified with two affective domains. The first domain comprises the personality or internal factors contributing to successful language learning, including cognition, motivation, and attitude. The second domain constitutes extrinsic factors such as socio-cultural variables because foreign language learners bring two intersecting languages and cultures. The language ability or linguistic factor also contributes to the deficient learners` writing skills.

### 2.8.1 Motivation

Motivation, both internal and external, powerfully guides individuals towards specific goals. In education, it's crucial to to foster learners' engagement and drive aspirations for success (Stark, 2019). This encompasses factors like the desire for excellence, thirst for knowledge, and future aspirations (Monard & Bal, 2013). In learning, motivation is essential for success, including internal and external factors driving engagement (Stark, 2019), such as the desire for success and hopes for the future (Monard & Bal, 2013). In language learning, motivation is key, especially for learning English as a foreign language (Thohir, 2017). It can be integrative, aiming for cultural engagement, or instrumental,



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focusing on goals like exam success or job attainment (Suryasa, 2017). Beyond academia, motivation's impact extends to online learning, surpassing specific strategies in predicting student success (Stark, 2019). Additionally, in areas like hotel review websites, motivation, particularly the internal drive to compare opinions, influences user engagement (Belarmino & Koh, 2018).

### 2.8.2 Attitude

Attitude, comprising one's mindset and emotional disposition, significantly influences classroom dynamics and learning results (Harmon-Jones et al., 2013). In education, students' attitudes hold substantial sway over their engagement and academic achievements. Those with a positive attitude toward learning tend to enthusiastically participate and excel.

Conversely, learners with negative attitudes may perceive tasks as daunting, struggle to complete assignments, and may be discouraged, hindering their subject mastery (Achor, 2011). Positive attitudes also extend their impact to the teaching and learning process. Teachers with positive attitudes inspire and motivate learners, while learners with favourable attitudes tend to be more receptive to instruction and active in class. This positivity cultivates an atmosphere of collaboration and mutual respect, enhancing the overall educational experience. Attitude is a key factor in the attainment of learning outcomes and influences engagement, mastery, and the quality of the learning environment.

### 2.8.3 Literacy

The learners'' thinking and learning styles are a function of the literacy level of the learner. Literacy skills include speaking, reading, and writing. (Sibeko,2020:450). However, literacy extends beyond oral communication. Reading and writing skills empower individuals to access and process information, enriching knowledge. In the modern era, reading and writing skills are increasingly important, allowing engagement with written texts, expression of thoughts through writing, and participation in broader communication networks. Reading is essential for knowledge acquisition and better writing skills (Ehm et



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al., 2019). It expands knowledge, enriches vocabulary, and enhances comprehension, forming a foundation for effective expression (Kaba & Ramaiah, 2020; Moon et al., 2019).This should be understood within the context of promoting expressive competence and creativity. Currently, literacy, connotes more than just the ability to read and write but the ability to negotiate one's way in life.

### 2.8.4 Cognitive

Cognitive abilities play a crucial role in the learning process and encompass various mental activities involved in acquiring knowledge and solving problems (Goel *et al*., 2017). Understanding and developing cognitive skills are essential in educational settings and contribute to learners' overall development (Goel *et al*., 2017). Additionally, cognition relates to a person's ability to remember, feel, and recognise something learned (Wang & Yang, 2014). Learners also need to develop critical thinking as they should be able to apply, analyse synthesise, and evaluate information

### 2.8.5 Language Acquisition and ability

Language ability, encompassing speaking, reading, and writing skills, is crucial for expressing ideas and communicating effectively (Herschensohn & Young-Scholten, 2012; Levin-Zamir *et al*., 2017). Good language skills are essential for writing, as they enable learners to adhere to acceptable English grammar rules and effectively convey their thoughts to readers (Levin-Zamir *et al*., 2017). Without strong language skills, learners may encounter difficulties in expressing themselves and effectively communicating their ideas.

Several studies on writing have been reviewed. They vary between writing approach (Bulqiyah *et al*., 2021; Smedt, 2018), attitudes and self-efficacy (Itua *et al*. 2014), challenges that minimise EFL learners' motivation to write learners' writing and their autonomy (; Camacho, 2021). In the main, there are a lot of other issues concerning pedagogy and curriculum with respect to writing..Kim, Rah & Hwang (2020) followed the usage-based perspective, which proposed that L2 development of construction is guided



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by the language experience of the learners. A child gradually accumulates constructional knowledge through repeated language experience over an extended period of time.

Kim et al (2020:57) use the usage-based approach to predict a step-by-step language learning process in L2 learners. Beginner-level L2 learners will exhibit a strong reliance on individual verbs and can only understand some highly frequent argument structure patterns, as their constructional representations have yet to be constructed. In contrast, reliance on constructional information will increase with L2 experience, and more advanced learners will more likely use constructional information and acquire complex and less frequent constructions. Also, given the significant role of light verbs in early L1 acquisition, it is predicted that verb semantics will modulate sensitivity to constructional cues for learners, particularly those at early or intermediate stages of constructional development (Kim *et al*, 2020:59). Bell, Brandt. Lieven, & Theakston,(2023) supported this argument in a corpus analysis of mother talk and children's speech by showing a direct effect of highly frequent light verbs on children's speech. In particular, they found a strong correlation between the meanings of the most frequent light verbs and their corresponding constructions in the speech of children and their mothers (for example, *go* in the intransitive-motion, *give* in the ditransitive, *put* in the caused-motion construction).

Kim *et al* (2020:59) indicate that 'another feature that characterises the acquisition and development of argument structure constructions is the role of prototypically encoded in verbs. In their research, Kim et al (2020) found that children strongly rely on so-called light verbs, or highly frequent, prototypical verbs with general purposes and less semantic content, in their early stages of constructional development. This shows that most learners lack the requisite vocabulary with which to express the complexity of thought.

## 2.9 Errors

### Definition of Error

Babushkina, Zaitsev & Kadi (2025) define error as unintentionally deviant language and is not self-corrigible by its writer. It is usually systematic and also governed by rules, as a learner has knowledge of the rules of the target language, but this knowledge is



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incomplete. ccording to Enobia & Palma, (2025) “errors are the result of some failure performance.” For example, some learners say *seed* rather than *saw*.

### 2.10 Strategies to Overcome Difficulties in Essay Writing

#### 2.10.1 Using the process approach to writing

Making an outline and taking notes enables learners to organize their ideas and transition more easily. Without planning, learners may stray off topic or become scattered in their writing. The result is poor writing. Learners should be encouraged to brainstorm and reflect on everyday situations.

Teachers recommended reading and brainstorming about the topic, using sample essays and writing short paragraphs or summaries.

#### 2.10.2 Frequent writing practice

Learners should be given more opportunities to practise writing. Learners should be exposed to a variety of writing tasks to increase their exposure to writing. Frequent practice is the best way for students to prevail over their current and forthcoming difficulties. Writing offers improved communication, critical thinking, and scholarly engagement (Anaktototy, Sekawael & Atief, 2022: 448). Language users should be able to articulate ideas with clarity and persuasion.

#### 2.10.3 Teacher feedback

Using teacher feedback and the TEXAS model (topic - explanation - example - analysis - solution). This model was suggested by Sogutlu & Austrasia (2022: 3977). Feedback on the essays was found to be useful by 78% of the learners. They recognised the importance of learning from their errors. In their studies, Sogutlu & Ostrasi (2024: 3965)



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found that spelling errors had the highest frequency (25,7%), vocabulary (11, 0%), prepositions (11,0%), punctuation (11,9%), and tenses (8,3%). Pablo & Lasaten (2018) noted that high school learners have challenges with writing skills, weak grammar, sentence construction, word choice, lack of cohesion, and coherence. L1 interference is a common challenge as L2 learners may undergo lexical, syntactical, and morphological difficulties. For teachers, it is imperative to encourage learners to think and write in English.

To overcome language mistakes through teacher feedback, a strong vocabulary is a prerequisite. Verbs used, for example, may be neutral or evaluative. (Muttaquin 2024: 46)

### 2.10.4 Confidence building

Group writing allows for interaction and cooperation, and in the long run solves anxiety issues. Once learners do the writing task in groups, they slowly gain confidence to handle the task as they start by just contributing a little.

### 2.10.5 Vocabulary extension

According to Wondemagegne, Simegn & Adugna (2024: 14) linguistic complexity is the variety and sophistication of syntactic features evident in L2 production. This includes the number of words per clause, the amount of subordination or the frequency of certain district phrases. High-quality writing was found to be characterised by diversity in adverbial modifies and nonfinite clauses controlled by less frequent verbs. They argue that high-quality essays show control of complex and sophisticated levels of syntactic knowledge. One of the instructors proposed sharing videos and online assignments with her learners so they could learn better even in their free time. In this vein, many researchers recommended utilising different electronic tools and online platforms to improve the students' abilities (Alsariera, 2022). These tools include electronic dictionaries, paraphrasing tools, and a wide variety of specialised and authentic learning webpages such as My English Lab, Oxford Online Practice, and many others.



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The recommendations made included improving reading habits and writing practice. So, it was suggested that language teachers should start with reading for it improves the learners' lexical knowledge and enhances their creativity. The more the learners practised reading the more confident they become and they are inspired to do more reading. This would achieve a deeper experience of the use of cohesive devices in different academic settings." (Alsariera, 2022)

Rohayati (2021:218) argues that the more enjoyment in writing the learners have, the more enthusiastic the students perceive the Academic Writing. In contrary, little writing enjoyment leads to lack of confidence.

Vocabulary is very important. This is supported by Enobia & Palma, (2025) who contend that the foundation of language is vocabulary which plays a crucial role in reading, speaking, listening, and writing. Vocabulary helps in expressing ideas, understanding others, and achieving academic and professional success (Ratnaningsih & Clara, 2021). Appropriate vocabulary makes writing academic and engaging for readers to read. Alharthi (2020) correlation found between lexical proficiency and the frequency of certain kinds of errors committed by learners, This reinforces the view that vocabulary is the basis of language acquisition Martin & Newport, 2025). Vocabulary is a very critical language component that educators and learners should consciously pursue in the teaching and learning process.

Vögelin, Jansen, Keller, Machts. & Möller. (2019) argue that assessment of essays is multileveled since the determinants of quality include word level (spelling, lexis), sentence and paragraph level (syntax and cohesion) and text level (the overall impression including coherence, structure and the logic of the argument). Teachers should be able to assess the essay writing of learners holistically. Their (Vogelin, et al, 2019:27 view on this is captured below:

> *Therefore, they must possess a concept of writing quality appropriate for the task and substantiate their judgement by referring to relevant criteria. Additionally, teachers need to be able to recognise and describe fine performances, to indicate*



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*areas for improvement in poor performances and to apply judgement criteria according to the standards of the profession and relevant to a certain genre*

It is therefore imperative for teachers to assist learners to acquire appropriate grade level vocabulary. This is so because as proficiency increases, there is a steady increase in lexical specificity, conjuncts, emphatics and amplifiers. Research has also examined whether linguistic features (lexical sophistication, syntactic complexity, cohesion and basic text information) predict L2 writing proficiency in the integrated and independent writing tasks.

The findings were that lexical complexity is a useful predictor for both integrated and independent tasks. So, the linguistic characteristics of learners' essays predict writing quality. Essays with a high error density (structural, mechanical, spelling and grammar) scored lower marks (Vogelin et al, 2019).

## 2.11. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is underpinned by Krashen's Input Hypothesis, a theory coined by Stephen D. Krashen, a renowned linguist and educational researcher, in the early 1980s. The Input Hypothesis constitutes one of the five central components of Krashen's broader Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory, which has significantly influenced the field of language education (Krashen, 1982). It was developed in response to the limitations of traditional grammar-based instruction and emphasises the role of naturalistic exposure in acquiring a second language. Krashen's theory has gained wide recognition in applied linguistics, particularly in the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

According to the Input Hypothesis, language acquisition occurs most effectively when learners are exposed to comprehensible input—that is, language that is slightly beyond the learners' current proficiency level (*i + 1*). This means that the input must be understandable but also include elements that are just above the learner's existing level of competence in order to stimulate progress. Krashen (1982) argues that acquiring a language is a subconscious process, similar to the way children acquire their first



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language. He contrasts this with language learning, which is a more conscious process involving formal instruction and the learning of grammatical rules. The theory further maintains that grammar is not acquired through isolated drills but through meaningful input that learners can internalise over time (Krashen, 1985). The key assumption is that the brain has an innate capacity to absorb language patterns when exposed to them consistently and contextually Adom,, Hussein,, & Agyem,2018). Frequency of exposure and practice, is critical to learning a target language.

In the context of this research, the Input Hypothesis is highly relevant and appropriate. The study investigates how Grade 7 English Second Language (ESL) learners use verbs in their argumentative writing. Since verbs are central to sentence construction and the expression of meaning, the learners' verb usage serves as a reflection of their level of language exposure and acquisition. The learners come from diverse social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, resulting in unequal access to English input, whether through home environments, peer interaction, media, or formal classroom instruction (Sah & Zaidi, 2025). The Input Hypothesis helps explain how such variation in exposure leads to differences in learners' written performance, especially in their range, accuracy, and appropriateness of verb usage.

Moreover, the Input Hypothesis supports the dual importance of incidental learning (e.g., exposure through reading, conversation, and listening) and explicit instruction (e.g., classroom lessons on grammar and vocabulary) (Nation, 2001). Both forms of input contribute to a learner's ability to use verbs effectively in writing. This makes the theory particularly suitable for a study that not only examines learners' current proficiency levels but also explores the factors contributing to those differences. By analysing the learners' argumentative essays, the study draws insights into how the quality and type of input the learners receive—both consciously and unconsciously—affect their language output, particularly the verbs they choose and how appropriately they use them.

Krashen's emphasis on comprehensible input also connects directly with vocabulary development, which is a crucial component of academic writing. The learners' verb choices are shaped by the vocabulary they have acquired through various means, and



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this acquisition is largely driven by the kind of input to which they have been exposed (Garcia, & Rodriguez, . (2022)

A learner with more access to rich, meaningful English input is more likely to possess a broader and more precise vocabulary. Therefore, the Input Hypothesis aligns with the objectives of the study, which aims to explore both the range and appropriateness of verb usage among learners at different levels of proficiency—below average, average, and above average.

In academic research, a theoretical framework refers to the conceptual lens through which a study is designed, analysed, and interpreted. As defined by Kerlinger (1986:9), it is “a set of interrelated constructs, definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables with the purpose of explaining and predicting phenomena.” In this study, Krashen’s Input Hypothesis provides that lens. It not only offers a foundation for understanding the relationship between input and output in language learning but also guides the interpretation of learners’ performance in a structured and theoretically sound manner. By applying this theory, the research is better positioned to account for the observed patterns in learners’ writing, offering insights into the impact of language exposure on grammatical competence—specifically verb use—in second language contexts.

## 2.12 CONCLUSION

The literature reviewed in this chapter situated the study within the context of language acquisition with the main focus on the use of verbs in argumentative writing. Vocabulary has been consistently identifiesd as a critical predictor of language proficiency. The verb is critica in conveying the language act being performed by the language user. Chapter 2 has focused on a literature review, indicating how essay writing is a complex enterprise requiring a number of skills. The research is understood within the context of second language learning, writing, and argument requires higher-order thinking skills of planning, organising, and presenting. Input through both explicit teaching and random exposure is critical to competent argumentative writing. Learners need to be equipped with



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appropriate vocabulary and verbs, by implication, to be able to express their ideas. The error density in a learner's essay reflects a lack of mastery of the language and the principles that govern its syntax. Verbs are the main focus of this research because they convey the ideas, emotions, and attitude of the writer. The main purpose of an argument is to persuade the readers to agree with the writer's point of view, and this can be achieved using strong and appropriate verbs.



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# CHAPTER 3:
# RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section outlines the research design and the methodology of the study. The chapter also highlights sampling techniques, data collection methods, analysis, and ethical considerations.

## 3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a structured plan or framework that outlines the approach and methods a researcher intends to use to answer specific research questions or achieve certain objectives (Maree, 2021:40). It serves as a roadmap for conducting the research, guiding the researcher through the entire process, from data collection to analysis and interpretation of results. Research design is “a plan envisaged for selecting research sites, participants, and data collection procedures to answer research questions so as to make them credible” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 157).

According to Leedy & Ormrod (2015), a research design "provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data." Similarly, Creswell & Creswell (2017) define research design as "the plan, structure, and strategy of investigation" that guides the researcher throughout the research process. Thus, researchers rely on the design to organise their study systematically.

Moreover, Yin (2017) emphasises the importance of aligning research design with the research objectives and context to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the study. The researcher concurs with the opinion that the importance of research design is to provide a clear framework for data collection and analysis, as well as the right plan and structure for investigations.

There are different types of research design, namely descriptive, evaluative, and explorative research designs, which are often adopted in qualitative and mixed-method



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research, as well as experimental design, often adopted in quantitative research, which aims at measuring causal effect relations between variables.

### 3.2.1 Descriptive research design

It describes systematically and accurately the facts and characteristics of a given population or area of interest (Bryman, 2017). This is done to portray or give an account of the characteristics of a particular population or individual, situation, or group. It also describes and documents aspects of a situation as it naturally occurs, providing insights into the demographics, behaviours, and attitudes of a specific group or community (Babbie, 2016).

Descriptive research helps researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of a subject or population by documenting its various attributes and characteristics about the research. Justification of the use of descriptive research is premised on the fact that it provides a comprehensive understanding of the research, particularly valuable information when little is known about the topic, and also provides a foundational understanding for further investigation. Descriptive research focuses on describing phenomena rather than establishing causal relationships. While it provides valuable insights into what is happening, it does not explain why certain patterns or behaviours occur. Descriptive research often involves subjective interpretation by researchers, which can introduce bias into the findings. This bias may affect the validity and reliability of the results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

The way data is collected, recorded, and analysed can be influenced by the researcher's own beliefs, experiences, and perspectives.

In conclusion, descriptive research design is valuable for its ability to provide a detailed account of a population or phenomenon, but it is limited in its ability to establish causality and generalise findings. It shares similarities with exploratory research but differs from experimental research in its approach and goals (Nemanja, 2020).



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### 3.2.2 Evaluative research design

Evaluation is an integral component of programme review. It can be done cross-sectionally or longitudinally (Patton, 2011). Although evaluative research is often done on a small scale, academic practitioners, as internally based researchers, may conduct a cross-sectional evaluative study for several reasons. Johnston & Vanderstoep (2009:216) suggested the evaluative research in instances where one would like to: assess the effectiveness of a programme or course of action; identify requisite interventions in solving a specific problem; compare the effectiveness of various teaching models. Evaluative research is indeed commonly used to assess the effectiveness of programmes or courses of action. This involves systematically gathering data to determine whether the intended outcomes of the program are being achieved and to what extent. Such evaluations are crucial for informing decision-making and improving program design and implementation (Rossi et al., 2018). Another common use of evaluative research is to compare the effectiveness of various teaching models. This involves evaluating different instructional methods, techniques, or strategies to determine their impact on student learning outcomes. Such comparisons can provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers in improving teaching practices (Creswell, 2014).

Evaluative research can indeed incorporate qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of the program or intervention being evaluated. This aligns with the principles of qualitative research, which emphasise understanding the meanings individuals attribute to their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Evaluative research should not be seen as merely an adjunct to other studies or as a means to gather data for epistemological or pedagogic interventions. Instead, evaluation should be approached as a rigorous and systematic process aimed at assessing the merit, worth, and significance of programs or interventions (Scriven & Coryn, 2014).



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### 3.2.3 Explorative research design

Exploratory design is mainly suited for studies that have few or no substantial literature bases to rely on for the prediction of outcome (Lodico, Spaulding &Voegtle, 2016). Exploratory studies enable researchers to explore the central tendencies (e.g., Mean, median), variability (e.g., range, standard deviation), and correlations among variables. By examining these aspects, researchers can identify patterns and relationships within the data, which can inform further research or hypothesis development (Flood et al., 2005). As one of its attributive features, it permits the researcher to gain insights and familiarity as well as establish a deeper understanding of the phenomena explored (Pratap,2019). It is indeed well-suited for studies where there is limited existing literature to rely on for predicting outcomes.

Exploratory research is more concerned with generating hypotheses and exploring new ideas, while descriptive research aims to provide a detailed description of the subject under study (Babbie, 2016).

This type of research allows researchers to investigate a new or underexplored topic, filling gaps in the literature and generating new knowledge (Lodico et al., 2006).

While exploratory research is valuable for generating new ideas and hypotheses, it also has some limitations. One critique is that exploratory studies often lack generalisability, as they are typically conducted in specific contexts or with small samples. Additionally, because exploratory research tends to be more flexible and open-ended, there may be concerns about the reliability and validity of the findings (Bryman, 2016).

For the purpose of this study, descriptive and explorative designs were used to understand the contextual issues surrounding the choice, usage, and limitations on the use of verbs in argumentative essays by selected Grade 7 EFAL learners. The essays were described for their qualities, and these qualities were explored to identify the patterns of performance of different learners of different exposures to the target language. As a result the different categories of performance can be linked to certain usage of vocabulary and verbs in particular.



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## 3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

Research approach is a common term that is often used to describe the collection of procedures and plans that decide the overall process (Dawson, 2007:18). Terms that are at times used to describe approaches include, among others, deductive, inductive, or addictive approaches. Other terms that are also used include qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. The current study proposes to use a qualitative approach on the basis of its merits, characteristic features, and applicability in line with research questions and objectives.

### 3.4.1 Approach

Qualitative research or approach “relies on linguistic (words) or narratives rather than numerical data (Crocker, 2021) and employs the meaning- based rather than statistically forms of data analysis” indicated on objective data, numbers and figures to express reality (Maree, 2021:59). According to Berg (2001:13), “qualitative research focuses on answering questions by analysing various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings.”

Underpinned by the interpretivism paradigm, it may also focus on the understandings and the meanings participants attach to their experiences. Maree (2021) defines qualitative research as an approach that seeks to understand the complexities of human behaviour and experiences through rich, detailed descriptions. However, the focus of qualitative research is on exploring subjective experiences and perspectives, rather than seeking objective truths (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

While qualitative research offers valuable insights into complex social phenomena and individuals' experiences, it also has limitations. One critique is that qualitative research findings may lack generalisability due to the small, non-random samples typically used (Osbeck, 2021). Additionally, qualitative research is often criticised for being subjective and prone to researcher bias, as interpretations of data can vary among researchers (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). To minimise such a shortfall, a mixed method is often used to strengthen data collection and interpretation.



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### 3.4.2 Research Method

There are different types of qualitative research methods. These may include, among others, case study, grounded theory, narrative study, phenomenology, content analysis, document analysis, ethnography, and action research. The choice of each method is guided by the context of study, the type of data explored or envisaged, and the researcher's primary objectives (Cresswell, 2014). For the purpose of this study, the researcher proposes to use action research.

### 3.4.3 Action Research

Burns (2015) defines action research as the superordinate term for a set of approaches to research which, at the same time, systematically investigate a given social situation and promote democratic change and collaborative participatory action research. On the other hand, George (2024) defines action research as a form of collective, self-reflective inquiry that participants in social situations undertake to improve: (1) the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices; (2) the participants' understanding of these practices and the situations in which they carry out these practices. Groups of participants can be educators, students, parents, workplace colleagues, social activists, or any other community members – that is, any group with a shared concern and the motivation and will to address their shared concern.

According to Willis & Edwards (2014:79), all models of action research involve identifying and investigating a problem, reflecting and analysing the problem; designing and implementing a plan to address the problem, and evaluating that plan so it can either be reviewed and improved or integrated into daily practice. These are virtually the universal aspects of action research.

### 3.4.4 RESEARCH PARADIGMS

A paradigm is a worldview, and there are different types of paradigms, namely, positivist, interpretivist, pragmatism, and critical theory. The positivist perspective is based on the premise that the world can be observed and verified (Maree, 2021). This means there are



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facts independent of what people think and feel. It starts with a particular way as a priority beginning point and works towards solving problems with solutions based on some guiding principle. In this paradigm, the researcher is the expert who leads and directs the process. The emphasis is on the traditional scientific side of things. It is usually guided by a theory to be proved.

According to De Vos et al. (2004:277), a paradigm is a "fundamental model or frame of reference we use to organise our observations and reasoning." It is a worldview or basic set of beliefs that guides the research and is based on assumptions about reality, the nature of reality, the relationship of the researcher to what is being researched, the role of values, and the methods. A paradigm points the direction the research should take.

Therefore, a paradigm guides the researcher in choosing the ideal method and the theoretical underpinning of the study, which is of primary importance (Guba & Lincoln, 2014). A paradigm is thus a set of ideas, beliefs, or understandings within which theories and practices can function. Though there are other paradigms, such as constructivism and critical theory, there are two primary research paradigms at polar opposites: positivism and interpretivism

#### 3.4.4.1 The interpretivist perspective

This is based on local solutions to local problems. This is the qualitative research approach where the researcher, as a participant within a community, identifies a problem, analyses it, and tries to design a plan of action to solve it. The researcher is no expert, though. Also, the problem and solution may change through the dialogue, reflection, and evaluation as participants refine their understanding. This is how, ultimately, the goal of action research is to improve current practice (Maree, 2021).

#### 3.4.4.2 Participatory Action Research

The main characteristics are collaboration and respect for local knowledge, commitment to social justice, and trust in the ability of the democratic processes to lead to positive personal, organisational, and community transformation (Lukatela, 2007). In short, action



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research is field-based, focuses on local problems and local solutions. The process is recursive and allows for evaluation and revision of solutions.

Within education, the most common action research is classroom action research. It is research that takes place within the classroom. Educators carry out research to solve everyday practical problems within the teaching profession.

Action research has been chosen because, as one of the practitioners in a Second Language Learning environment, it will help fellow educators to develop reflexive teaching as they monitor their practice. Furthermore, it is convenient as it is adopted by practitioners in their context of operation (the classroom). In this study, it is intended to address a specific problem of verb usage in argumentative essays, which is a challenge experienced by the Grade 7 English FAL learners (Maja, 2019).

## 3.5 POPULATION

Population is “a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects, or events, which conform to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalise the results of the research” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:489). Thus, the population is a set of people from which you expect to collect data. Adeniyi, Oyekanmi & Tijani (2011) define the population of the study as a presentation of all conceivable elements, subjects, or observations relating to the area of interest to the researcher.

In addition, a population may include a group of individuals belonging to the same species, residing in a particular geographical area, and capable of interbreeding. In biological terms, a population is characterised by its genetic composition, demographic attributes (such as age distribution, sex ratio, and density), and ecological interactions within its habitat (Charlesworth, 2009). The population for this study will be EFAL Grade 7 learners. The population of Grade 7 EFAL learners in the Mvudi Circuit is 924 learners.



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### 3.5.1 Target population

According to Maree (2019) the target population is the population with the characteristics targeted by the research study. This is the population from which the actual number of participants will be sampled.

The target population for the present study is the selected Grade 7 English First Additional Language learners from three selected schools in Vhembe East District, Mvudi Circuit, Limpopo province.

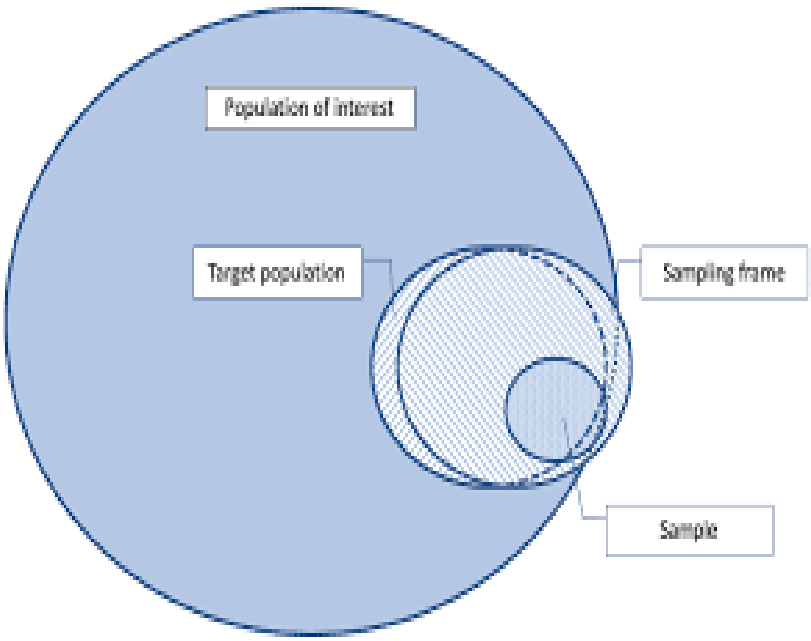



**FIGURE 1:Shukla (2020:37) Research Methodology and Statistics**

### 3.5.2 Sampling

According to Maree (2021:93), sampling is “the selection of a sample of members of a population.” Vartiainen & Hakonen (2015:1313) define sampling as “a technique of selecting a representative part of a population for determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population.” Sampling reduces the cost of having to collect data from the whole population, and it is faster. Each observation measures one or more properties of observable bodies distinguished as independent objects or individuals.



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Both definitions place a strong emphasis on the process of selection, suggesting that sampling entails selecting certain people or components from a population. Maree's definition makes no mention of representativeness. They both understand that the goal of sampling is to draw conclusions about the general population from observations made inside the sample. Sampling is a realistic requirement in research since it frequently results in lower data collection costs and times than trying to collect data from the complete population.

A possible criticism is the possibility of sampling bias, which occurs when a sample is chosen that may not fairly represent the features of the total population, producing skewed or incorrect results, further restrictions may apply when extrapolating results from a sample to the broader population, particularly if the sample is not genuinely representative or if certain population subgroups are underrepresented in the sample.

### 3.5.3 Sampling type

Qualitative research often uses purposive sampling. According to Maree (2021:93), members are selected for a purpose, and the sampling should meet six criteria: relevance to the conceptual framework, likelihood to generate rich information, enhancing transferability of the findings, credible description, meeting ethical preconditions, and feasibility.

Purposive sampling was used to identify and select the study sample**.** According to Johnson & Christiansen (2012: 231), purposive sampling enables the researcher to identify the specific characteristics of interest from the population. The sample for this research was therefore selected on the basis of their similar backgrounds.

### 3.5.4 Study Sample

A sample refers to any portion of a population selected for the study and on whom information needed for the study is obtained (Awoniyi, Aderanti & Tayo, 2011). Sampling should be a small section of the population with the same characteristics, and it should be manageable for the researcher. A sample is the actual number of participants or objects



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selected for the research, and these share generally similar characteristics with the population for the research. The sampled essays should be representative of the argumentative writing of Grade 7.

For this study, 36 essays were purposefully sampled: a total of 12 essays from each of the three schools: 4 from the upper limit, 4 from the middle, and 4 from the lower limit of performance. Four essays per level could suffice for the purpose of this study.

### 3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Kabir (2016) and Taherdoost (2021) state that the data collection method is the process of gathering and evaluating data on relevant variables in a predetermined, methodical manner so as to address research questions, test hypotheses, and assess results. This process is referred to as data collection. Any field of study, including the Humanities, Business, Social and Physical sciences includes a data collection component. Although techniques differ depending on the field, making sure that the collection is honest and accurate always comes first. They also indicated that data collection methods are divided into two main categories, which are Primary Data Collection Methods and Secondary Data Collection Methods.

Maree (2021:108) defines data collection as the gathering of data that should be the focus of the research. This data will allow the researcher to analyse it to answer the research questions to meet the objectives of the research. Qualitative research data may be collected using interviews, observation, or document analysis. A document is any text, such as an essay, story, video, or photograph (Morgan, 2021: 64). It is a research practice based on pre-existing texts. This is why it is referred to as secondary data.

Secondary data, which comes from existing information sources, includes published literature, historical research, state reports, and statistical abstracts. These sources should be examined in the same manner as primary data are studied (Taherdoost, 2021). In this research, secondary data (pre-existing document) was used as exemplified in (Table 2).



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### 3.6.1 Document Analysis

Document analysis was conducted to collect data. Document analysis entails examining various documents such as newspaper articles, academic journal articles, and institutional reports (Morgan, 2021:64). Any document or text may serve as a potential source for qualitative analysis. Generally, a document encompasses a wide range of materials, including visual sources like photographs, videos, and films. Document analysis focuses on pre-existing texts.

**Characteristics of a document**

According to Morgan (2021:71), a good document should possess the following characteristics:

- **Authenticity**
  This means a document should be genuine. It should not be manipulated or falsified.
- **Credibility**
  It should be free from error and distortion.
- **Representativeness**
  The document should be typical of the genre being investigated. It must possess the qualities of the type of document being sought.
- **Meaning**
  The document should be significant, clear, and understandable.
- **Thematic Approaches**
  Document analysis can be done using a reflexive approach, a coding reliability approach, or a codebook approach.
- **The Reflexive approach**
  This approach relies on the researchers' subjectivity in choosing the focus and the themes and codes to use. Reflexivity allows for flexibility and independence of the researcher based on the experience and knowledge of the topic. For example, the researcher's knowledge of the topic and previous research findings in the area



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under investigation will allow for flexibility in decision-making about the document analysis.

Codes evolve as the analysis progresses, and they are not predetermined at the start. Reflexivity allows for the uncovering of unexpected meanings.

- **Code reliability approach**

  This one focuses on the codes that should be used to generate the themes. It refers to the consistency and dependability of the codes that are used in document analysis without errors or failures. A code must be accurate, stable, robust, easy to understand, and testable. It should be easy to integrate the code continuously

## 3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

A thematic analysis is often used in qualitative studies to analyse the data obtained from sources such as interviews, observation, and documents. A thematic approach "identifies the themes that emerge from data" (Maree, 2021:108). Braun & Clarke's (2006) recommend 6-step guidelines for thematic analysis.

### 3.7.1 Familiarisation

The first step is **familiarisation with the unit of analysis**. This involves the verbs used in the argumentative essays. The next step is the **identification of codes** to be used in the search for themes. The fourth step is the **revision of themes** by reducing both the codes and the number of possible themes. The fifth step is to **define the themes**. The final stage is the discussion of the themes about the objectives, research questions, and the theoretical framework.

Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) emphasise that there are different approaches to qualitative data analysis, which basically means that there is no one single way to analyse and interpret. Cohen et al (2011) outlined some procedures when analysing data. These are discussed in the ensuing sections. During this stage the researcher marked the essays focusing on the use of verbs although the analytic rubric was holistic.



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### 3.7.2 Organising Data

The researcher should examine or review all the data to see if any trend or pattern is emerging from the data. Letters, numbers, or symbols can be used to organise the data. Sometimes, they may be separated according to research questions or subtopics (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011). For this study, the essays were organised according to the level of performance achieved. The essays were categorised into three: the above –average, average and the below average.

### 3.7.3 Coding Data

Creswell (2012) defines coding as a procedure of fragmenting and classifying text to form explanations and comprehensive themes in the data. Coding is the method of categorising data in order to start making thematically-arranged ideas on collected data. Dey (1993:32) defines coding as 'codes are tags or labels for allocating identified themes or topics from the data compiled in the study.' Morgan (2021:72) supports this, noting that the researcher should develop a set of rules for coding the data according to the units and categories of analysis.Coding was achieved by identifying the verbs according to the three research questions. According to research question one, the types of verbs were identified. For research question two, the argumentative verbs were identified. The third question yielded verbs that related to the appropriateness of the verbs.

### 3.7.4 Validating Data

According to Stiles (2000), the validation of data from qualitative research is directly related to the trustworthiness of its interpretations and conclusions, and these are considered to be reliable and coherent when they are internally consistent. Validation of data is done to find out whether the data collected follows a pre-set standard and is without bias. This involves applying the rules consistently to ensure the trustworthiness of the coding and analysis (Morgan, 2021). In this research the validation involved aligning the data to the objectives and research questions of the study.The data answered the research questions. The verbs were from real learner scripts and therefore, reflected the



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use of verbs in argumentative essay writing by Grade 7 learners. The analytic rubric used afforded fair assessment of each learner's competence in writing an argumentative essay.

## 3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics refers to the accepted standards of conduct. According to McMillan & Schumaker (2010:122), ethics are "measures taken to ensure a fair and transparent process in which participants were not disadvantaged." Ethical concerns are not only limited to research practices and the classic norms of research protection and authorship recognition, but also encompass subjects and participants, where harm must be minimised, confidentiality must be guaranteed and a transparent participation process must be carried out, with informed consent, situations that go hand in hand with the "integrity of research" (De Wet, 2010).

According to Salmon (2017:1), the main purpose is to "promote the integrity of research." Personal integrity may be compromised if a researcher fabricates quotations, or data, or gains information under false pretences. Ethical clearance will be obtained from the University of Venda, and permission to conduct the research will be obtained from the Department of Education, and subsequently, the schools and the parents. The schools, parents, and teachers should sign informed consent forms first before they can participate in the research.

The other ethical considerations to be maintained are confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent, withdrawal permission, and observing the safety of participants.

### 3.8.1 Confidentiality

According to Aldridge (2014), confidentiality is defined as 'not disclosing what the participants did or said during research unless they consent to do so and only in ways they agreed on'. The identity of the schools, all participants, and the data collected will be confidential and protected by the researcher. Stiles & Pretrilla (2011) emphasised that the maintenance and confidentiality of research subjects and research data are essential to



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the research process. The researcher will not mention the names of the schools or the names of the participants of the study.

### 3.8.2 Anonymity

According to McMillan & Schumacher (2010:363), the participants and locations should not be identified in print. As a result, the settings' locations and characteristics will be hidden to resemble a variety of potential destinations. Places and people in this study will be referred to by code names. Researchers have two roles to play: keeping informants safe from the wider public and protecting each person's privacy from other participants in the environment. In order to allow participants to feel comfortable and free to express their opinions, the researcher will ensure that the questionnaire for this study does not include any setting-specific questions. Names and the identity of the participants will not be made known to the public. This will be achieved by not writing names on the essays. The essays will be coded to ensure anonymity.

### 3.8.3 Informed consent

Informed consent means that the participants understand what they are getting into and the extent of their involvement in the research. Salmon (2017) points out that informed consent describes the process and agreements about how participants know about the study and what they are expected to do. The researcher must provide all the information about the research: purpose, methodology, the time it should take, and the rights of the participants during the research. Participants were informed about the right to withdraw in the research.

According to Terre Blanche & Durrheim (2006:50), obtaining explicit and unequivocal consent from research subjects to engage in studies is based on ensuring that they fully comprehend the processes involved and the potential consequences. Welman (2005:182) concurs and says that after fully and truthfully informing the respondents of the study's goal, the researcher should obtain the required consent from them.



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The participants received an explanation from the researcher regarding the nature, objectives, and scope of the study. This made it easier for participants to comprehend the nature of the study, what was expected of them, and how it would affect both the researcher and them. Each participant got an informed consent form from the researcher outlining the goals of the study in order to acquire their informed consent. Along with the approach and procedures to be followed, it was also explained how the information would be gathered.

By doing this, it ensured that responders are aware of what they are consenting to and that their agreement is the result of their own free will and clear knowledge, rather than being obtained through manipulation. According to McMillan & Schumacher (2010:363), most researchers assure participants of their privacy and confidentiality while obtaining their informed consent. They also explain the intended use of the data.

### 3.8.4 Principle of no harm

The principle of no harm in a study means that population subjects are well informed about the study, potential risks, and benefits of participation in the research (Mayne et al, 2015). It is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that research participants are not subjected to harm in any way. In this research, teachers and learners were apprised of the benefits of reading in the whole process of teaching and learning, so that they could see how participation is safe and beneficial.

### 3.8.5 Voluntary participation

Voluntary participation refers to a human research subject's exercise of free will in deciding whether or not to participate in a research activity (Lavrakas, 2008). According to Christiana et al. (2015), international law, national law, and the codes of conduct of scientific communities protect this right. No participant was coerced to take part in the research. Instead, they will do it willingly.

Taking part voluntarily is essential. No one should feel pressured into taking part in activities they don't want to or that they are under pressure to do so. This entails granting



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individuals the freedom to refuse participation in the study at any point, even if they have already consented to it.

## 3.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the methodology of this study. It described the research design guided by the research paradigm that was used to answer the research questions. The population and the sample, data collection methods and analysis were also described. Ethical considerations were discussed. The chapter that follows presents and discusses the findings of the research.



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# CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The current chapter presents and interprets data obtained through document analysis. The study's primary aim was to evaluate the usage of verbs in argumentative essays by selected Grade 7 English First Additional Language learners in Mvudi Circuit, Vhembe East District, Limpopo Province. The chapter discusses the characteristics of participating schools in quintile levels for insights into the socioeconomic integrities of sampled schools.

The findings are presented in line with the research objectives and aligned with the research questions as stated below:

**Research Question 1**

- How do Grade 7 English First Additional Language learners use verbs in their argumentative essays?

**Research Question 2**

- What type of verbs are commonly chosen by Grade 7 learners in their argumentative essays?

**Research Question 3**

- How appropriate are the verbs used by Grade 7 learners in their argumentative essays?

## 4.2 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The research focused on argumentative essays of 36 EFAL Grade 7 learners drawn from three Primary schools. The assessment of the essays was first done using a rubric (**see Appendix A)** that focused on content/the facts the learners proffered, the grammar and punctuation, argumentative verbs and vocabulary, organisation/structure, and planning. The I2 learners from each of the three schools were assessed using the rubric. The rubric helped to rank the essays based on the level of competencies displayed by the learners.



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The rubric helped to identify the essay qualities based on the criteria and descriptors used in the rubric. From the rubric and the essays, certain content emerged as guidelines in the analysis of the essays.

The table below categorises the learners' essays according to the categories: below average, average, and above average performance. These main concepts are presented in the table below.

**Table 2: The quality of essays**

| Quality | Above-average levels | Average levels | Below average levels | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Planning | I0 | I8 | 8 | 36 |
| Content/ Points | I2 | I8 | 6 | 36 |
| Grammar | II | I5 | I0 | 36 |
| Vocabulary | 8 | 20 | 8 | 36 |
| Structure | 9 | 22 | 5 | 36 |
| Score % | 50% | 93% | 37% | |

It is quite clear that the highest score on three competency assessment standards was under the average level, with 93%, followed by above average, with 50% and below average, respectively, with 37%.

This is also highlighted by Figure 2 under Section 4.3, which summarizes the score level and the number of participants per competency standards.



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## 4.3 EMERGING LEVELS OF COMPETENCIES FROM THE DATA

The graph below indicates that 9 learners, constituting 25%, fall under the above-average category, 19 learners, constituting 52.8%, performed within the average category, and 8 learners, constituting 22.2%, were within the below-average category. This information is presented in the graph below.

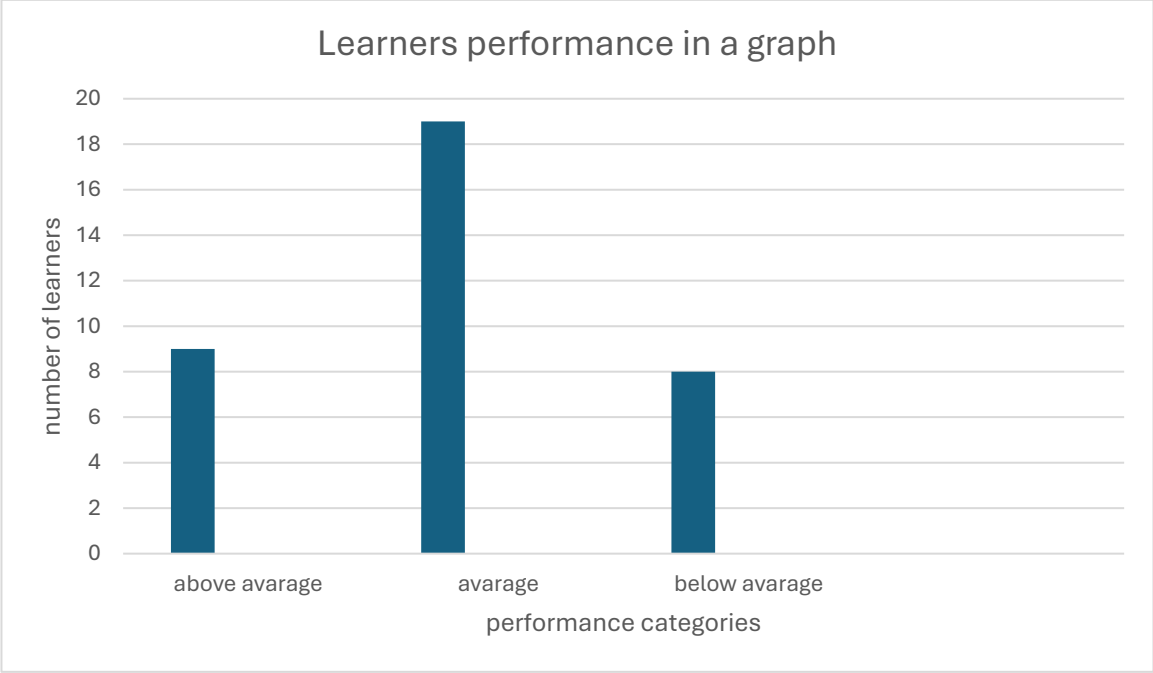



**FIGURE 2: Learner Performance**

The graph shows the performance of learners in the argumentative essay writing. The graph shows performance according to the three performance categories (Above average (09), Average (19), and below average (8). The majority of the sample is in the average category.

## 4.4 LEARNERS' RAW MARKS FROM THE HIGHEST TO THE LOWEST

**RESULTS** of 36 Grade 7 Argumentative Essays from three schools ( Schools A, B, and C), with I2 learners sampled from each school are presented here. . A is for school 1, B is for school 2, and C is for school 3. The graph shows the raw marks that all 36



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participants obtained, and the marks were also calculated into percentages. The graph also supports the Frequency graph according to the three categories.

**TABLE 3: Performance in the argumentative essay writing**

| School A | Marks out of 20 | % | School B | Marks out of 20 | % | School C | Marks out of 20 | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A1** | 18 | 90% | **B1** | 7 | 85% | **C1** | 16 | 80% |
| **A2** | 16 | 80% | **B2** | 15 | 75% | **C2** | 15 | 75% |
| **A3** | 15 | 75% | **B3** | 14 | 70% | **C3** | 13 | 65% |
| **A4** | 14 | 70% | **B4** | 13 | 65% | **C4** | 12 | 60% |
| **A5** | 13 | 65% | **B5** | 12 | 60% | **C5** | 12 | 60% |
| **A6** | 13 | 65% | **B6** | 12 | 60% | **C6** | 11 | 55% |
| **A7** | 12 | 60% | **B7** | 12 | 60% | **C7** | 10 | 50% |
| **A8** | 12 | 60% | **B8** | 11 | 55% | **C8** | 10 | 50% |
| **A9** | 11 | 55% | **B9** | 10 | 50% | **C9** | 10 | 50% |
| **A10** | 10 | 50% | **B10** | 9 | 45% | **C10** | 8 | 40% |
| **A11** | 8 | 40% | **B11** | 8 | 45% | **C11** | 5 | 25% |
| **A12** | 8 | 40% | **B12** | 7 | 35% | **C12** | 2 | 10% |

Table 2 shows the participants' raw marks, the percentage, and the performance level achieved. Most learners are between 50 and 69% which was the average category. The table also shows that 4 learners fell between 10% and 30% score levels, and this constitutes 11.1% of the sampled learners from the three schools.

Table 3 below shows findings on the question**: How do Grade 7 English First Additional Language learners use verbs in their argumentative essays?** Findings on this question are presented respectively based on the identified competency levels: below average, average, and above average.

**USAGE OF VERBS BY PARTICIPANTS CATEGORISED AS BELOW AVERAGE**

| THEMES | SUB-THEME |
|---|---|
| Concord error | Mismatch between the subject and the verb |
| Confusing words | Confusion between homophones and homonyms. |
| Ambiguity/vagueness | misplaced verb phrases or wrong words, |



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| | |
|---|---|
| Inappropriate vocabulary | A weak word or verb fails to express the intended meaning. |
| Repetition of the subject | The subject is repeated using a pronoun before the verb |
| Spelling | Words are misspelt |

Table 4. Themes on the usage of verbs in the **below-average** category of performance

**MISMATCH BETWEEN THE SUBJECT AND THE VERB**

Mismatch between the subject and the verb is one of the common anomalies that participants at this level (*below average*) of competency displayed.

**Excerpt 1**: *Cellphone users has Facebook*

This is a typical example of a syntactic error where the verb is used without considering the form of the subject. In this context, the plural subject "cellphone users is used with a singular main verb 'has'.

**CONFUSING WORDS**

The use of wrong words is often attributed to confusing words on the basis of their sound (homophones). In such cases, incorrect word classes are often used with either a noun or a verb in the position of a verb.

**Excerpt 2:** *has online courses and expect opinion*

The word "*expect", which is a verb,* is used in the above excerpt as a modifying adjective to the word opinion which is a noun. Typical erratic usage like this often produces unintelligible utterances, either because they are vague or clumsy.

**AMBIGUITY/VAGUENESS**

Ambiguity in a sentence could be attributed to a number of factors, which could be of either semantic or syntactic orientation. Common sources of ambiguity or vagueness



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include, among others, lexical, syntactic, contextual, pronoun reference, and incorrect punctuation.

**Excerpt 3:** *an app which people watch* videos people dancing.

The source of vagueness in the above excerpt could be attributed to lexical ambiguity and incorrect word ordering or sequencing. The verb watch in the above excerpt shows an actual action that the subject is performing. However, it is not clear whether the verb watch is meant to refer to an app or is used to refer to people watching videos.

**MODAL USED WITH INFLECTED VERBS**

Modal verbs like can and could, may and might, as well as shall and should, are often used to express ability, permission, and determination, respectively. When a verb is preceded by a modal verb, inflecting a verb is an anomaly because the verb after a main verb should always be in its base form.

**Excerpt 4:** *Twitter it can took photo*

As expanded above, the modal verb *"çan' which* denotes ability, is followed by a simple past tense verb '*took'*. This could be attributed to overgeneralisation, developmental errors, or fossilisation.

**PHONETIC CONFUSION**

Words are often misspelled as a result of phonetic confusion, and in some cases as a result of homophone pairs. The letter *'t'* in listen is silent, while the "*w*" in wrestle is also not pronounced. Furthermore, homophone pairs like bear and bare may at times be used interchangeably.

**Excerpt 5:** *Social media tark/your time to do work.*

The interchangeable use of "tark" and *"take*" in excerpt 5 could be attributed to careless usage, learning difficulty, or recall issues.



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## PUNCTUATION

Punctuation errors include starting a sentence with a small letter, missing a punctuation mark such as a comma, an apostrophe, or a full stop where there should be one. Sometimes the punctuation errors are such that they impede meaning and communication. The excerpt below is from the participant with the lowest score in the sample.

**Excerpt 6**

*the social medie avin the Tv and cellphones has facebook instargram, twit and whatsapp. influence is to your cple the flin. influence the which the TV and facebook and Wify*

In this excerpt, punctuation at the beginning and end of sentences is ignored. This, compounded by a lack of vocabulary and knowledge of syntax, creates confusion and misunderstanding due to impaired communication. As already mentioned, very weak performance is characterised by a multiplicity of errors as evident in this excerpt. *'the social medie avin…'* is incomprehensible because of 'avin'.

## INAPPROPRIATE VOCABULARY

The inappropriate use of a word in a context where it does not fit affects the meaning and can cause misunderstanding. Lack of appropriate vocabulary or spelling errors can lead to inappropriate vocabulary. The following excerpt is an example of inappropriate vocabulary:

**Excerpt 7**

*I social medie is the web your call people.*

The word '*web*' is inappropriate because social media is not a web. The pronoun 'your' is inappropriately used in this context.

**Excerpt 8**



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*media is the most bad influence to our education. Instagram has sexual which is like*

*facebook they go hand in hand.*

The words *'most bad'* are supposed to be an adjective qualifying the noun 'influence'. However, the superlative degree of bad is 'worst' and not '*most bad'*. This is an instance of inappropriate vocabulary resulting in an overt grammar error.

In extreme cases, there can be a severe communication breakdown due to a combination of spelling errors and inappropriate vocabulary. The following excerpt is a case in point:

**Excerpt 9**

*the social medie avin the Tv and cellphones has facebook instargram, twit and whatsapp*

*influence is to your cple the flin*

*influence the which the TV and facebook and Wify*

These sentence fragments reveal a critical lack of language awareness by the learner. There is a multiplicity of errors characteristic of very weak performance. The word 'avin' is strange in this context. It is neither a verb nor a known word. It is just a creation by the learner.

The second objective was to analyse the choice of verbs Grade 7 learners use in argumentative writing.

## 4.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE TWO

Research objective two explored the type of verbs that the selected participants use when writing argumentative essays. Verbal variation in argumentative essays not only reflects learners' vocabulary depth. It could also be a reflection of their awareness of forms, structure, and positionality that verbs are to be used guided by the basic syntactic rules and principles.



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Table 4 overleaf demonstrates the type and usage of verbs by participants in their argumentative essays. Categories of verbs are presented respectively in contrastive pairs. These included the usage of regular verbs compared to irregular verbs; auxiliary verbs compared to main verbs, and transitive verbs compared to intransitive verbs. Modal verbs are presented independently.

### 4.5.1 THE CHOICE OF VERBS IN THE ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING OF LEARNERS

| | Regular Verbs | | | Irregular Verbs | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | EXAMPLES IN THE EXCERPTS | % FREQUENCY | | EXAMPLES IN THE EXCERPTS | % FREQUENCY |
| 1 | *Social media **helps** with information.* | 25 | 6 | *Learners **become** lazy…* | 30 |
| 2 | *Children **watch** bad movies* | 10 | 7 | *Social media **tark/take** your time…* | 8 |
| 3 | *Learners **abuse** social media and bully others.* | 8 | 8 | *We **get** social media on our phones.* | 30 |
| 4 | *It **distracts** them from studying.* | 5 | 9 | *Social media also **gives** us information that we need.* | 35 |
| 5 | *Social media **affects** our attention …constantly **bombarded** by....* | 45<br><br>1 | 10 | *We **make** friends out of social media.* | 40 |

**Table 5: Learners' choice of verbs**

The choice of verbs in an argumentative essay should be underpinned by the assertive voice the writer would like to convey. In advanced argumentative pieces of writing, competent writers would vary their choice to indicate either their strong analysis, reflect their opinions, present their counterpoints, show reasoning or logic, and use verbs that drive home their claim.



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The table above (4) indicates the participants' choice of positive affirmative verbs presenting social media as a good thing. The table indicates three frequently used verbs that participants used to convey their thoughts about social media. These include the verb '***helps***' as used in excerpt one, with 25 frequency of usage; the verb gives which appeared 35 times, and make which appeared 40 times.

Similarly, participants used a variety of irregular verbs, but not necessarily in their perfect participle form, to mark the negativity associated with social media. These included verbs like *watch*, which was used ten times; *abuse*, used eight times; *distract*, appearing five times; *affect*, appearing forty-five times; and *become*, which was used thirty times. As indicated below, one of the participants used a strong verb, which not only shows the writer's viewpoint but also a strong view with emotional attachment, marking the writer's disdain for social media. The verb *bombarded,* as used in the extract below, expresses the negative perception the writer has towards social media.

*Social media* ***affects*** *our attention …constantly* ***bombarded*** *by....*

So, the word ***bombarded*** as used in the sentence above suggests a lack of control and the invasive power of social media in the lives of children and users alike. The word appeared once, suggesting the possibility of above-average, exceptional vocabulary depth of the participant in relation to grade competency standards.

### 4.5.2 USAGE OF AUXILIARY VERBS AND MAIN VERBS IN ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS

**Table 6: Auxiliary Verbs and Main Verbs**



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| Auxiliary verbs | | | Main verbs | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Examples in the excerpts | Frequency % | | Examples in the excerpts | Frequency % |
| **1** | *Tik tok **is** a lesson to children. Social media **is** hindering education* | 30 | **5** | *Social media **influences** children* | 30 |
| **2** | *Children **are influenced** by other children on social media.* | 58 | **6** | *Social media **help** children during homework. It also **help** to support peoples dreams.* | 30 |
| **3** | *We **are** because of the influence on social media.* | 20 | **7** | *Social media **affected** my school work.* | 25 |
| **4** | *The people **are influencing** our education* | 58 | **8** | *Learners **watch** bad movies.* | 32 |
| | | 60 | **9** | *Children **spend** most of their time watch TV. Children **don't** obey their gardiens* | 24 |

Auxiliary verbs work with main verbs to express tense, voice, mood, or aspect ,Daniel Z (2023). Excerpts one and three show the use of the auxiliary verb ***is*** and *are* without their complementing main verbs as required. On the other hand, excerpts **two** and **four** show the correct usage of auxiliary verbs with their complementing main verbs. In terms of the role they serve in the excerpts, the auxiliary verbs 'is' and 'are' were used mainly to mark the tense (present tense), and the voice is both active and passive, as indicated by excerpts one and two, respectively, in the table above.

As indicated in the previous table on the choice and usage of main verbs in argumentative essays, main verbs like influence, help, affect, watch, and spend were used in varying levels of frequency, marking tense, concord, and writers' assertive voice and positionality regarding social media.



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## .5 3 USAGE OF TRANSITIVE AND INTRANSITIVE VERBS IN ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS

| Transitive verbs | | | Intransitive verbs | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Examples in the excerpts | Frequency % | | Examples in the excerpts | Frequency % |
| **1** | Children **watch** movies | 32 | **6** | As we **grow** and **mature**.. | 3 |
| **2** | Social media **influences** learners to bully each other. | 30 | **7** | All that **happens** on tiktok. | 4 |
| **3** | Social media **gives** us information. | 35 | **8** | Children must **study** for more hours. | 60 |
| **4** | They **take** your phone away | 12 | **9** | Children do not **care** about school. | 12 |
| **5** | It **presents** challenges like distraction and negative influence. | 5 | | | 6 |

**Table 7: Transitive and Intransitive Verbs**

Transitive verbs are followed by a direct object in the sentence, while intransitive verbs may not take an object after the main verb. When used correctly, they provide clarity and precision. This often helps to identify who does what to what or who does what to whom, and this is said to be crucial for the development of strong and persuasive argumentative writing.

In all the excerpts from examples numbered one to five in the table above, transitive verbs were used with a direct object. For instance, watch in except one is used with a direct object in movies**.** This was used thirty-two times, suggesting the duration that one may have on social media. Hence, example five presents challenges five times, affirming the negativity of time consumption associated with social media.

Conversely, intransitive verbs are not followed by a direct object. Excerpts six, seven, eight, and nine are examples of sentences with intransitive verbs. The most overt anomaly with the usage is with excerpt six, where the sentence appears to be rather incomplete and vague, reading: *as we grow and mature.*



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### 4.5.4 THE USAGE OF MODAL VERBS IN ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS

**Table 8 Modal Verbs**

| Modal Verbs | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Examples of modal verbs as used in the excerpts | Frequency % |
| 1 | Parents **should** do something about phones. | 20 |
| 2 | We **will** do it because of social media. | 29 |
| 3 | We **mus**t encourage children to study. | 24 |
| 4 | Social media **can** unintentionally affect … | 50 |
| 5 | People **could** comment on social media and bully you | 12 |
| 6 | *Some people **may** not study their books* | 3 |
| 7 | *Twitter it **can** took photo* | 7 |

Modal verbs are often categorized as subtle and yet with the potential to convey **tone**, suggest **degrees of certainty**, and signal **obligation or possibility .**Degrave, P. (2022). In excerpt one, the modal verb should be used to convey a sense of urgency requiring parental intervention in children's usage of social media. The use of will in excerpt 2 reflects a sense of introspection and susceptibility that children have in social media. Excerpt three used the modal verb must, suggesting an authorial voice for action that will encourage children to act. Excerpt four used the modal verb can, suggesting a degree of certainty about what social media can do to the user. Excerpt six uses the modal verb could, which appears speculative, lacking clarity, and precision. In formal writing, the two sentences below may be preferable on the basis that they may adequately serve the desired objective with the correct tone and precision.

*People **might** use social media to **bully** others."*
*"Users **can** post harmful comments that **amount to bullying**."*

Finally, the overt anomaly as per table 7 with different excerpts is with example 7 where the following erroneous instances are evidenced: The use of double subjects ‘Twitter’ and ‘It’; and the inflection of a verb after a modal verb where a past tense form ‘’ took’ is used



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instead of using the present tense form which in this context was supposed to be the verb 'take'.

The next section indicates the general reflection on the appropriacy of verbs used by Grade 7 learners in their argumentative essays. This was aligned with research objective three of the study.

## 4.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE THREE

Objective three assessed the appropriacy of verbs as used by selected learners in their argumentative essays. In persuasive writing and in argumentative essays alike, verbs drive arguments, define relationships between ideas, and tone. For the purposes of this study, evaluating the appropriacy of verbs implied checking whether the choice of verbs by selected participants matched the essay's purpose, audience, tone, formality, and analytical depth. In essence, the analysis covered three basic areas as stated below:

- **Mismatch of verbs to tone and intent**
- **Lack of Consistency of Modality and Strength**
- **Verbs and their contextual relevance**

### 4.6.I Mismatch of verbs to tone and intent.

The table below summarizes the identified mismatch of verbs to tone and intent, highlighting the inappropriacy of verbs used in a given argumentative writing.

| **Mismatch of verbs to tone and intent** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | ***Excerpts*** | ***Reasons for the mismatch*** | **Frequency %** |
| 1 | *Children **see** television.* | The 'verb' **see** suggests an act of perceiving something without focus. The appropriate verb in this context would have been to **watch**, since the latter implies looking at something for a long period of time, either out of curiosity or interest. | 20 |
| 2 | *Twitter **can took** your time.* | Firstly, the verb **took** in its past tense form is inappropriate in this context. This is because verbs after modal verbs are not inflected. | 10 |



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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | In terms of the adequacy of the verb to convey the desired intention, the verb **waste** would have been appropriate since social media is an inanimate platform. | |
| 3 | *….a message would **ring** at your phone.* | It is the phone that **rings** and not the message. So, the appropriate expression would be: You would receive a notification on your phone, or your phone would beep when you get a message. | 40 |
| 4 | *Children **look** TV most of the time.* | The verb **look** in this context may suggest that children are looking at the device and not necessarily the content or the show on Television. So the verb watch would be appropriate in this context. | 20 |

**Table 9: Mismatch of verbs, tone, and intent.**

As indicated in the table above, four recurring instances of inappropriacy were identified. The first one is the usage of the verb ***see:***

*Children **see** television.*

The verb see as used above connotes an act of **gazing** or **staring** without a specific focus on details. Instead, the verb **watch,** which connotes an intentional decision to observe or view something out of interest or curiosity, should have been used on the basis of its illocutionary force.

Secondly, the action verb **took** was used inappropriately as per the excerpt below

*Twitter **can took** your time*

The verb **took** was preceded by a modal verb, **can**, and the verb that follows in line with basic syntactic rules should ideally not be inflected or tensed. Instead of keeping the verb in its present tense form, '***take'***, the findings show a total of 10 recurring occurrences.

The third instance of inappropriacy was with the use of the **verb** ring as indicated in the excerpt:

*A message would **ring** on your phone.*



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Ideally, it is the phone that **rings** and not the message, as per participants' usage. So, the appropriate expression could be: You will receive a notification on your phone, or your phone will beep when you get a message.

The last observation was on the usage of the verb ***look*** as indicated in the excerpt***:***

*Children **look** TV most of the time*

The verb look ideally suggests a brief and momentary action. The verb **look** is also ideally followed by a preposition ***at,*** *so that the phrase would read****: look at,*** *but in this case, the principle is not applicable since the user simply misused the verb,* and the correct verb would have been to ***watch.*** The next table captures the analysis of the consistency of verbal modality and strength.

Modality expresses the level of conviction of the writer in respect of the views being expressed. Modality may reveal the stance of the writer, showing possibilities. So, modals such as "*can, should,* may/might' express the writer's assumptions or sense of conviction and balance and consideration about the topic.

The inconsistency is evident in the lack of strong verbs and appropriate use of modals, especially to show discrimination of response to issues. Instead, the modality comes as a matter–of–fact assumption, such as "Parents should take the phones". It is general and assumes that every parent agrees to that. That "*People comment and bully"* also ignores the fact that not all people comment and bully others on social media. So, discriminating modals such as "may" help strike a balance as they capture the sense of possibility and the likelihood that others do not do it.

### 4.6.3 Consistency of modality and strength

| Consistency of modality and strength | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Excerpts** | **Reasons for the lack of consistency of modality** |
| 1 | *Twitter **can took** photos* | *Incorrect inflections* |



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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | *Parents **should take** the phones.* | *Weakened necessity.* |
| 3 | *It **can influence** learners to misbehave.* | *It is presented as a possibility and does not convey the conviction that it is already happening.* |
| 4 | *People **comment** on social media and bully* | *This assumes everyone who uses social media bullies people.* |
| 5 | *Children **do not do** their homework* | *This assumes every child is on social media all the time* |

**Table 10: Consistency of modality and strength**

As indicated in Table 9, the modal verb ***can*** is suggestive of an ability and potentiality, which in this context is adequate. However, the inflection of a verb ***took*** which was preceded by a modal verb is an anomaly to be corrected in line with basic syntactic rules.

*Twitter **can took** photos*

Secondly, the use of **should** often suggests what is ideal or expected. Contrary to this, *must* is suggestive of a much stronger force, which in this context may explain the inherent authority that parents have over the usage of phones by their children; hence, the use of the modal verb "must" may align with the anticipated urgency of the situation.

*Parents **should take** the phones.*

The use of ***can*** in the example below is presented as a possibility and does not convey the conviction that it is already happening. If the intention was to present it as a strong proposition, then the sentence would read: it influences learners to behave.

*It **can influence** learners to misbehave.*

### 4.6.3 Verbs and their contextual relevance

The table below captures the analysis of the use of verbs evaluated on the basis of relevance in context.

| **Verbs and their contextual relevance** |
|---|



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| | Excerpts | Reasons for the lack of relevance to context | Frequency % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | *When you **post** another person being beaten, this can lead to children committing suicide.* | The verb 'committing' suicide is out of context as it is not referring to the person being beaten. | 15 |
| 2 | *Children **look** bad movies on social media* | 'Look' is out of context as it is weak and also vague. Movies are watched. | 20 |
| 3 | *Social media is a web your **can** the people* | This is cryptic as the verb lacks a main verb. | 5 |
| 4 | *.. an app which people **watch** videos people dancing.* | This is a cryptic sentence that creates vagueness. | 5 |
| 5 | *Hello. I **wanted to** talk about social media.* | 'wanted' is in past tense yet the tense of the essay is in the present tense. | 5 |

**Table: 11 Verbs and contextual relevance**

Contextual relevance of verbs is very important. This is premised on the fact that context gives the frame within which the language should be used. Verbs may express bias, stereotype, or conviction. The way the verbs are used should reflect appropriateness to the context. Contexts may be informal or formal, conversational or serious/ academic. As a result, the verbs used should be appropriate. In the above table, the verb phrase "committing suicide, is out of context as the child committing suicide cannot be linked to the post of a person being beaten. To '*look"* is irrelevant to the context. It is too general and weak. This suggests that the learners lack the appropriate vocabulary to use here. The conversational, "*Hello, I wanted to*..." makes the argument informal, and the verb *"watched'* becomes irrelevant to the context as it is in the past tense when the argument is in the present tense.

The above analysis on tone and intent, function, context, and modality reflects the inadequacies in argumentative writing at Grade 7. Most of the statements are presented as strong claims but without substantiation, mostly presented in weak vocabulary with limited awareness of tone, function, and modality. This makes the arguments weak and inadequate in motivation and balance of the views expressed.



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## 4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the data and the findings of this research. The essays that were analysed using a thematic approach revealed that the Grade 7 learners' use of verbs was varied and was categorised into below average, average, and above average performance. These categories reflected the level of exposure to and mastery of the language by these learners. Those in the below-average category reflected very limited vocabulary and struggled with language rules of concord, spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary in general. However, the causes of this unsatisfactory performance were not investigated in this research beyond the errors identified.



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# CHAPTER 5

# INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

## 5. 1 INTRODUCTION

The current chapter interprets and discusses data obtained through document analysis. The study's primary aim was to evaluate the usage of verbs in argumentative essays by selected Grade 7 English First Additional Language learners in Mvudi Circuit, Vhembe East District, Limpopo Province.

The analysis of essays demonstrated the importance of grade-appropriate vocabulary. Writing is a complex process that allows learners to employ various aspects of their knowledge of English. It involves brainstorming, mind-mapping, selecting the correct vocabulary, and appropriating a tone. It also calls for the mastery of the writing mechanics such as spelling, punctuation, and diction. Argumentative essay writing is a demanding writing task that trains learners to express their views on a topic. The argument should be logical, engaging, and convincing.

The assessment of the essays was done using an analytic rubric, which is inclusive of the diversity in learner proficiency. As a result, the performance of the learners in the essays reflected three categories: the above-average, average, and below-average categories. These categories reflected the level of performance according to the rubric, which captured the different levels of the abilities of the learners. The wide spectrum of abilities of the learners was reflected in the data that was analysed according to the three objectives directed by three research questions.

Discussion is organized and presented around the study objectives, which are aligned to the research questions. This, in essence, was to establish the usage of verbs by selected grade 7 learners. The three guiding questions were:

- How do Grade 7 English First Additional Language learners use verbs in their argumentative essays?



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- What type of verbs are commonly chosen by Grade 7 learners in their argumentative essays?
- How appropriate are the verbs used by Grade 7 learners in their argumentative essays?

## 5.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this section, findings on the key themes that emerged from data analysis are discussed. As per the preceding chapter, the outlined main themes are as follows:

**Key theme 1:** Mismatch between the subject and the verb

**Key theme 2:** Ambiguity/Vagueness

**Key theme 3:** Modal used with inflected verbs

**Key theme 4:** Inappropriate Vocabulary

**Key theme 5:** Mismatch of verbs to tone and intent

**Key theme 6:** Mismatch of Verbs on the basis of contextual relevance

**Key theme 7**: Confused words

### 5.2.1 THEME 1: MISMATCH BETWEEN THE SUBJECT AND THE VERB

The first theme that emerged from the findings had to do with the mismatch between the subject and the verb. These syntactic errors were common among the participants classified as the below-average level category. These entailed a lack of agreement between the subject and the verb. The overt errors in line with this observation were even on plural subjects marked by plural marker(s), which ideally should be followed by an uninflected verb. Learners at this grade level are expected to identify and categorise subjects in terms of categories: common nouns, collective nouns, abstract nouns, and proper nouns. They are equally expected to understand the mechanics of plural formations with specific nouns changing the spelling to mark the plural nouns as irregular nouns. The use of suffix(es) as a plural marker is considered to be quite elementary;



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hence, the observation of subject-verb agreement may not necessarily be difficult to observe in a simple sentence. A study by Abdullah (2021) found that common subject-verb agreement errors were found to be the highest level of usage and paragraph construction. These included the use of verbs with quantifiers that do not indicate the exact number of items. Kay (2023). Similarly, a study by Benati (2022) established that observing subject-verb agreement on sentences with verbs preceded by abstract nouns and rarely used nouns has always posed difficulties to learners, either with a poor background, minimal exposure target language, and also as a result of wrong input Mohebbi (2021).

### 5.2.2 THEME 2: AMBIGUITY/VAGUENESS

There are several factors that contribute to sentential ambiguity. This aspect of semantics is closely intertwined with the unintelligibility of expressions, which in some studies is often identified as vagueness, clumsy Alswlaiman (2021), utterances Gadalla, & Shiels (2023), or unintelligible expressions Hughes, King., Gamarel, Geronimus, Panagiotou., & Hughto, (2022). The previous chapter on findings identified this type of semantic anomaly, which could be attributable to the usage of verbs by a specific category of selected participants.

The ambiguous, vague, and unintelligible expressions in the findings had to do with the incorrect placement of parts of speech in a sentence. The basic syntactic sequencing in a simple sentence takes the form of SVO structure, with the subject preferably preceding the verb and the object following the verb as the recipient of the action Davidson, Kathryn, and Deanna Gagne( 2022). The excerpt**:** ***"an app which people watch videos people dancing***." was noted under this theme as one of the examples of an ambiguous expression resulting to unintelligibility.

The first misplacement is the incorrect use of two consecutive nouns that, in this context, lacked the requisite illocutionary modifying force. In the identified sample, the nouns "videos" and "people" are examples of nouns that are used incorrectly and erroneously. On the basis of how they are used, they may be interpreted differently. The first



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misinterpretation could mean that the plural noun “videos” is modifying the noun “people.” The second possible cause of misinterpretation is the absence of the requisite preposition that should show the relationship between the subject and the verb. When corrected, this could read like: "An app where people watch videos of others dancing. Paraphrased differently, the sentence: An app where users can watch dance videos from people around the world. It could be another expanded version of the same sentence, and yet convey the same meaning. Previous studies on semantic ambiguity identified parallel contributing factors. For example, when the overall meaning is unclear due to vague or abstract terms (Wang & Qin, 2022.; Ogihara.2023) as in the sentence: *He gave her cat food*." The analysis indicated that it is not clear whether she was given food meant for the cat or whether it was her cat that was given the food Nilsson,., Hellryd, & Kjell, (2022). In a different setting, a study by Chin (2023). identified Pronoun Reference Ambiguity as one of the common contributors to vague expressions presented by nonnative speakers of English. In the example: John told Mark he was late." It is not clear as to who was late—John or Mark? And this has been identified as an example of pronoun reference ambiguity

**Goodall, G. (2023)**

The example below, as in Al-khawaldeh (2021) , illustrates how meaning changes with the change of punctuation conventions:

*Let’s eat, Grandma!" vs. "Let’s eat Grandma!"*

This example from Alyeksyeyeva , Kaptiurova & Orlova,(2021) shows the impact of punctuation on meaning.

In the first sentence, there is an imperative verb phrase that is separated by a comma from the noun grandma. This is followed by an exclamation mark “!”, helping in setting the tone of the utterance or the speaker's impatience with the grandma. However, the second comparative example is presented as if the speaker is making an invitation that grandma should be eaten. Omission of punctuation when compared to the preceding example is the primary cause of semantic ambiguity in the second version of the pair.



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### 5.2.3Theme 3: MODAL USED WITH INFLECTED VERBS

Modals often work hand in hand with verbs. They are used to convey ability, possibility, command, and or determination Parker (2021) . For instance, the modal 'can' in the sentence: "It can be really cold in winter." suggests possibility; on the other hand, "can" in the sentence, "you can leave tomorrow," suggests permission, while "can" in the sentence "*Can you help me with this?* suggests a request.

As per the excerpt from the chapter on findings, the sentence "***Twitter can take a photo***" reflects two anomalies. The first one is the use of a double subject: Twitter and the pronoun it" in a simple sentence. The verb after the modal can is presented in a past tense, which makes the sentence syntactically and semantically incorrect. Syntactic incorrectness in this context is a result of the use of a double subject, while semantic errors arise as a result of an incorrect past tense marker "took." A study by Degrave (2022). highlighted some common examples of modal verbs preceded by a modal. These include changing the tense of the verb after a modal, as in:

*If they played well, they could won the game* Liu (2024).

Inserting an auxiliary verb (have) after the modal (could) separates the verb *won* from the modal, which addresses the problem of inflecting a verb (won) after an immediate modal (could) so that it would read: If they played well, they could have won the game.

### 5.2.4 THEME 4: INAPPROPRIATE VOCABULARY

Formalities observed when deciding on the appropriateness of the verb as used in argumentative essays are well documented in the National Curriculum Statement guidelines. In line with the nature of the study's central enquiry, teaching learners how to use verbs for their explicit functionalities, like strengthening or weakening claims, and signalling opinion versus fact, is considered one of the central skills in argumentative essay writing (NCS, 2011). At this level, learners who are able to present strong claims



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augmented with supporting evidence are considered competent or above average, while those who present strong claims without augmenting or supporting may be considered below average. The following excerpts, as presented in the previous chapter, demonstrate correct choice of verbs with reasonable demonstration of the writer's voice:

> *Social media **affects** our attention …constantly **bombarded** by....*
> *Children **are influenced** by other children on social media*
> *Social media **help** children during homework. It also **help** to support peoples dreams.*

The excerpts also demonstrate the correct choice of verbs that not only indicate the writer's opinions. They equally express participants' feelings about the causal effect of social media, with instances of negative affect and positive affect identified.

Conversely, random selection of verbs may not affect the semantic quality of the sentence; instead, they are also more likely to limit the writer's persuasive stance. A study by source (year) indicates strange anomalies where novice writers use action verbs where abstract verbs are more suited, as in the examples below:

> **Incorrect**: *I **run** the idea that school uniforms are good.*
>
> **Correct:** *I support the idea that school uniforms are good* Ansar., Shepard & Gottfried (2022).

It is clear, as per the example above, that *running* is a verb denoting a perceptible physical action**.** However, the verb support, being an abstract verb, is more appropriate since it also conveys perceptual attitude.

The above examples also may also serve as a good example of a mismatch of verbs to tone and intent. While it is grammatically correct for one to say: I am running behind the idea, it is important to note the fact that in the excerpt above, run is used in its uninflected lexical form, which in this context does not convey the appropriate tone as well as the intent.



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### 5.2.5 THEME 5: CONFUSED WORDS

Literature on why emerging writers, like primary school-aged learners, confuse words is substantial and widely documented. This ranges from inevitable issues of poor cognitive developmental stage, which may not be properly developed to process abstract thinking Sarasua (2021), to lack of exposure to formal writing Sari & Agustina, (2022) , and overgeneralization of rules Seddik, M. (2023). Similarly, factors like confusion between similar words were attributed to psychosocial linguistic factors like limited vocabulary and or possible mother tongue interference Putri (2021).

As per the excerpts below from the previous chapter, it is interesting to note that some of the above-mentioned factors could be considered as the main cause.

*Children **see** television.*

*Children **look** TV most of the time.*

The choice of the verb see in the first sentence is inappropriate. Similarly, look at the second sentence, which is also not appropriate. In both sentences, the verb watch would be appropriate since the verb is active and intentional compared to the latter, which are passive and unintentional Lenth, Russell (2025).

## 5.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the interpretation of the findings. The main finding is that argumentative writing is an engaging academic activity that requires a number of competencies. The performance reflected that Grade 7 learners are not performing at the same level in essay writing. The verbs they use are varied across the performance levels, with the below average scoring lowest level and the above average category recording the refined choice of verbs in argumentative writing. The three objectives of the research were investigated, and the document analysis focusing on verbs revealed the fact that



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vocabulary is central to argumentative essay writing and proficiency in a language in general.



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# CHAPTER 6

## SUMMARY, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6. 1. INTRODUCTION

This research focused on the Grade 7 learners' use of argumentative verbs in argumentative writing. The research was guided by three research questions focusing on the learners' use of verbs, the common verbs used, and the appropriateness of the verbs they use. An argumentative essay is a special writing task that allows learners to express their ideas and, in so doing, demonstrate not only their views regarding a topic but also use their vocabulary to convince the readers about their stance on an issue. Grade 7 is the exit Grade into secondary level, so learners should be ready to handle high school language tasks, especially in English First Additional Language. Essay writing is a demanding task that requires planning, drafting, editing, and writing of the final draft. In an argument, learners are expected to demonstrate the skill of structuring the argument so that there is an introduction, body, and conclusion. In the body, the learner is supposed to agree or disagree with the topic, but also refute some of the opposing claims.

The verb is one such indicator of language users' proficiency. In argumentative writing, verbs express the writer's views, and the reasons given are expressed using verbs. As a result, there are verbs to show agreement or disagreement, to persuade, show possibility, or doubt. Essays are to be assessed using an analytic rubric, which allows the teacher to assess a number of attributes and therefore, strike a semblance of fairness and inclusivity. In other words, there is an attempt to minimize bias towards only one aspect.

In this research, the sample was 36 argumentative essays that were sampled purposively and assessed using an analytic rubric. The rubric focused on planning, content, grammar, verbs and vocabulary, and structure.



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## 6.2. SUMMARY

This study comprises six chapters, which are summarized below with a few pointers to outline the salient features of each chapter. In the process, a holistic view of the research is offered. The first chapter offers the introduction to the research and research protocol, which is amplified by the chapters that follow it.

### 6.2.1SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

The summary of the chapters is given below.

**Chapter One**

This chapter introduces the study and outlines the background to the study and the rationale behind the study. It also offers the statement of the problem, aim, and objectives of the study, as well as the research questions that the research seeks to answer, and the research design. Terms critical to the study are explained and contextualised. It gives an overview of the research, with the main thrust of outlining the roadmap to be followed.

**Chapter Two**

This chapter presents literature relevant to the study. The main thrust of the chapter is to situate the study within the current scholarly thought. The theoretical framework is outlined to explain the theories that underpin the study. The research also discussed literature relevant to the study of verbs with a view to identifying the prevailing literature, situating this study, and assessing its relevance.

**Chapter Three**

The chapter specifies the research design to be adopted. The qualitative design used for this research was discussed, outlining the population, sample, data collection, data analysis, ethical, and trustworthiness considerations.



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**Chapter Four**

In this chapter, the qualitative data gathered from the participants of the study from the essays are analysed using a thematic approach. The findings are presented in both narrative form and graphically using tables. The analysis is guided by the three objectives of the research.

**Chapter Five**

This chapter interprets the findings being guided by the theoretical framework and the relevant literature regarding the themes that emerged in Chapter Four.

**Chapter Six**

This chapter provides a summary of the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations

### 6.2.2 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The research focused on the use of verbs by Grade 7 learners in essay writing. Essay writing was the ideal task to assess language competency in writing. Writing is both complex and involving. It calls for many skills such as organization, critical thinking, and display of the learners ' exposure to the language and genre.

The research sought to answer three pertinent research questions focusing on verb use, type, and appropriateness of the verbs used in argumentative writing.

**The key findings were:**

Grade 7 learners use a variety of verbs, the majority of which are weak verbs, which do not succinctly bring out the argument.

The types of verbs used ranged from those verbs used to state a point to those that showed discriminating responses in tone and intent.



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There was a high density of inappropriate use of verbs in the below-average performance category.

Vocabulary is limited for the majority of the learners. This explains why the arguments are weak and one-sided with little or no evidence.

The majority of the Grade 7 learners use verbs to state points without vigorous scrutiny or support for the propositions.

## 6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

### 6.3.1 Proposed Recommendations to Curriculum Advisors

It is recommended that the English FAL Curriculum advisors should give more support to subject teachers to develop argumentative writing skills of learners through organized debates within and between schools. The rationale is that speaking complements writing and the acquisition of the language. It also builds learners' confidence. Teachers need support in this regard. Some of the essays were too low for the Grade level. There were essays in which learners could barely construct a single correct sentence in English. The Curriculum Advisors may have to intensify monitoring of the curriculum to assist schools in dealing with such cases of inadequacies.

### 6.3.2 Proposed Recommendations to GET EFAL Phase Teachers

It is recommended that the GET Phase English FAL teachers should help learners increase their vocabulary through reading and having debate sessions during lessons. Exposure to a wide range of grade-level vocabulary helps learners acquire and use the target language. Classrooms should be language-rich with relevant reading material such as short stories. Learners should be offered more opportunities to develop critical thinking. Exposure to news and newspapers broadens learners' knowledge about various topics in their environment. Scaffolding strategies where teachers use a model argument to help



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learners develop their own argument can help learners acquire not only vocabulary but also the art of argumentative writing.

Teachers are advised to give feedback on learners' extended writing so that learners are aware of the correct use of the language.

### 6.3.3 Proposed Recommendations to learners

Learners should be encouraged to write often to express their views with the aim to convincing the reader to buy their view. Frequent writing is encouraged for learners to practice expressing their views and self-correct.

### 6.3.4 Proposed Recommendations to the community and parents

Parental involvement is a prerequisite for the success of the learners. Parents should also supervise their children at home and even at school to check if adequate work is being done. Parents should always be in contact with the school and the subject teacher to co-supervise the learners. Parents can engage in arguments with their children in order to develop their children's competence. They should provide appropriate reading material to increase exposure to the language and increase the vocabulary of the learners.

## 6.4 CONCLUSION

Grade 7 English First Additional Language learners use a variety of verbs in argumentative writing. They use these verbs to express their stance, tone, and intent. The research found that the majority of the essays relied on weak verbs, which did not result in a vigorous argument. The mismatch between subject and verb was common in essays from the below-average category. While Grade 7 learners know about the genre, the majority of them still make errors in the use of verbs. The findings point to a great need to equip learners with both vocabulary and knowledge about the features of the genre. Essay writing is a complex but necessary task that affords learners an opportunity to showcase their linguistic repertoire. This also explains why an analytic rubric was used to assess a wide range of the essays attributes. The recommendations are suggestions whose



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implementation depends on a number of other modalities, such as the availability of resources and the requisite skills. Verbs are indispensable in articulating one's views, as is vocabulary in general. The development of proficiency in a language is multifaceted and not a once-off event. Constant exposure to and practice in the target language are influential in the acquisition and improvement of proficiency in a language. Learners, teachers, and parents have a role to play in this regard.



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## APPENDIX A: RUBRIC FOR MARKING ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY. GRADE 7 (20 MARKS)

| ASPECT | Excellent ( 5 Marks) | Good (4 Marks) | Satisfactory (3marks) | Needs improvement ( I-2 Marks) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Content<br><br>(5 Marks) | The response is interesting and catches the reader's attention. There are valid facts , and personal voice. It exceeds expectations. Highly engaging, original response | The response is interesting. An effort has been made to be original. The topic is handled creatively/ convincingly./ shows creativity and good response. | The response is relevant to the topic and reads fairly well. Some creativity but lacking engagement | The response irrelevant but the learner has got the idea of an argument. Some responses may be totally irrelevant. | |
| Grammar<br><br>and punctuation<br><br>(5 Marks) | No grammar errors or spelling, punctuation errors | Few minor errors that do not affect meaning. The response reads very well. | Some errors that slightly affect understanding. Little awareness of correct use of some language structures. | Many errors that make comprehension difficult. | |



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| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Argumentative<br><br>Verbs, and<br><br>Vocabulary<br><br>(5 Marks) | Rich and varied vocabulary used effectively. Some expressions may exceed expectations. Use of discourse markers.<br><br>The urge to persuade the reader is evident. | Good word choice with some variety. Verbs used reflect conviction. | Simple vocabulary with limited variety. | Basic words with frequent repetition, and not effective in conveying the idea. | |
| Organization ,Structure<br><br>And planning (5 Marks) | The essay is well organized into an introduction development, plot and ending. The ideas are well connected and the essays flows very well.<br><br>Learner uses the plan to inform their drafting and expand on the planning creativity. | Clear introduction, body, conclusion and logical flow of ideas. Perfect punctuation. Learner uses some ideas from their planning | Good structure with minor lapses in flow. Learners attempts to use the plan | Some organization but may be unclear in some parts. Poor structures, ideas difficult to follow/ little or no creativity.<br><br>Planning is irrelevant. | |



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## APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

**Research Title:**

**The usage of verbs in argumentative essays: A case of selected Grade 7 English First Additional Language learners in Mvudi Circuit, Vhembe District, Limpopo Province Researcher**

**Details:**

**Name** : Mrs O Nyarhi

**Institution** : University of Venda

**Contact Information** : nyarhiolgah1@gmail.com

: 071 273 0887

**Introduction:**

You are being invited to sign the consent on behalf of your child to take part in a research study. Before you allow her to participate, it is important that you understand why the research is being conducted and what the participation will involve. Please take the time to read this information carefully. Do not hesitate to contact the researcher if you have any questions.

**Purpose of the Study:**

**The purpose of this study is to explore** the usage of verbs by Grade 7 English First Additional Language Learners in their argumentative essays.

**Why have learners been invited to participate?**



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Learners have been selected because of the performance , above average , average and below average, which is a simple criteria of ratings per school from the previous grade which is Grade 6.[ Mvudi Circuit, Vhembe East District].

**What Will Participation Involve?**

If parents agree for their children to participate, they will write an argumentative essay and the researcher will give them a topic to write about. Learners will write the essay in the presence of the researcher. Parents have the right of not allowing their children to participate without any consequences.

**What Are the Possible Benefits of Taking Part?**

By participating, learner`s contributions can help to inform educational practices, more especially English teachers to come up with more strategies on how they can teach learners to write essays using verbs in arguments. The findings from this study may assist teachers and learners.

**Are There Any Risks or Discomforts Involved?**

There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study. Learners will only write the essay during normal school hours wherein the staff members will be around.

**Will My Information Be Confidential?**

Yes, confidentiality is a priority. All information provided will be kept strictly confidential. The responses will be anonymized, meaning any identifying information will be removed or altered. Data will only be accessible to the research team and securely stored according to ethical guidelines. The identity will not be disclosed in any reports or publications that result from this study.

**Do The learners Have to Take Part in full force?**



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No, participation is voluntary. If the parent the learner to participate, you are free to withdraw them at any time without giving a reason, and there will be no consequences for doing so or if the learner doesn't want to participate, it is still fine.

**What Will Happen to the Results of the Study?**

The findings from this study will be shared through academic publications, presentations, and reports. The results may also be shared with the district educational office to inform local educational practices. All results will be reported in a way that maintains the anonymity of all participants.

**Contact for Further Information**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study , please feel free to contact **Olgah Nyarhi** at **071 273 0887 or 015 962 6294**. You may also reach out to my email: ***nyarhiolgah1@gmail.com*****.**

Thank you for considering to allow your child to participate in this study.

**Consent**

By agreeing to participate, you are confirming that:

- You have read and understood the information provided.
- You have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- You voluntarily agree to take part in the study.

…… ……..

**Participant Signature** **Date**



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# APPENDIX C: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE FROM THE UNIVERSITY

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

NAME OF RESEARCHER/INVESTIGATOR:
**Mrs O Nyarhi**

STUDENT NO:
18022834

PROJECT TITLE: **The usage of verbs in argumentative essays: A case of selected Grade 7 English First Additional Language learners in Mvudi Circuit, Vhembe District, Limpopo Province.**

ETHICAL CLEARANCE NO: **FHSSE/24/EMS/41/0901**

SUPERVISORS/ CO-RESEARCHERS/ CO-INVESTIGATORS

| NAME | INSTITUTION & DEPARTMENT | ROLE |
|---|---|---|
| Dr TE Sikitime | UNIVEN, English, Media Studies and Linguistics | Supervisor |
| Prof EK Klu | UNIVEN, English, Media Studies and Linguistics | Co-Supervisor |
| Mrs O Nyarhi | UNIVEN, English, Media Studies and Linguistics | Investigator -Student |

Type: Masters Research
Risk: *Minimal risk to humans, animals, or environment (Category 2)*
Approval Period: January 2025 – January 2026

The Research Ethics Social Science Committee (RESSC) hereby approves your project as indicated above.

General Conditions
While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following.

- The project leader (principal investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the REC:
  - Annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project.
  - Within 48hrs in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
  - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the REC. Would there be deviated from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date; a new application must be made to the REC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the REC retains the right to:
  - Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project,
  - To ask further questions; Seek additional information; Require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
  - withdraw or postpone approval if:
  - Any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected.
  - It becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the REC or that information has been false or misrepresented.
  - The required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
  - New institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.

ISSUED BY:
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA, RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
Date Considered: January 2025

Name of the RESSC Chairperson of the Committee..... Prof M. Mwale-Manjoro

Signature.....

University of Venda
PRIVATE BAG X5050, THOHOYANDOU, 0950, LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA
TELEPHONE (015) 962 8304/8313 FAX (015) 962 0060
*"A quality driven, financially sustainable, rural-based Comprehensive University"*

UNIVERS OF VENDA
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
2025 -01- 09
Private Bag X5050



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# APPENDIX D: ETHICAL CLEARENCE CERTIFICATE FROM LIMPOPO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**CONFIDENTIAL**

LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

Office of the Premier

Research and Development Directorate

Private Bag X9483, Polokwane, 0700, South Africa

Tel: (015) 230 9910, Email: mokobij@premier.limpopo.gov.za

**LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL RESEARCH ETHICS**

**COMMITTEE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**REVIEW DATE: 28 MAY 2025**

**PROJECT NUMBER: LPREC/90/2025: PG**

**SUBJECT: THE USAGE OF VERBS IN ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS: A CASE OF SELECTED GRADE 7 ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN MVUDI CIRCUIT, VHEMBE EAST DISTRICT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

**RESEARCHER: O NYARHI**

Acting Chairperson: Dr. MM Maebane

Acting chairperson: Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee

The Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee (LPREC) is registered with National Health Research Council (NHREC) Registration Number **REC-111513-038.**

**Note:**

i. **This study is categorized as a Low Risk Level in accordance with risk level descriptors as enshrined in LPREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**

ii. **Should there be any amendment to the approved research proposal; the researcher(s) must re-submit the proposal to the ethics committee for review prior data collection.**

iii. **The researcher(s) must provide annual reporting to the committee as well as the relevant department and also provide the department with the final report/thesis.**

iv. **The researchers will be required to make presentations of the study findings and recommendations at the Provincial Research Conference/Departmental Research Day.**

v. **The ethical clearance certificate is valid for 12 months. Should the need to extend the period for data collection arise then the researcher should renew the certificate through LPREC secretariat. PLEASE QUOTE THE PROJECT NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.**



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## APPENDIX E: APPROVAL LETTER FROM LIMPOPO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

CONFIDENTIAL

Ref: 2/2/2 Enq: Makola MC Tel No: 015 290 9448 E-mail:MakolaMC@edu.limpopo.gov.za

NYAHI O
P/Bag X5050
THOHOYANDOU
0950

nyarhiolgah1@gmail.com

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH.**

1. The above bear's reference.

2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to undertake research titled: **"THE USAGE OF VERBS IN ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS: A CASE OF SELECTED GRADE 7 ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN MVUDI CIRCUIT, VHEMBE EAST DISTRICT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE"** has been approved

3. The following conditions should be considered:

3.1 The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.

3.2 Arrangements should be made with the Circuit Office and the School concerned.

3.3 The conduct of research should not in any how disrupt the academic programmes at the school(s).

3.4 The research should not be conducted during the time of Examinations, especially in the fourth term.

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: NYAHI O Page 1

Cnr 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X 9489, Polokwane, 0700
Tel:015 290 7600/ 7702 Fax 086 218 0560

*The heartland of Southern Africa-development is about people*



© University of Venda

3.5 During the study, applicable research ethics should be adhered to; in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected and treated with dignity).

3.6 Upon completion of the research, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with the Department.

4 Additionally, you are expected to produce this letter at School(s)/Office(s) where you intend to conduct your research as evidence that permission has been granted for access to the research site(s).

5 The Department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your investigation.

Best wishes.

**MC Makola PhD**

13/06/2025
**Date**

**Molope NM**
**Acting DDG: CORPORATE SERVICES**

18/06/2025
**Date**



Cnr 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X 9489, Polokwane, 0700
Tel:015 290 7600/ 7702 Fax 086 218 0560



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## APPENDIX F: REQUEST FOR PERMISION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH TO MVUDI CIRCUIT

LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
VHEMBE DISTRICT

REF NO: 14/7/R
ENQ: MATHIVHA E
TEL: 081 276 2592

MVUDI CIRCUIT
PRIVATE BAG x2166
SIBASA
0970
25 JUNE 2025

**TO: NYARI OLGAH**

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

1. The above matter refers.
2. Our office received your request for permission to conduct research in our primary schools.
3. This office has no objection as long as you don't disrupt lessons during school time.
4. Wishing you the best in all your endeavours for the completion of your studies.

Mavhila
**CIRCUIT MANAGER**

25.06.2025
**DATE/STAMP**

MVUDI CURCUIT
VHEMBE EAST DISTRICT
DEPARTMENTAL DATE STAMP
25 -06- 2025
TEL: 015 963 1895
P/BAG X2166 SIBASA 0970
LIMPOPO DEPT. OF EDUCATION



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## APPENDIX G: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH IN MVUDI SELECTED SCHOOLS

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH

PO Box 118

ELIM Hospital

0960

23 June 2025

Mvudi circuit

Thohoyandou, 0950

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH IN YOUR AREA

This letter serves to request for permission to conduct study entitled: The usage of verbs in argumentative essays: A CASE OF SELECTED Grade 7 English First Additional Language learners in MVUDI CIRCUIT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE.I hereby formally request permission to carry out the above study in Mvudi Circuit area particularly in Thulamela Municipality for the *Master's degree of language and teaching* in the school of Human and Social Sciences at the University of Venda.

The purpose of the study is to investigates: The usage of verbs in argumentative essays: A CASE OF SELECTED Grade 7 English First Additional Language learners, in MVUDI CIRCUIT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE. This study is quite significant because the findings will be used not only for academic qualifications but can also be used to develop interventions and to help learners to write argumentative essays using verbs in the GET phase. Hoping that my request will be granted. For more enquiries contact MRS NYARHI OLGAH at (071 273 0887)

Kindest regards

Nyarhi Olgah

MVUDI CURCUIT
VHEMBE EAST DISTRICT
DEPARTMENTAL DATE STAMP
23 -06- 2025
TEL: 015 963 1895
P/BAG X2166 SIBASA 0970
LIMPOPO DEPT. OF EDUCATION



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# APPENDIX H: PROOF OF REGISTRATION

University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

## PROOF OF REGISTRATION
### To Whom It May Concern

06-Feb-2025

It is hereby confirmed that the under mentioned person is a registered student at University of Venda PRODI41.

**Student Number:** 18022834
**Student ID Number:** 7505270728083
**Name:** OLGAH NYARHI
**Registered for Period:** 06-Jan-2025 - 31-Dec-2025
**Study Level:** 2ND YEAR
**Qualification:** HSMELS MA IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDIES
**Offering Type :** MASTERS (SUCCESIVE) FULL TIME

| Subject | Description | Qual. | Class Group | Exam Year | Exam Month | Registration Date | Cancel Date | Stats Credits | | Amount |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ENG6300 | H3 MASTERS STUDENTS DISSERTATION 6300 | HSMELS | A | 2025 | 11 | 06-Feb-2025 | | 0.334 | | 19640.00 |
| | | | | | | | | | Subtotal: | 19640.00 |
| | | | | | | | Credit Total: | 0.334 | Total: | 19640.00 |

Outstanding Balance: 26505.85

***NB. The costs reflected in this document apply only to the current academic year's registration and do not constitute a financial statement of account. Registration fees, SRC levies, and residence costs are not included here but will appear on the financial statement of account.***

DR. J.J BALOYI
UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA
UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR
06-Feb-2025
P/BAG X5050, THOHOYANDOU, 0950

University Road, Thohoyandou, Limpopo, Private Bag x5050, Thohoyandou, 0950, Limpopo, South Africa
**Tel:** +27 15 962 8000, **Fax:** +27 962 4759, **Email:** info@univen.ac.za **Web:** www.univen.ac.za



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## APPENDIX I: CERTIFCATE FROM THE EDITOR

**11/08/2025**

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

**Editing and Proofreading Report for Nyarhi Olgah (18022834)**

This letter serves to confirm that Muandi Onpoint Language Services has proofread and edited a master's dissertation by Olgah Nyarhi (18022834) from the University of Venda, titled: *The Usage Of Verbs In Argumentative Essays: A Case Of Selected Grade 7 English First Additional Language Learners In Mvudi Circuit, Vhembe East District, Limpopo Province*

**The submission was** carefully read through, focusing on the formulation of ideas, word choice, syntactic correctness, and conventions.

The recommended suggestions were highlighted.

Yours Sincerely

Muandi Onpoint Language Services

Tel.: 0675794813

E-mail: Muanditrading@gmail.com



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