

**EXPLORING A GENRE-BASED PEDAGOGY IN THE TEACHING OF  
WRITING EXPLANATION TEXTS IN A GRADE 11 ESL  
CLASSROOM: AN ACTION RESEARCH CASE STUDY**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis reports on an action research case study into the use of a genre-based approach (GBA) in teaching the writing of explanation texts to Grade 11 learners in Ohangwena Region, Namibia. Knowledge of how to write different genres is a requirement of the Namibian curriculum, and in particular the Grade 11-12 English Second Language [ESL] syllabus.

The study aimed to improve my pedagogic practice in the teaching of genre as an English Second Language [ESL] teacher. It also aimed to further develop my Grade 11 learners' academic language proficiency in genre writing. I employed two action research [AR] cycles. The first cycle was aimed at establishing learners' baseline proficiencies with regards to writing explanation texts. The second was then aimed at strengthening the weaknesses I identified in my first cycle. Theoretically informed by the genre and socio-constructivism theories, and following the recommended stages of the genre pedagogy cycle, I designed a GBA lesson unit comprising seven lessons. The lessons spanned a two week period. I used formative assessment to assess my learners' activities during each lesson using marking rubrics designed in line with the structural and linguistic conventions of explanation texts.

Data sources include document evidence from my learners' pre- and post- instruction written works, my written reflections on the teaching/learning process from my research journal, my learners' written reflections on each lesson, and the whole class closing discussion.

The data revealed that, prior to the GBA intervention, while my Grade 11 learners possessed some skill in writing shorter explanations for content subjects; they lacked deep knowledge for so doing in ESL. The post GBA intervention data revealed that, by interacting with texts and working collaboratively in unpacking the features of the genre, learners were able to develop a more critical awareness of the generic and linguistic features of written explanation texts. The study concludes that learners' genre writing skills can be strengthened through using a GBA approach in which they are immersed in the relevant text features and provided with appropriate assistance and feedback.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Thirdly, I thank my parents, my siblings and my son Simon ‘*Mickey*’ Nekondo for affording me enough time away from home to concentrate on finishing this research.

A special thanks to my brother, Volkwin Nekondo, and to Mr Simon Andjamba (*Oluzizi World of Commerce*) for your financial contributions to this study.

Finally, I would thank my family, friends, colleagues and fellow MEd students for ELT, Science and Maths (Class of 2016). All of you that made contributions in one way or another to this study, all I can say is: “Together we have made it. Keep doing it for others and may God bless you all abundantly”.

## DEDICATIONS

I dedicate this thesis to my late grandmother *Meekulu* Ida “Shimuna” Alweendo, whom I mourned at a distance and did not attend her burial because of this study’s commitments. Although she is no more, the ethos and moral values she taught me are indelible in my mind. I love you *Meekulu* and continue Resting in Peace.

## **DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

I LINUS VAAKOHAMBO NEKONDO, student number g13N6679, declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own work and has not been previously submitted for a degree in any other university. Where I have drawn on the words or ideas of others, these have been acknowledged using complete references according to the guidelines provided by Rhodes University's Education Department.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Register continua.....	9
Figure 2: Cummins' BICS and CALP quadrants.....	11
Figure 3: The iceberg representation of language proficiency.....	12
Figure 4: Action Research cycles.....	35
Figure 5: Genre pedagogy cycle.....	36
Figure 6: The genre cycle as embedded in the action research cycle.....	37
Figure 7: A genre-writing language proficiency learning continuum.....	38
Figure 8: A group activity instruction.....	41

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Features of formality and the problems they create for writers.....	13
Table 2: Sub-genres of explanation.....	17
Table 3: Continuous Assessment and Examination marks.....	19
Table 4: A broad outline of the lessons of the GBA intervention.....	39
Table 5: The pre- and post-test instruction.....	41
Table 6: Generic features' marking rubric.....	43
Table 7: Linguistic features' marking rubric.....	44
Table 8: The change -score results.....	54
Table 9: Summary of Lesson One.....	55
Table 10: Summary of Lesson Two.....	63
Table 11: Summary of Lesson Three.....	66
Table 12: Learners' scoring of the generic features' activity.....	66
Table 13: Summary of Lesson Four.....	69
Table 14: Learners' scoring of the linguistic features' activity.....	71
Table 15: Summary of Lesson Five.....	74
Table 16: Summary of Lesson Six.....	78
Table 17: Summary of Lesson Seven.....	82

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AR:	Action Research
BICS:	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CA:	Continuous Assessment
CALP:	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
ELPP:	English Language Proficiency Programme
ELT:	English Language Teaching
ESL:	English as a Second Language
GBA:	Genre Based Approach
GPC:	Genre Pedagogic Cycle
L2:	Second Language
LCE:	Learner Centred Education
LoLT:	Language of Learning and Teaching
MBESC:	Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture
MEC:	Ministry of Education and Culture
MKO:	More Knowledgeable Other
MoE:	Ministry of Education
NIED:	National Institute for Educational Development
PC:	Personal Computer
PCK:	Pedagogic Content Knowledge
SFL:	Systemic Function Linguistic
TCE:	Teacher Centred Education
UNAM:	University of Namibia
ZPD:	Zone of Proximal Development

## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ii
DEDICATIONS.....	iii
DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY .....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES .....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
LIST OF ACRONYMS .....	vi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Context of the study.....	1
1.3 Research goal.....	4
1.4 Research site .....	5
1.5 Overview of the thesis .....	6
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	7
2.1 Introduction.....	7
2.2 The teaching of genres.....	7
2.2.1 BICS and CALP.....	10
2.2.2 Genre definition .....	13
2.3 Types of genres.....	14
2.4 Explanation as a genre .....	15
2.4.1 Sub-genres of the explanation genre.....	16
2.4.2 Schematic structure of explanations .....	17
2.4.3 Language features of explanations.....	18
2.5 Challenges facing the teaching of genres.....	18
2.5.1 Policy issues.....	18
2.5.2 Teachers Pedagogical Content Knowledge.....	21
2.5.3 Teacher Centred Education and Learner Centred Education .....	22
2.6 Genre-based approach as a possible pedagogy in developing learners' writing skills .....	24
2.6.1 A whole text approach for learning to write .....	26
2.6.2 Scaffolding for learning to write.....	27
2.6.3 Formative assessment for learning to write .....	28
2.7 Conclusion .....	31

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY .....	32
3.1 Introduction.....	32
3.2 Sampling .....	32
3.3 Research design .....	33
3.4 Action Research.....	34
3.5 The GBA lesson unit.....	38
3.5.1 Lesson One: Needs analysis.....	39
3.5.2 Lesson Two: Setting context.....	41
3.5.3 Lesson Three: Deconstruction of generic features.....	42
3.5.4 Lesson Four: Deconstruction of language features.....	43
3.5.5 Lesson Five: Joint construction.....	44
3.5.6 Lesson Six: Individual construction.....	45
3.5.7 Lesson Seven: Feedback and evaluation.....	46
3.6 Data collection .....	47
3.6.1 Document analysis .....	47
3.6.1.1 Learners' pre- and post- activities.....	47
3.6.1.2 Learners' daily lesson reflections .....	48
3.6.2 My personal research journal.....	48
3.6.3 Whole class closing discussion .....	49
3.7 Data analysis and discussion.....	49
3.8 Validity and trustworthiness .....	50
3.9 Ethical issues.....	51
3.9.1 Obtaining permission .....	51
3.9.2 Participants' privacy .....	51
3.10 Conclusions.....	52
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION & ANALYSIS .....	53
4.1 Introduction.....	53
4.2 Selection of the lesson unit .....	53
4.3 The pre- and post-test results .....	54
4.4 Lesson One.....	55
4.4.1 What went well? .....	55
4.4.2 What did not go well? .....	60
4.4.3 What needed to be improved if the lesson were to be taught in the future? .....	61
4.5 Lesson Two.....	62

4.5.1 What went well? .....	63
4.5.2 What did not go well? .....	64
4.5.3 What needed to be improved if the lesson were to be taught in the future? .....	65
4.6 Lesson Three .....	65
4.6.1 What went well? .....	66
4.6.2 What did not go well? .....	68
4.6.3 What needed to be improved if the lesson were to be taught in the future? .....	68
4.7 Lesson Four .....	69
4.7.1 What went well? .....	70
4.7.2 What did not go well? .....	73
4.7.3 What needed to be improved if the lesson were to be taught in the future? .....	74
4.8 Lesson Five .....	74
4.8.1 What went well? .....	74
4.8.2 What did not go well? .....	77
4.8.3 What needed to be improved if the lesson were to be taught in the future? .....	77
4.9 Lesson Six .....	78
4.9.1 What went well? .....	78
4.9.2 What did not go well? .....	81
4.9.3 What needed to be improved if the lesson were to be taught in the future? .....	82
4.10 Lesson Seven .....	82
4.10.1 What went well? .....	82
4.10.2 What did not go well? .....	83
4.10.3 What needed to be improved if the lesson were to be taught in the future? .....	83
4.11 Conclusion .....	83
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION .....	84
5.1 Introduction .....	84
5.2 Positive aspects for the GBA intervention .....	84
5.2.1 GBA enhances meaningful writing .....	84
5.2.2 GBA contribution to my pedagogic knowledge .....	85
5.2.3 GBA contribution to my learners' English development and genre writing proficiency .....	86
5.2.4 Social interaction in GBA promotes learning .....	87
5.3 Limitations of the study .....	87
5.4 Significance of the study .....	88
5.5 Suggestions for further research .....	88

5.6 Conclusion .....	89
REFERENCES .....	90
APPENDICES .....	98
Appendix 1 – Permission letters and Responses.....	98
Appendix 1a Access letter to the Regional Director .....	98
Appendix 1b Access letter to the Principal.....	99
Appendix 1c Response from the Director .....	100
Appendix 1d Response from the Principal .....	101
Appendix 2 – The GBA Lesson Unit.....	102
Appendix 2a Lesson One.....	102
Appendix 2b Lesson Two.....	103
Appendix 2c Lesson Three.....	104
Appendix 2d Lesson Four.....	105
Appendix 2e Lesson Five .....	106
Appendix 2f Lesson Six.....	107
Appendix 3 – Handouts for readings and activities .....	108
Appendix 3a Handout with parts of a flushing toilet.....	108
Appendix 3b Reading titled “How do we breathe?”.....	109
Appendix 3c Readings on “How taps work”.....	110
Appendix 3d A picture of a cross section of a flower.....	111
Appendix 3e A fishbone diagram.....	112
Appendix 3f A chain-sequence diagram.....	113
Appendix 3g A handout of the cohesive devices.....	114
Appendix 4 –Marking rubrics and Reflection sheets.....	115
Appendix 4a Namibia. MoE genre writings’ marking rubric.....	115
Appendix 4b Explanation texts marking rubric .....	116
Appendix 4c A copy of learners’ lesson evaluation sheet.....	117
Appendix 5 - Samples of learners’ written works.....	119
Appendix 5a Synopsis of learners’ group explanations .....	119
Appendix 5b Copies of learners’ pre-test explanations .....	120
Appendix 5c Copies of learners’ post-test explanations.....	123

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This action research study has a primary and a secondary aim, with the former being to improve my pedagogic practice in the teaching of genre as an English Second Language [ESL] teacher, and the latter being to help develop my Grade 11 learners' academic language proficiency in relation to the writing of genres. To do that, I employed a genre-based approach (GBA) to teach my Grade 11 ESL learners more about writing explanation texts. The study was based in a secondary school in Namibia's Ohangwena Region. In this chapter, first I describe the context of the study within the broader field of genre teaching. I then give my motivation for the research, I discuss the research goal, and I present an overview of the structure of the thesis.

### **1.2 Context of the study**

In ESL teaching and learning in the Namibian context, genre writing is one of the explicit and obligatory objectives of the Namibian National Curriculum for Basic Education [Namibia. NCBE] (2010). The broad curriculum document states that in order for Namibia to be a knowledge-based country "learners must be able to work with and write well a wide variety of texts" (Namibia. NCBE, 2010, p. 11). Similarly, the Namibia Ministry of Education's [MoE] ESL syllabus for Grades 11-12 (2010) indicates that "developing and organising ideas into coherent sentences, paragraphs and whole texts" are skills learners should manage (p. 11).

According to Scarcella (2003, p. 6) learners need a sufficient level of academic English in order to be able to produce coherent written texts and "for long-term academic success". Although academic English is seen as important, some believe it is not being given enough attention in schools (Baker, 2001; Gersten & Baker, 2000; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000). Similarly, Scarcella (2003) shares that there is vast literature on academic English, particularly on English for academic and specific purposes, but this is focused on mainly at university level. She recommends that serious consideration be given to teaching academic English in formal schooling, noting that, "without knowledge of academic English, individuals may be excluded from participation in educated society and prevented from transforming it" (Scarcella, 2003, p. 7).

Low academic language proficiency in Namibia is a recurring trend. Bradley (2001), for example, carried out research that revealed that 69% of Namibian college students did not have the required level of English understanding to cope effectively with the study courses. Similarly, research carried out by Töttemeyer (2010) in her capacity as a lecturer at the University of Namibia [UNAM] shares that the performance in English of the first year students has remained low over years. In that light she states that, “the cream of the Namibian senior secondary school leavers can testify to the poor English writing proficiency of the majority” (Töttemeyer, 2010, p. 50). Linking the two researchers to my own experience and capacity as an ESL teacher with four years of experience teaching ESL to Grades 11 and 12, I can confirm that the same situation of low academic language proficiency exists. I base such claim on my experience of marking my learners’ examination scripts (which comprise three genres in most cases). There, I mostly encounter many learners leaving the continuous writing section incompletely attempted. Moreover, where a learner has attempted to write a continuous piece, it is frequently repetitive and lacking in appropriate cohesive devices.

It is against that background that I was prompted to explore a teaching approach that would improve my genre teaching skills and thereby help to improve also my learners’ academic English proficiency in writing coherently and meaningfully. In the study, I specifically chose *writing* as the language skill to focus on because it is deemed “a formidable task for students” (Hyland, 1992, p. 14). Skilled writing requires learners to generate and organise ideas and make appropriate grammatical and vocabulary choices in order to produce intelligible text (Richard & Renandya, 2002; Luu, 2011). The particular aspect of GBA I chose to trial with my learners was the structural and linguistic features of writing explanation texts.

Considering the level of academic language proficiency demonstrated by my learners as indicated above, I acknowledge such weaknesses may be linked to my own knowledge and pedagogic practices brought about my professional training background. In my view my initial professional training did not equip me well as regards aspects of teaching genres. Scarcella (2003, p. 3) highlighted that “many public school teachers do not even know what academic English is, let alone what approaches are effective in teaching it”. Similarly, Kajinga (2006, p. 61) asserted that “teachers are shaped by their personal experiences, their instruction and formal knowledge” and this includes the knowledge of ‘what’ content to be taught, the ‘how’ methodologies to employ, as well as the ‘why’ the rationale for teaching certain skills, and/or content.

Personally, on the ‘what’ aspects, I was trained on how to plan lessons on each of the four language skills, reading, writing, speaking and listening (Namibia. NCBE, 2010); as well as on how to integrate them when teaching. However, I was not well versed with the conventions of specific genres such as the structural and language features of explanation that this study covers (see Section 2.4.2 and 2.4.3). I was also not familiarised with the ‘why’ aspects of teaching certain or all genres, for instance the overarching role of explanations (explained in Section 2.4) which would have expanded my horizons on the academic significance of genres in general. In addition, I was not familiarised with the ‘how’ aspects of genre, for instance employing a GBA pedagogy. I came to learn this through my Education Honours studies in English Language Teaching [ELT] during the 2014 academic year. The void with regards to pedagogical aspects found me either employing an intuitive and ad hoc pedagogy that I deemed fit for each situation when teaching the writing of genres, or replicating the teaching approaches I was exposed to during my formal schooling. Apart from weaknesses in my own pedagogic practice, my learners’ weaknesses in genre writing might also be attributed to their incorrect usage of the conversational language and academic language in relation to different purposes and audiences. Cummins (2008) calls such registers Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). These are two distinct language registers that students have to master in the Language of Learning and Teaching [LoLT] in order to succeed academically (Cummins, 2000) further discussed in Chapter 2. These two language registers are part of this study though the focus, in relation to my teaching of ‘explanation’ as the text type, is more inclined to CALP. It is however worth sharing that both BICS and CALP have a place in ESL academic contexts, and so, in this study, are not contending but are rather complementing features of language proficiency. Their application is, nevertheless, determined by text ‘audience’ and ‘purpose’ as alluded to earlier.

The overarching role of English in helping content subjects is highlighted by Gibbons (2003): “For students who are learning ESL in an English-medium school, English is both a target and a medium of education [because] they are not only learning English as a subject but are learning through it as well” (p. 247). This means that ESL plays a vital role in assisting learners with their content-subjects: “In ... content-based classrooms, the construction of curriculum knowledge needs to progress hand-in-hand with the development of English” (Gibbons, 2003, p. 247). It is that significance that this study highlights. A GBA study based on the teaching of explanation has already been conducted by a Namibian teacher, and that was Helena Josua (2009). Josua is a teacher of science. However, whereas Josua’s study was based specifically

on understanding how to help her learners produce good science texts, the goal of my study was to explore the efficacy of a GBA in the teaching of explanation texts from the perspective of ESL as a subject. My doing this as the learners' *language* teacher, particularly at Grade 11-12, I see it as very important because in addition to ESL, learners in those grades have to study six compulsory subjects of which four (Geography, Biology, History and Agriculture) in particular require the use of explanation texts. Hence, employing a genre-based pedagogy in teaching explanation texts from the language point of view may make it easier for my learners to write meaningfully not just in the English classroom, but could cater for other subjects which are hosts to questions requiring explanation texts.

### **1.3 Research goal**

The goal of this study was to explore the efficacy of the GBA in teaching the conventions (generic and linguistic features) of writing explanation texts to my Grade 11 ESL learners.

Knowledge of such features is important both in ESL which, as explained earlier, serves the roles of LoLT; school subject in its own right, and as a support to the learning (In English) of the other content subjects. English is also one of Namibia's compulsory *passing* subjects<sup>1</sup>.

This AR research study is thus very significant in the sense that it affords me the chance to reflect critically on and attempt to transform my pedagogic practice in relation to my ESL teaching of genre writing at secondary school level. The research is also significant because it carries within it the possibility for enhancing my learners' overall academic language proficiency as they become more familiar with the structural and linguistic conventions of written explanation texts. In so doing, it responds to the challenge highlighted by Scarcella (2003), namely, that academic English is given insufficient attention in formal schooling of which my own (secondary school) level of teaching responsibility is part.

The questions guiding the study are as follow:

**Main research question:** In what ways does employing a GBA in the teaching of writing explanation texts improve my pedagogic practices in the teaching of academic genre writing as an ESL teacher?

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<sup>1</sup>By 'passing subject' I mean that in terms of policy regulation, learners *must* pass it in order to be promoted to the next grade, or, for Grade 12 learners, to institutions of higher learning.

**Secondary research question:** In what ways will teaching the writing of explanation texts through a GBA strengthen my learners' academic English language development and genre writing proficiency?

#### **1.4 Research site**

This study, as noted earlier, was carried out with my Grade 11 ESL learners at the school where I am employed as a permanent teacher. The school is located in a rural village in Ohangwena Region of Namibia. It was established in 1978. Below I briefly profile some aspects of the school:

- It provides for learners Grades 8 – 12;
- The average class size is 40 learners;
- Because of Namibia's Ministerial Universal Free Secondary Education, no learners in the school pay the school fund;
- It is a boarding school, with 70% of learners residing in the hostel;
- There are three heads of department; one for science, one for languages and one for commerce department;
- It has a mixture of novice and veteran teachers on its staff;
- Five ESL teachers (2 males, 3 females) are responsible for teaching Grade 11 – 12;
- Our policy is that the same ESL teacher is responsible for starting with his/her class of ESL learners in Grade 11 and for taking them through to Grade 12;
- All teachers are native speakers of *Oshiwambo*, the commonly spoken language in the region, and an umbrella of the *Oshikwanyama* dialect/language that all learners study as their First Language in the school.

## 1.5 Overview of the thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters

In Chapter One I introduce the contextual background around current practices to teaching genre, I state the research goal and questions, and I provide a brief description of the research site.

In Chapter Two I review literature on the teaching of genres, share the types of genres normally taught in schools, and justify why explanation texts are the focus of this study. I also outline the sub-types and structures of explanation texts, and share some background detail on GBAs and how these informed my study.

In Chapter Three, the methodology chapter, I describe the research design and the methods I used to collect data. I also share how I chose the participants, how I analysed data, and how I addressed validity and ethical issues.

In Chapter Four, the data analysis chapter, I present and analyse the data of the explanation text lesson unit. I highlight the positive and negative aspects of each lesson within the unit, as well as make suggestions for ongoing improvement to my teaching strategy. I also describe and discuss the ‘pre-test’ and ‘post-test’ results<sup>2</sup>, and present an overall discussion of my findings based on my personal critical reflections and on my learners’ post-lesson reflections for the two cycles of the intervention.

In Chapter Five I conclude the thesis by identifying the lessons learnt and conclusions drawn from my experience and my learners’ experiences of this GBA intervention. I also make recommendations and suggestions here for further research.

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<sup>2</sup>The terms ‘pre-test’ and ‘post-test’ have a quantitative sound, yet AR is essentially qualitative. Hence, I have tried throughout to discuss the quantitative data in qualitative ways in order to give meaning to percentage scores mentioned in the study.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

As I explained in Chapter One, the goal of this AR study was to employ a genre-based pedagogy in the teaching of writing explanation texts. In so doing, my goal was to improve my pedagogic practice in the teaching of genres, plus improve my learners' academic language proficiency as regards writing explanation texts (both in relation to their ESL studies *and* their work in their other content subjects).

This chapter reviews literature on the teaching of genres, identifies the types of genres normally taught in schools, and justifies the selection of explanation text to be the focus of the study. It also differentiates explanation texts from justifications and procedural texts, outlines the sub-genres of explanation texts, and discusses the generic and linguistic features of explanation texts.

An explanation of some of the challenges to genre teaching is also undertaken. Such explanation seeks to illuminate the approach to teaching genre from the level of the whole text, through to scaffolding for writing genres (in this case the genre of 'explanation') through to strategies for providing learners with formative assessment; all of which inform GBAs in general, and the use of a GBA for this study in particular.

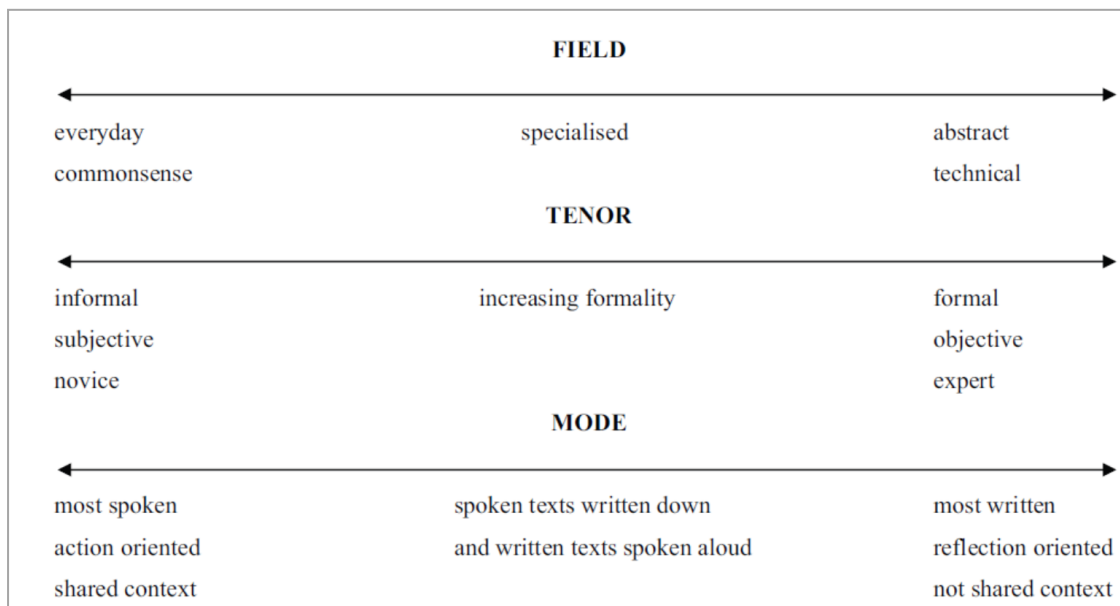
### 2.2 The teaching of genres

Genre teaching is seen as a means of enhancing learners' meaning making potential (Hyland, 2003; Awases, 2015), through being able to write or speak meaningfully for a particular audience, context and purpose (Paltridge, 2002). As I noted in the introductory chapter, in Namibia, genre writing is one of the objectives of the curriculum document. However, I have noted that most of my learners are not proficient enough in written discourse. It is hence the requirements of the curriculum and the weaknesses I have spotted in my learners that gave rise to this study. Hyland (1992, p. 14) noted that: "producing a successful piece of written work, obviously involves competence in a number of connected spheres". To be specific, it requires "knowledge of the topic, knowledge of the audience and ... knowledge of the language conventions" (Applebee, cited in Hyland, 1992, p. 14).

Writing of meaningful texts is one of the cornerstones of “*high literacy* [italics added] which ventures beyond reading simple texts with superficial understanding or writing in a manner that is merely comprehensible” (Langer, 2002, p. 10). Similarly, the teaching of writing, particularly in ESL contexts, is imperative because it affords learners opportunities to learn not just the “content knowledge, [but also] ways of structuring ideas, and ways of communicating with others” (Langer, 2002, p. 10). These aspects, according to Graff (1987, cited in Langer, 2002) are the “the ‘marks’ of an educated person” (p. 10). Langer (2002) proposes what she terms ‘an effective English classroom’: a classroom in which “students are learning to write, talk about, and extract meaning from knowledge and experience in the ways that school, work, and life demand in the twenty-first century” (p. 9). For this study, that classroom resembles a GBA classroom in which language is learnt in context as opposed to some more traditional ways of treating the teaching of grammar and meaning in isolation from one another (see Section 2.6).

Instead of setting up genre teaching as something separate from literacy development, Daley (2003) sees the production of coherent texts through the use of a GBA as correlating with literacy development. In her view, “literacy involves the ability to read and write ... to understand information, and to express ideas both concretely and abstractly” (Daley, 2003, p. 33). As Schleppegrell and Colombi note, “proficiency in reading and writing are especially related to long-term academic success” (2002, p. 10). In this study, while I am aware that reading almost always goes alongside writing in the teaching and learning of genres, I have focused primarily on the skill of writing, for as Scarcella (2003, p. 8) posited, “as children develop, the nature of academic English comes to rely more heavily on the features of written discourse”. The same is applicable in the Namibian context. At Grade 11-12, the majority of subjects including ESL have written examinations. Specifically in ESL, learners have to write two or three genres including articles, letters and essays for each examination. My learners’ written continuous pieces I mark mostly have flaws either in structure or language usage, indicating a lack of what Merlose (1995, cited in Derewianka, 2003) called “a full grasp of the intricacies” of coherent genre writing (p. 139). It also fits what Bhatia (2008, p. 161) describes that “although many students ... can handle textual features of some genres ... they are still unaware of the ‘discursive realities’ ...” about writing genres. In Bhatia’s view the blame in that regard should be on language teachers because they do not seem always to take genre teaching seriously, but rather treat genres as “simply textual artifacts” [*sic*] (Bhatia, 2008, p. 161).

Other than high literacy, genre teaching and learning is also deemed a means of alerting learners to what level of formality is appropriate for a particular purpose and audience. As Christie and Martin (1997) explain, language use in genres is influenced by the social purpose; which is a description of how a text unfolds in terms of what the writers or speakers want to achieve. Alike, Derewianka and Jones (2010, p. 7) believe appropriate usage of language is influenced by three factors; “the field (what is going on), the tenor (who is involved) and the mode (what channel of communication)”. The abovementioned factors are better depicted in the register continua by Dare (2010, p. 20) below.



**Figure 1: Register continua**

(Adapted from Dare, 2010, p. 20)

For this study, such factors have also played a role as follows. In terms of field, I planned an intervention on writing explanation texts with topics varied (see Table 4) and covering aspects or topics learners encounter in ESL and in other content subjects. For tenor, I strived to enhance my learners’ knowledge of language usage in terms of producing explanations for a ‘wider’ unknown audience requiring what Dare (2010, p. 20) calls “academic objectivity and disciplinary expertise”. In other words, I wanted to make them aim for a more ‘formal’ tenor. For mode, I required learners to produce explanation texts in *written* form (as opposed to spoken form) which are free from external cues such as body gestures and facial expressions. The usage of language depending on register can also be categorised into Basic Interpersonal

Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 2008), as discussed below.

### 2.2.1 BICS and CALP

Also known as conversational and academic language (Gee, 1990), or playground and classroom language (Gibbons, 1991), the two are described as two distinct language registers that students have to master in a language, particularly in the LoLT, in order to succeed academically (Cummins, 2000). They are the basis of Cummins's (1984) work stemming from the problem that so many second language (L2) speakers were wrongly labelled as deficient. That resulted in many L2 learners being placed on slow streams and special education programs because it was assumed that they could not use language satisfactorily. Cummins's work therefore classified the level of formality/cognitive challenge into categories of BICS and CALP, pointing out, as did Christie and Martin (1997) that different styles of language usage depend on the audience and purpose.

BICS is described as relating "to the phonological, syntactic and lexical skills necessary to function in everyday interpersonal contexts" (May, Hill & Tiakiwai, 2004, p. 50). Calling it playground language, Gibbons (1991, p. 3) describes BICS as, "language which enables children to make friends, join in games and take part in a variety of day-to-day activities that develop and maintain social contacts". In her views "without it a child is isolated from the normal social life of the playground" (Gibbons, 1991, p. 3). She further elaborated its implications for education, warning that;

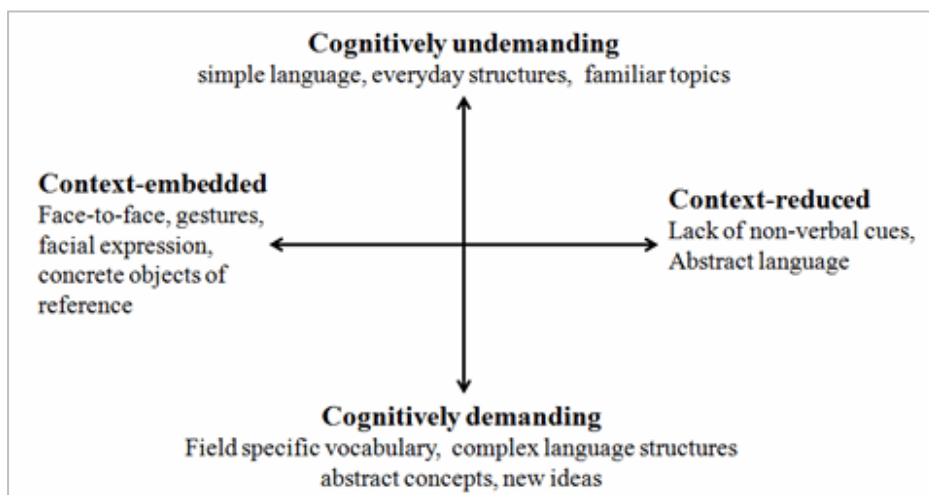
[playground language] ... is not the language associated with learning in mathematics or social studies, or science [*sic*], ... [because] it does not offer children the opportunity to use such language as : *if we increase the angle by 5 degrees, we could cut the circumference into equal parts* ... nor does it normally require the language associated with the higher order thinking skills, such as hypothesising, evaluating, inferring, generalising, predicting or classifying ... which are language functions which are related to learning and the development of cognition. (Gibbons, 1991, p. 3).

Gibbons's views on BICS appear to match my learners' position with regards to writing genres, for they [learners] *can* write in English, but not in the conventions or style that is academically appropriate.

CALP, on the other hand, is described as the language that teachers mainly use in classrooms and the language learners are expected to use for more formal pieces of writing (Gibbons,

1991). Its acquisition and learning thereof is most commonly “acquired in social institutions beyond the family (e.g. school, business, religious, and cultural contexts) and involves acquisition of specialised vocabulary and functions of language appropriate to those settings” (Cummins, 2008, p. 75). CALP is therefore important in the context of this study which focused on the genre of formal explanation texts occurring in most areas of the curriculum, and without which “a child’s potential in academic areas cannot be realised” (Gibbons, 1991, p.3).

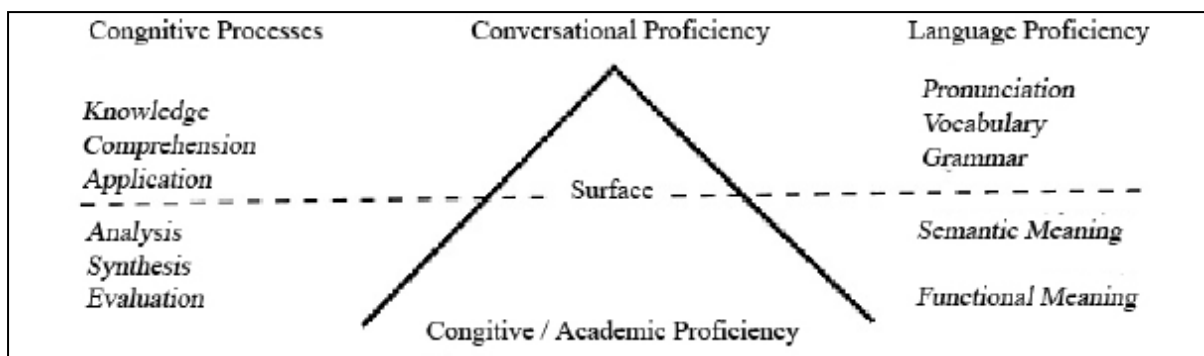
The relationship between BICS and CALP is better depicted in terms of what Cummins (2008) calls context embedded and context reduced and cognitively demanding and cognitively undemanding as depicted in Figure 2 below. It is worth sharing that, such depiction resembles language usage in terms of mode, field and tenor (Derewianka & Jones, 2010; Dare, 2010) which informed this study as explained above.



**Figure 2: Cummins’ BICS and CALP quadrants**

*(Cummins, 1984, reproduced in Al Shlowiy, 2012, unpagged)*

Other than the matrix above, BICS and CALP are also frequently presented as an iceberg (Figure 3). Such representation highlights key terminologies in cognitive demand and language proficiency in relation to surface and deep understanding.



**Figure 3: The iceberg representation of language proficiency**

*(Cummins 1984, reproduced in Baker, 2001, p. 170)*

Whereas Cummins (1984) distinguishes the two registers with BICS being surface language usage and CALP being deep language usage, it is worth sharing that BICS and CALP are not contending aspects, but are rather complementing each other depending on the register. For instance, in this study, if I were to explain how to flush a toilet informally to a friend, I would use a different style than if I were writing it for a plumber’s manual; with the former being more of BICS and the latter being more CALP oriented. That language usage better describes how the setting (context) plays a major role in the choice of words to be used and the need for or absence of clues as depicted in the quadrants (Figure 2) above; with the horizontal axis representing a continuum from context embedded to context reduced and the vertical axis representing the degree of cognitive involvement in the task (Al-Shlowiy, 2012).

For the written discourse, van der Mescht (2017) shared some features that distinguish formal academic language (CALP) from conversational language (BICS) and the potential problems that academic language poses for writers (See Table 1 below).

In essence and for this study, van der Mescht’s (2017) features resemble the usage of language for a wider audience, free from external concrete cues such as gesture and facial expression as explained above. Furthermore, and considering the fact that one of the aims of this study is to enhance my learners’ academic language proficiency in writing explanation texts, it is those features of academic writing that form the basis for the linguistic features’ marking rubric (Table 7) that I used in marking the learners’ work. I did all that drawing from Cummins’s conclusion that “once the second language students have attained academic fluency they usually catch, and sometimes pass their peers in academic achievement” (2008, p. 54).

<b>Formal written (Academic)</b>	<b>Potential problems (for writers)</b>
Writer is not present. May withdraw by using passive or third person to disguise the 'agent'.	The passive voice is a problematic construction
Formal word choices. Uses large technical vocabulary.	Need to learn a lot of vocabulary, especially at the beginning of courses.
Information given in full.	Long sentences get out of control. Giving information in full can mean repetition.
Ideas are grouped in sections and paragraphs.	Making choices about structure. What evidence is most suitable?
The text has a flow of meaning and leads the reader to a conclusion/point.	Keeping the thread going through a long text takes planning.
Connections between ideas are explicit and clear.	Care to use links – conjunctions, pronouns, references etc. Linking words must be accurate.

**Table 1: Features of formality and the problems they create for writers**

*(Adapted from van der Mescht, 2017, pp. 4-5)*

### **2.2.2 Genre definition**

Genre is defined as “different types of texts that enact various types of social context” (Martin & Rose, 2003, p. 7). Derewianka (2003) defines genre as “texts that share the same social purpose and have many of the same features” (p. 1); such as “form, content, and style” (Culham, 2016, p. 555). They can be in different modes: written, oral, visual, or a combination (Luu, 2011) and can be either “formal or informal, standard or non-standard” (Wu & Dong, 2009, p. 77). According to Grabe and Kaplan (1996, p. 206) genres have “identifiable formal properties, identifiable purposes, and a complete structure (that is, a beginning, middle and end)”.

Genres are also sometimes referred to as text-types (Derewianka, 2003). The two terms are often used interchangeably in the literature. In the Namibian context, ‘genres or text-types’ are also known as ‘continuous writing pieces’. Hence, in this study, I have tended to use the three terms ‘genre, text type and continuous writing pieces’ interchangeably also when I refer to the texts that my learners write.

### 2.3 Types of genres

There are a number of different genres, and each genre is distinguished from the other by the purpose, function, structure, language patterns and register (Josua, 2009; Derewianka & Jones, 2010). As indicated earlier, Grabe and Kaplan (1996) indicated “the beginning, middle and end” (p. 206) as what constitute the complete structure of a genre. Such structural features are also known as the introduction, body and conclusion (Luu, 2011). Explanation text which is used to “explain why or how something happens” is one of the six main genres identified by Derewianka. The others are:

- Narratives: tells a story, usually to entertain
- Recounts: (personal, factual) tell what happened
- Information reports: provide factual information
- Instructions: tells the listeners or readers what to do
- Expository texts: present or argue a point

(Derewianka, 1990, cited in Luu, 2011, p. 122)

The learning of new genres and exposing of learners to a variety of different texts is “a means of extending the learner’s meaning-making potential” (Derewianka, 2003, p. 143) and of “countering student unfamiliarity with both written or spoken genres” (Al-Jawi, 2011, p. 6). Similarly, and in a conclusion drawn in a Namibian-based research, Josua (2009, p. 20) posits that “getting learners used to different genres serves an important role of linking writing to learning”. However, there is no mentioning in the ESL curriculum document of explanation texts as one of the continuous pieces of writing learners should be taught both in the Namibian curriculum and the Grade 11-12 ESL syllabus. Such absence could lead to ESL teachers not teaching it which would be problematic since English is the LoLT and explanation text is such a common text type in other curriculum areas. It is such absence that necessitates the need for this research to explore the teaching of writing explanation texts through a GBA.

Genre teaching is not bound to ESL only but can be done in other subjects as well, such as Josua (2009) did for Life Science. It is however cautioned that genre teaching should not be merely left to content subject teachers because they may not always have the same language insights as language teachers do. Snow (2005, p. 695) share that, “content teaching in school setting is not necessarily good language teaching”. In the same vein, Lyster and Ranta (1997)

share that genre teaching requires highlighting certain ‘salient features’ that content subjects may not often address. In this study therefore, in my capacity as an ESL teacher, I aimed to highlighting the salient features with regards to the teaching of explanation texts. So doing from the ESL perspective better defines my role in relation to the content subject teachers as indicated in the Namibia Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture [MEAC] (2015) that:

English has an interdisciplinary role in supporting learning across the curriculum. As English is the medium of instruction, conscious attention to language will be the concern of all teachers, not only English teachers. English teachers, however, have a special responsibility to assist their colleagues and learners so that they are able to use the language effectively in all subjects (Namibia. MEAC, 2015, p. 1).

It is against that significance of ESL teaching that this study aims to tackle the teaching and learning of explanation texts from the ESL perspective. In the following sections I highlight some of the salient structural and linguistic features of writing explanation text.

## **2.4 Explanation as a genre**

The term *explanation* is defined as “a statement, fact, or situation that tells you why something happened ... [or] a statement or piece of writing that tells you how something works or makes something easier to understand” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 2010, p. 515). As a genre, explanation text is defined as a text which explains how things happen or why things are made, answering the questions ‘how?’ and ‘why?’ (Derewianka, 2004; Lin, 2006). Hadiani (2014, p. 61) posits that the first element of explanation texts is “to communicate how something happens, elaborating steps or any other procedures the process undergoes in certain circumstances”.

Although they mostly address the ‘how’ and ‘why’ aspects; explanations may often be confused with procedural texts and justifications (Wulan, 2012; Josua, 2009). Wulan (2012) differentiates explanations and procedurals by noting that “explanations texts tend to explain ... while a procedure text is intended to instruct how to form or make something” (unpaged). Similarly, Josua (2009), citing Derewianka (1996, p. 23), differentiates between explanation and justification, writing that; “justification attempts to give a simple reason for specific behaviour, and are used for everyday communication purposes” whereas explanation add in depth to knowledge and understanding of phenomena, and mostly used for academic purposes (Josua, 2009). To such, she cites an example of a justification as, “Can you explain why you are late?” (Josua, 2009, p. 23).

The teaching of explanation texts in this study is aimed at covering on a wider spectrum the cognitive and linguistic development of my learners so that they can learn, understand and employ the structural and linguistic features in accordance with the field, tenor and mode (Derewianka & Jones, 2010; Dare, 2010) as discussed in section 2.2. Knowledge of such academic language is not only beneficial in ESL as a subject, but it also helps in other subjects as indicated by Gibbons (1991) that “language functions ... are related to learning and the development of cognition; they occur in all areas of the curriculum, and without them a child's potential in academic areas cannot be realized.” (p. 3).

#### **2.4.1 Sub-genres of the explanation genre**

Martin and Miller (1998, cited in Wellington & Osborne, 2001) indicate that under each major genre there are sub-genres with minor differences in purpose. For the explanation genre, “sequential, causal, cyclical, system and factorial” (Brisk, 2015, p. 216) are the sub-genres. See Table 2 below.

All explanations, regardless of the sub-type, have their significances in different contexts and different subjects. Brisk (2015) expounds that, system and factorial explanations require categorisation and relationships which demand more cognitive skills for children; unlike the other sub-types that require presentation of information in an easy and temporal sequence. The issue of cognitive demand is in line with the BICS and CALP quadrants (Figure 2) which indicates how learners’ academic language proficiency can be enhanced through the consideration of the social purpose and putting the audience into consideration. Hence considering the level of my learners (Grade 11) I focused this study on the systems explanation. The rationale behind my option was simply because system explanations require figuring out the parts involved in the system and the cause and effect, which are part of academic language demonstration as indicated in van der Mescht (2017) (See Table 1). Knowledge of such explanations may benefit learners in knowing how to critically analyse systems for ESL writing, but above all it may assist them in other subjects. For example, that could be writing an explanation text on how a volcano erupts (Geography) or on how blood circulates in the body (Biology). That makes understanding of how to structure explanation texts a cross-curricular-skill imperative for academic excellence in ESL and content subjects.

<b>Types of explanation</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Example</b>
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<b>Sequential</b>	Explains a phenomenon in a linear sequence	How recycled paper is made; how a bill becomes a law;
<b>Causal</b>	Explains a phenomenon in a linear sequence	How a volcano erupts; solar eclipse
<b>Cyclical</b>	Explains phenomena in a cyclical way, where the last step is also the beginning of the cycle	The life cycle of a frog; the water cycle
<b>Systems</b>	Explains how a system works. Includes description of the components and how they relate and interact with each other	How the desert works as an ecosystem; how the branches of government work
<b>Factorial</b>	Explains factors that contribute to an event or outcome.	Factors that create the condition for a tornado; Factors that led to World War II

**Table 2: Sub-genres of explanation**

*(Adapted with modification from Brisk, 2015, p. 216)*

Below, I unpack some of the characteristics of the genre of explanation.

#### **2.4.2 Schematic structure of explanations**

Schematic structure refers to “internal structure or the text organisation ... in terms of the introduction, body and conclusion” (Luu, 2011, p. 122). For the explanations, schematic features include the following as adapted from Luu (2011):

- Title: that prepares and leads the reader to the text, and uses a ‘how’ or ‘why’
- Introduction: comprising a general statement that introduces or identifies the scientific or technical phenomenon and gives the audience a brief introduction to the event or thing
- Body: comprising logically sequenced statements and paragraphs that explain how or why something happens, and shows cause and effects
- Conclusion: comprising an optional concluding statement that ties up the explanation, and may give examples

It is such features that form the basis of the salient features that I unpacked with my learners. Most of all, they [features] form the basis of the generic features' marking rubric (Table 6) and the generic features section in the marking rubric (Appendix 4b).

### **2.4.3 Language features of explanations**

The language features of explanations refer to “linguistic aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, connectors ... that the writers have to use in order to translate information/ideas into a readable text” (Luu, 2011, p. 122). As distinguishing factors, the following are language features of explanations.

- Use of action verbs and simple present tense (timeless present tense) indicating that the actions referred to still happen
- Use of technical terms that are register specific
- Use of passive voice and nominalisation to link the events through cause and effect.
- Use of time conjunctions and connectives to link events and to keep the text flowing

The above features are in line with van der Mescht's (2017) points on knowledge of academic English; and as stated earlier, they form the basis of the linguistic features marking rubric (Table 7) and the language features section in the marking rubric (Appendix 4b).

## **2.5 Challenges facing the teaching of genres**

Although genre teaching is a requirement of the Namibia's NCBE (2010), its teaching is compromised by many factors. Basing on my personal experience, such factors include; voids in the policy documents, and teachers' Pedagogic Content Knowledge (PCK) as regards approaches to teaching, learning and assessment.

### **2.5.1 Policy issues**

The ESL Syllabus for Grades 11 -12 indicates genre writing as a skill that learners need to master. Similarly, a new revised syllabus for Grades 8 – 9, to be implemented in 2017 calls for this. However, neither document indicates explanation as a genre nor even as part of the continuous writing tasks that Namibian learners should be taught, as indicated earlier in section 1.2.

With regards to content, in my capacity as a teacher, and also a recipient of education under the Namibian system, I was not taught the writing of explanations in ESL, be it in Primary, Junior Secondary or Senior Secondary. As indicated earlier, it was through being familiarised with numerous genres during my Honours studies for ELT that I realised the need for exploring the explanation genre. Derewianka (2003, p. 139) points that “it is often a case that only a small handful of genres are taught across the years of schooling, as if they were the only ones that students will encounter”. The absence of explanations as a genre in the ESL syllabus which is a National/Ministerial document might have detrimental consequences because ESL has thematic links to other subjects (Namibia. NCBE, 2010). That means weaknesses arising from the teaching of ESL may adversely affect learners’ excellence in content subjects as well, for they are offered in English as the LoLT. It is against that background that this study focused on the teaching of the explanation genre to cover that void.

As for assessment, the Namibia. NCBE (2010) indicates that continuous assessment [CA] is the integral part of learning. It also specifies the weight of CA in both upper primary (Grades 5 – 7) and Junior Secondary (Grades 8 – 10) as per the table below. Such CA is compulsory and contributes significantly to individual learner’s final marks.

SUBJECTS	GRADE 5		GRADES 6 &7		GRADES 8-10	
	CA	Exam	CA	Exam	CA	Exam
<b>Skills based subjects</b> <i>(languages, Pre-Vocational subjects)</i>	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%
<b>Content subjects</b> <i>(All other subjects)</i>	65%	35%	50%	50%	35%	65%

**Table 3: Continuous Assessment and Examination marks**

*(Adapted from Namibia. NCBE, 2010, p. 34)*

By contrast, nothing is mentioned about CA at Grade 11 – 12 neither the weight nor how it should be carried out at such phase. Furthermore, as a teacher at such grades, there is no practicality of CA implementation at all. Such void creates room for complacency in teachers, particularly in the assessment of continuous writing (genre writing) which requires vast amount of time when it comes to marking continuous written pieces in classes of 40+ learners. It may also lead to ESL teachers keeping assessment for continuous writing at bay, and delivering of writing lessons in a way that makes learners passive listeners.

Keeping of assessment at bay is further exacerbated by the Namibia. NCBE (2010) which postulates that, an internally assessed formal school based examination must be given at the end of Grade 11. The external examination referred to is a summative one, defined as “assessment made at the end of the school year ... of which the result is a single end of year promotion grade” (Namibia. NCBE, 2010, p. 50). Guskey (2003, p. 4) calls summative assessment “a one-shot, do-or-die” assessment that teachers administer not necessarily to shape the teaching and learning but rather for assigning learner grades. This, according to San (2016, p. 137), is “not the right approach for humanitarian system”; and it is counter to the principles outlined in *Towards Education for All* Namibia’s Ministry of Education [MEC] document where the need to ensure that evaluation is based on a “continuous assessment throughout the year rather than on a single major examination” is advocated (1993, p. 61).

Although CA, is needed in schools, it is believed that if too much concentration is to be put in at the expense of teaching learners to know, it may result in “test score pollution”<sup>3</sup> (Ferman, 2008, p. 204). CA may also encourage ‘washback’ [my emphasis] in education (Alderson& Wall, 1993; Moodley, 2015), defined as “the extent to which a test influences teachers and learners to do things they would not otherwise necessarily do” (Messick, 1996, p. 241). That means most of the time teachers may end up assessing learners for the sake of completing the CA sheets but not necessarily to enhance learning through addressing the problems and needs of learners. In that vein, Wiseman (1961, cited in Moodley, 2015, p. 2057) shared that washback “constraints the curriculum [by] narrowing the scope of teaching to those aspects that are most generally tested”. To overcome washback in assessment, Messick (1996, p. 241) proposes ‘optimal washback’ which is a balance between “activities involved in learning the language and activities involved in preparing the test” with a little difference if there is to be any.

As a way to base my teaching on the needs of the learners and keeping track of their progress, this study employed a formative way of assessment, as it is believed to be the appropriate measure to continuously monitor learners’ progress and align teaching approaches to their immediate needs (Heritage, 2007).Formative assessment is defined as “a systemic process to continuously gather evidence about learning” (Heritage, 2007, p. 141). In her views, the collected data is used to identify learners’ current level of learning and understanding, and

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<sup>3</sup> Ferman (2008) defines ‘test score pollution’ as teaching towards ‘an increase in test scores without a parallel rise in the ability in the constructs tested’

helps teachers to adapt lessons and approaches to help learners reach the desired learning goal (Heritage, 2007). She further indicates the elements of formative assessment as: “identifying the gap, feedback, student involvement, and learning progression” (Heritage, 2007, p. 141) which I employed in this study to diagnose individual learners and the whole class weaknesses and strengths in the writing of explanation texts. I did that with the aim to align appropriate teaching and learning pedagogies in terms of the content to deliver and the necessary need for support required in terms of academic language proficiency development for my learners (see description in Chapter 3).

### **2.5.2 Teachers Pedagogical Content Knowledge**

Mullock (2006) defines pedagogical content knowledge [PCK] as “accumulated knowledge about the act of teaching, including goals, procedures, and strategies that form the basis for what teachers do in classroom” (p. 48). To most teachers, such knowledge is mostly influenced by “their pedagogical knowledge (what they know about teaching) [and] their subject matter knowledge (what they know about what they teach)” (Cochran, 1997, p. 100).

The term originates from the work of Shulman (1986) as a proposed “form of formal and specific content knowledge that builds on both subject matter knowledge and knowledge of the pedagogy” (Shulman 1986, cited in Xiaoyan, 2007, p. 85). In Shulman’s view, “it is the integration or the synthesis of teachers' pedagogical knowledge and their subject matter knowledge that comprises pedagogical content knowledge” (Cochran, 1997, p. 100).

It has been argued, however, that teachers’ PCK is informed by their previous school experiences, and what they experienced at university or in college influence practice or play a role in the manner that teachers teach (Bai & Ertmer, 2004; Ertmer, 2005). In the teaching of writing, which is the basis of this study, Culham (2016, p. 553) indicates that its teaching is highly influenced by the teachers’ knowledge of “what to write” and “how to write”, which he terms “two sides of the coin”. Against this background, and as mentioned earlier, my teacher training did not familiarise me with the pedagogical knowledge on ‘the how’ of teaching writing meaningfully to learners. Instead, I was taught how to interpret the objectives and competencies of the syllabus; as well as how to plan lessons addressing the pre-, while-, and post- writing stages. The lack of training on teaching pedagogies finds me employing intuitive and ad hoc approaches, mostly drawn from the way I was taught. O’Sullivan (2003, p. 134) confirms that “in the absence of teacher training, teachers relied on the use of methods that they

had experienced during their own school days”. In this study, I try to challenge such status quo by improving my own pedagogic practices through employing a GBA which I was not familiarised with.

Regarding content knowledge and proficiency in English, Namibia’s main LoLT, Kisting (2011) shares that based on a national English Language Proficiency Programme [ELPP] test administered in 2011, very few teachers in Namibia are fluent in English. He shares that of the 23 000 Namibian teachers who wrote an ELPP test, consisted of a comprehension section, language usage part and a writing category, 22 089 or 98% cannot read, write and speak basics of the official language (Kisting, 2011). An analysis of the results in performance per phase further indicates that 70% of teachers at Secondary Phase (which is the focus of this study), inclusive of English teachers, lack such proficiencies. Kisting (2011, unpagged) therefore concludes that, “there is strong evidence that this low performance of teachers and other educators overall has a negative impact on learners’ performance in English and other subjects”. Such findings match a conclusion drawn by Scarcella (2003) that it is difficult for teachers to teach and assess their learners’ academic English proficiency if they themselves do not have such knowledge.

As a practising teacher, in this study I aimed to employ a GBA as a new teaching approach, to practise the teaching of the conventions of writing explanation texts to my Grade 11 learners, and to then use this to reflect on further ways of improving my pedagogy. In order to do that, I first had to be well versant with the features, which does not only benefit my learners but will also expand my academic English (content knowledge) understanding as a teacher.

### **2.5.3 Teacher Centred Education and Learner Centred Education**

As per the Namibian education ministerial documents, two approaches, namely: Teacher Centred Education [TCE] and Learner Centred Education [LCE] have been identified, with TCE being discouraged whereas LCE is encouraged (Namibia.MEC, 1993; Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture [MBESC], 2003).

TCE is defined as an approach in which a teacher’s role is “to transmit the authoritative knowledge to learners through lecture and notes on the board, while learners listen and receive it with little critical reflection on how it came to be” (Vavrus, Thomas & Bartlett, 2011, p. 25). Du Plessis (2016, p. 140) indicates that “the teacher-centred position focuses on transmission or direct instruction ... and the focus is on memorization (remembering), traditional tests, the

presentation of knowledge by the teacher, the completion of individual tasks ...”. Opponents of this approach indicate that it makes learners passive recipients of information (Brooks & Brooks, 1999), and it is likely to lead to boredom; whereas “rote memorisation and repetition can stifle curiosity” (Namibia. MEC, 1993, p. 34).

In Namibian schools, TCE has been so rife during the apartheid era (Awases, 2015), and after gaining independence on March 21, 1990, the curriculum was restructured. In principle it was required that autonomy be shifted to learners to actively engage in their learning (Namibia. MEC, 1993; Namibia. MoE, 2010). This finds the adoption of LCE, in principle, as “an antidote to the stifling teacher-centred practices” (O’Sullivan, 2004, p. 585); as described in this section.

In my views however, doing away with TCE in totality or assumptions that TCE is an outdated practice may be counterproductive because delivery of lessons requires flexibility. That means there is room for TCE in lesson presentations. Its need, however, is determined by the nature of the lesson which in general determines the roles and level of engagement of both the teacher and the learners. In essence, TCE and LCE should not be viewed as contrasting teaching and learning approaches, but should rather complement each other. Alike, in this study, I was flexible enough to align my teaching in accordance with the nature of the lesson without inclining to or neglecting neither of the two approaches. The evidence thereof can be found in Chapter 3.

LCE is defined as “an approach to teaching and learning in which the teacher puts the needs of the learners at the centre of what they do in class, rather than learners being made to fit whatever needs the teacher decides” (Namibia. MBESC, 2003, p. 7). It involves collaboration among learners (Brooks & Brooks, 1999), and puts them at the centre of their teaching and learning by considering their existing knowledge, skills and understanding of the topic (Namibia. MBESC, 2003), but it also involves collaboration with the teacher. Adejoke (2007) indicates that “teaching using the learner-centred method allows for communicative and interactive process of learning through pair or group work” (unpaged) and involves learning by doing, and self- and peer-assessment (Brandes & Ginnis, 1996; McCombs & Whistler, 1997). Du Plessis (2016, p. 141) states the following elements of LCE: “active learning, guided discovery, focusing on understanding instead of memorization, application of knowledge, alternative forms of assessment, self-assessment, and reflection”. Such elements formed the integral part of the planning of my lesson unit which was the backbone of this study as described in Chapter 3.

Although LCE is a canonised approach in the Namibian education system, it is argued that there are misconceptions between its understanding and its practice (O’Sullivan, 2004; Kasanda et al., 2005; Pomuti, Leczel, Liman, Swarts, & Van Graan, 2005; Nyambe, 2008). On the practical implementation of LCE in Namibia, it was reported in a Namibia National Institute for Educational Development [NIED] document that “since LCE was introduced in 1991 as a foundation policy for the new educational system of Namibia, there have been different understandings of what is meant by learner-centred education and how to put it into practice” (Namibia. NIED, 2003, p. 1). Similarly, in his study aimed at figuring out teachers’ understanding and practices of LCE, Nyambe (2008) discovered what he terms “a disjuncture between teacher educators and their practice of it [LCE]” (p. i). In his views, such disjuncture can be attributed to teachers’ understanding of LCE as he shares that “learner-centred pedagogy was understood as a matter of changing from teacher-centeredness to a learner-centeredness while frame factors, for instance regarding the selection, pacing or sequencing of discourses, still followed the traditional approach” (Nyambe, 2008, p. ii). Pomuti *et al* (2005) share that “teachers are aware of the necessity to incorporate learner-centred principles in their teaching, but they lack the skills to do it” (p. 16). Such lack of skill is made explicit in van Aswegen and Dreyer (2004, cited in Nyambe, 2008, p. 181) who, after observing LCE application in an ESL classroom conclude that;

Teacher educators assume most of the responsibility for determining the learning goals, delivering what they determined to be crucial information, providing feedback when possible, and assessing learning outcomes. ... Students had no input in the decision-making process and they did not get the opportunity to set their own learning goals, make connections between prior knowledge and experience, build pathways for new understanding and continuously modify their behaviour to better achieve those goals.

It is against that background and as indicated earlier that in this study I did not allow the policy documents to dictate on the approach to employ, but I was rather guided by the nature of the lesson. So doing is a total contrast of the problems observed by van Aswegen and Dreyer (2004) and other researcher as explained above.

## **2.6 Genre-based approach as a possible pedagogy in developing learners’ writing skills**

Given the kinds of difficulties identified in the preceding sub-sections, I now look at literature around GBA approaches to the development of learners’ writing skills. Identified as one of the major trends in the new millennium (Rodgers, 2001), GBA is defined as an approach that “focuses on the creation of meaning at the level of the whole text” (Derewianka, 2003, p. 134).

In that vein, Lin (2006, p. 70) shares that “GBA begins with the whole text as the unit in focus rather than sentence, that is, language at the level of discourse, since it is only through whole or complete texts that an act of communication achieves its purposes”. The approach is believed to contribute immensely to giving learners’ writing an appropriate structure because it “places greater emphasis on the relationship between text genres and their contexts” (Hyon, 1996, p. 5). Other than benefiting learners, Hyland (1992, p. 15) believes GBA helps teachers too because “it involves genre analysis that may help teachers with the vocabulary and concepts to explicitly teach the structures and help learners with placing the language at the centre of writing development by allowing shared understanding and explicit guidance (Hyland, 1992, p.16). It is the fore mentioned benefits of GBA that qualifies it as the ‘possible’ suitable approach in this study because in Hyland’s (1992, p. 16) views GBA “does not suffocate innovation and personal expression, but it can provide a methodological environment that develops writing skills and encourages creativity”.

GBA has been trialled and implemented in several countries, including Australia (Burns, 2003; Gibbons, 2003), Vietnam (Luu, 2011), Malaysia (Yap, 2005) and Brunei (Ho, 2009); and it has proved to yield positive results whenever employed. Derewianka and Jones (2010) share their experiences in using a GBA in teaching English in an Australian educational setting. Their findings reveal that by employing GBA in the teaching of meaning and form, their model provided “powerful tools important for identifying curriculum priorities, designing pedagogy, and for assessing learners’ accomplishment and needs” (p. 6). Alike, Swales (1984, cited in Hyland, 1992) employed a GBA in the teaching and learning of narratives and reports genres. He describes the process as having been conducive in a sense that it “promoted more effective negotiations and consultations as well as providing each child with their own individual scaffolding that can be deployed to produce successful texts” (p. 15). He therefore shares that his “students became more critical and perceptive of article introductions” (Hyland, 1992, p. 17). Although the above mentioned researchers shared the advantages of GBA, their researches were conducted in the developed countries and in other genres other than explanations. Hence, their results cannot be generalised to the teaching of genre in the Namibian context in general and to the teaching of explanation texts in particular, hence this study.

In the context of explanation writing, Martinez Lirola (2015) carried out a study using the genre theory as a framework to teach academic writing. Her aim was to help students improve their level of literacy through the study of text types and specific grammatical structures that appear

in such texts. She employed a Systemic Function Linguistic [SFL] genre-based pedagogy informed by Halliday's view of "language as a semiotic system" (Halliday, 1978, cited in Martinez Lirola, 2015, p. 191) which highlights the significance of organising information at the text level, and to see text as a social product reflecting the social context in which it is written. Martinez Lirola's (2015, p. 189) findings reveal that, "exposing students to good models of different text types, paying special attention to explanations, and asking them to write texts based on these models, improves students' texts from the grammatical and textual points of view".

As an emerging approach in Namibia, Josua (2009), as noted earlier, implemented a GBA aimed at developing the writing of explanations in Grade 10 Life Science. Her study explored the teaching of shorter explanations suitable for academic excellence in Life Science at Junior Secondary phase. Her findings reveal that, regardless of the subject area, "learners' writing skills can be improved by implementing suitable teaching strategies" (Josua, 2009, p. i) (here referring to the use of a GBA approach). Although her research was Namibian based and specifically on the teaching of explanation texts (which matches this study), her findings cannot be generalised to the teaching of ESL because the explanations she focused on lacked some generic features such as the title and conclusion, which this study will cover.

Therefore, in attempt to improve my pedagogical skills and enhance my learners' English proficiency development in the writing of explanation texts, I employed a GBA informed by the genre theory's teaching of writing from the level of the whole text, Vygotsky's (1978) socio-constructivism theory of rendering assistance during teaching (writing) and formative assessment for keeping track of learners' progress. The following is an exhaustion of each of the three aspects and how each played out in practice.

### **2.6.1 A whole text approach for learning to write**

Tackling the teaching and learning of genres from the level of the whole text is the major tenet of genre theory; defined as "the study of how language is used within a particular context" (Hyland, 1992, p. 14). It aims "to create meaning at the level of the whole text" (Rose, 2005, p. 145); and it is in contrast to "the more traditional way of teaching writing that uses a bottom-up approach with more attention paid to form (i.e. grammatical correctness) than to meaning". Rose (2005, p. 145) characterises the traditional way of teaching as employing approaches that treat language "as though it were 'bricks-&-mortar', building from smallest to larger units,

from letters to blends to words ... from single words to word groups to sentences”. Such teaching, it has been argued, inhibits learners’ thinking and writing capabilities because it gives insufficient space for learners to understand how layout, audience, purpose and language are significant in meaningful writing, and to understand that texts are written for real purpose and real audiences in the world (Derewianka, 2003).

In his study aimed at developing genre awareness in writing a literary criticism, Ong (2016), carried out a GBA study. His research was conducted in a Teacher Education campus in Malaysia and employed what he termed “the three-step approach ... of the scaffolding principles for the teaching of writing, where students are gradually eased into independent composition ... via observation and guided or joint writing sessions” (Ong, 2016, p. 37). His study concludes that, by teaching students to read and write through a GBA, students reported “a greater level of achievement in secondary and early-tertiary level ..., particularly English Language learners” (Ong, 2016, p. 37). He attributes that success to the deconstruction, joint construction and independent construction which are aspects of the Genre Pedagogic Cycle (GPC), which alike has informed the planning and implementation of the GBA lesson unit (see description in Chapter 3, Section 3.4 and Appendix 2).

### **2.6.2 Scaffolding for learning to write**

Derewianka (2003, p. 143) points out that “genre pedagogy in countries such as Australia is based on a Vygotskian learning theory”. Similarly, Hyland (2007, p. 158) notes that “... genre-based pedagogies employ the ideas of Vygotsky”. He further notes the emphasis in Vygotskian theory on “the notion of scaffolding [which] emphasises the role of interaction with peers and experienced others in moving learners from their existing level of performance, (what they can do now), to a level of ‘potential performance’(what they could do without assistance)...” (Hyland, 2007, p. 158). In Rose’s (2005, p. 142) views scaffolded learning involves “learning taking place in the zone between what learners can do independently and what they can do with support of a teacher”. This zone is called a ‘Zone of Proximal Development’ [ZPD] while the support rendered is called ‘mediation’ (Vygotsky, 1978) or ‘scaffolding’ (a term introduced by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) in light of their reading of Vygotsky’s work). It is however critiqued that, the term scaffolding is widely used in academic terms but there are no specific strategies that can be applied in the classroom to promote it (Anghileri, 2006). Citing examples of scaffolding practices in home and classroom contexts, Anghileri (2006) concludes that most of the researches on scaffolding have been drawn from aspects that do not relate specifically to

the classroom contexts or to specific subjects. That implies that, the overgeneralization of scaffolding as a successful remedy to learning needs to be relooked at.

For this study, as a teacher I sought to provide scaffolding for enhancing my learners' academic English learning as indicated by Cummins (2008). To do that, I planned a GBA intervention which involved me rendering the necessary assistance to my learners, assuming the role of the MKO, as well as learners collaborating as peers. So doing is in line with what Hyland (2007, p. 158) calls "shared consciousness" as well as "borrowed consciousness". These, he explains, refer to "the idea that learners working together learn more effectively than individuals working separately and ... [to] the idea that learners working with knowledgeable others develop greater understanding of tasks and ideas".

Webb (2015) better summarises the issue of collaboration in learning indicating that the most fruitful writing needs to be done in a seemingly slow, endless loop that involves "drafting, reviewing with self and peers, revising and reviewing again and again" (p. 175). He then proposes collaboration in writing classrooms positing that:

A large portion of class is spent engaging in various levels of drafting and brainstorming ... often done in peer groups instead of through lecturer, or in isolation because it is believed that such peer to peer interaction not only improves both writers' and reviewers' reading and composing process, but it also creates more motivation in the students to write well because the writer has a tangible audience to consider and from whom he/she will receive instant feedback (Webb, 2015, p. 175).

In this study, I employed scaffolded learning to keep me abreast in knowing and monitoring my learners' learning in terms of their position of strengths and weaknesses in writing explanatory texts. Such information informed my pedagogic choices in terms of the need to increase or withdraw scaffolding, and so, in the process, "establish a writing environment rather than a grading environment in the classroom" (Hyland, 2007, p. 161).

### **2.6.3 Formative assessment for learning to write**

In GBA, assessment is deemed "an integral aspect of the teaching-learning process and central to students' progress towards increasing control of their writing" (Hyland, 2007, p. 161). In order for that to happen successfully, Hyland (2007, p. 161) suggests "a competency based procedure ... [which] utilises an analytic approach based on the primary traits of the particular genre, ensuring that key features of these texts are clearly specified, taught and used to describe a standard of performance". Alike, Donohue and Erling (2012, p. 211) believe assessment

happens well when there are “diagnostic descriptors” which are discriminatory enough to pinpoint areas of strengths and weaknesses in language use. Airasian (1997) believes assessment should not be restricted to teachers only but should rather involve the learners as well. To that he says “when students are using a performance criterion to review their own or another pupil’s productions or products, they are neither solely assessing nor solely learning; they are using assessment as a means of learning” (Airasian, 1997, p. 236).

The opposite, however, is happening in the current practices to assessment in ESL teaching in Namibian schools. Such can be attributed to the nature of the marking rubrics used to assess written works and the provision of feedback for written works by teachers (as discussed below).

Kepner (1991) defines feedback as “any procedures used to inform a learner whether an instructional response is right or wrong” (p. 141). Ur (1996) defines it as “information that is given to the learner about his/her performance of the learning task, usually with the objective of improving performance” (p. 242). Feedback can be categorised as form feedback (also known as grammar or surface level feedback) and content feedback (Grami, 2005). He defines form feedback as “the type of feedback that looks into issues like spelling, grammar, punctuation”; whereas content feedback, refers to “matters like organisation, choice of vocabularies, rhetoric use of the language, cohesion and coherence, and other more abstract and notional matters of writing” (Grami, 2005, unpagged). Furthermore, he indicates that the terms ‘feedback, comments and correction’ are used interchangeably (Grami, 2005), and the same applies for this study.

Srichanyachon (2012) indicates that, in the context of English language writing courses, feedback is “an essential component” (p. 8). Practically, in Namibian ESL teaching, feedback happens, but mostly with form feedback receiving prominence than content feedback. That manifests itself in most of the learners’ marked works whereby most of the grammatical errors are ‘reddened<sup>4</sup>’ and pinpointed, while little to no comments are made on content. Ur (1996) urges the need for teachers to put into consideration the importance of assessing and providing feedback. He however warns that, although students deserve to know the mistakes they make, “if teachers correct everything then there is a risk that they fail in their role as supportive mentors” (Ur, 1996, p. 242).

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<sup>4</sup> By ‘reddening’ I’m referring to when learners’ work is returned to them shot through with red ballpoint marks.

On content feedback, and from my experience, most comments or remarks teachers give are mostly vague. For example ‘*Good work, keep it up!*’ or ‘*Too limited content*’ or ‘*Too many grammatical errors*’ or ‘*A good command of English, but you did not address all the given prompts*’. Such comments (feedback) may not paint a picture of the aspects that learners addressed satisfactorily, partially or not at all. Hyland (2007) calls such remarks “vague descriptors”, and cites examples as “adequate knowledge of syntax” or “a limited variety of mostly correct sentences” (p. 162). Wingate (2012) indicates that vague feedback provided by teachers may implicitly reflect tutors’ own uncertainty over the aspect being taught; while Jacobs (2005) posits that “it may also reflect a broader uncertainty over the requirements of the essay [text] of which teachers tend to have only ‘tacit’ knowledge” (p. 477).

In Namibia, particularly at Grade 11-12, vague feedback happens, and it may be promoted by the ministerial marking rubric (Appendix 4a). Such rubric has general statements that are not neither descriptive enough nor genre specific. Instead, teachers are expected to read learners’ works (written texts) and indicate “C” for content and “L” for language, and the number of the corresponding column in which the teacher *believes* the learner’s content and language levels respectively fall. Example C3 and L3 is given for a learners’ work that is average. Such rubric is not genre specific, but is rather used to mark all the text-types. It is also not descriptive enough to show learners’ their strengths and weaknesses. Similarly, the representation of categories for learners as C3 and L3 while learners do not neither have the rubrics with them nor have an explanation given prior to marking is counterproductive. That matches Donohue and Elring (2012) views that most of learners’ works are marked without employing ‘diagnostic descriptors’ which are discriminatory enough to pinpoint areas of strengths and weaknesses.

As a contrast, and drawing from Donohue and Elring (2012), in this study, the feedback I provided to my learners was content feedback (explained above). To do that, I designed marking rubrics with ‘diagnostic descriptors’ in terms of explanation texts’ structural, linguistic and the general organisational features (See Appendix 4b). Such rubrics were descriptive enough and a tick had to be put in a box to indicate feedback on what is done well, averagely or not at all. That may offer learners an opportunity to master the features that were explained to them, and receive feedback with a greater confidence (Hyland, 2007). For this study, I did all that because it is through provision of feedback that learners will be able to navigate what they can do on their own and what they can do with MKO, and inform me on the pedagogic choices and the learners’ academic English proficiency development.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

This chapter explored the teaching of genres and the significance it has both in the teaching of ESL and other subjects. It also shared the main genres, the rationale behind choosing the genre of explanation to form the basis of this study, as well as its [explanation] sub-genres. It also shared the structural and linguistic features that writers should be well versant with in order to produce effective explanation texts regardless of the sub-genre. It also highlighted the challenges facing the teaching of genre, as well as distinguished between the two main teaching approaches TCE and LCE and shared the roles each plays in genre teaching as informed by scholars. Finally, it justified why GBA might be the answer to the current challenges facing the teaching of genre writing, and clarified the theoretical underpinnings informing the study in terms of pedagogy and assessment.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the research procedures I have employed in order to achieve the purpose of my research. First, I will share the research design and the paradigm under which it falls. I then justify the suitability of action research to this study and how its cycles informed the study. I will also share the sampling procedures in terms of site, participants and population and the reasons behind that. Furthermore, I will share the planning and implementation of the GBA lesson unit, giving a justification of how each individual lesson of the lesson unit played out in practice and how the whole text approach, scaffolding for learning to write and formative assessment for learning to write manifest themselves in such lessons. I will then briefly describe my data collection techniques and the procedures I followed in analysing the data I collected. I will also address the validity and trustworthiness of the data reported and finally shares the ethical issues.

### 3.2 Sampling

Bertram and Christiansen (2014, p. 59) define sampling as involving “making decisions about which people, settings, events or behaviours to include in the study”. Since this is a small scale research [half-thesis], it involved a single Grade 11 classroom, which was one of the four classes I teach ESL. The Grade 11 class I worked with represented a convenience sample; “which is easy for the researcher to reach” (p. 61). It consisted of 39 learners (17 girls and 22 boys) who, like me, speak *Oshiwambo* dialects, including *Oshikwanyama*, *Oshindonga* and *Oshimbalantu*. Sharing the same language was advantageous because it enabled me as the teacher to understand directly translated phrases or sentences in learners’ written work that a native English speaker could possibly not understand. It is however worth sharing that my delivering of lessons and the interaction with my learners was in English only and there was no code switching allowed.

Other than the above, I had also specifically chosen Grade 11 as opposed to Grade 12 (that I also teach) because learners in Grade 11 still had a year before they could finish their formal schooling. That could have easily afforded us an opportunity to implement another cycle or to correct aspects indicated to be problematic the following year. The results of such will however not be part of this study.

Unlike the learners, I had also conveniently chosen the school because it is where I am employed as a teacher. That implied that, there would not be a need for me to apply for leave nor to incur transport costs whilst conducting the study.

### **3.3 Research design**

This qualitative research takes a case study design, located within an interpretive paradigm.

Case study is defined as “a systemic and in-depth study of one particular case in its context” (Rule & John, 2011, p. 4) with a focus on “a small geographical area or a very limited numbers of individuals as the subjects of the study” (Zainal, 2007, p. 1). Alike, in an interpretive paradigm, researchers aim to make interpretations and understanding of “human agency, behavior attitudes, beliefs and perceptions” (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014, p. 26). For this study, the case was the challenge of helping my Grade 11 learners develop genre awareness of writing explanation texts in terms of both the generic and language structures features explained in Section 2.4. The problem stemmed from the fact that most of my Grade 11 ESL learners demonstrated a lack of knowledge of how to write continuous writings coherently. That put me in a position to assess my pedagogic practices which found me employing a GBA as a new pedagogy in one Grade 11 class (of four) that I teach English. The backbone of the whole GBA intervention was a lesson unit of seven lessons taught over a time of two weeks and I employed a whole text approach to learning writing explanation texts, scaffolded learning and formative assessment to keep track of learners’ progress prior to and after the intervention. So doing gave me a better understanding of the impact of GBA in my learners writing of explanation texts as reflected in the percentage score table (Table 8).

According to Bassey (1999) data in a case study can be generated from numerous sources and it can either be quantitative or qualitative or both. This study is a qualitative research, defined as “research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17). Since this was an AR, (discussed in details below) I collected data from numerous sources discussed in Section 3.6. It is, however, worth sharing that, there is quantitative data that was mined from the pre- and post-test, but that was primarily aimed at painting a baseline picture of the learners’ positions prior to and after the GBA intervention has been implemented. Whereas I have tabulated that results in Table 8, I used qualitative data to interpret, evaluate and discuss such quantitative results, in essence giving meaning to the numeric data I have presented. As a means of presenting my

case and validate the claims I have made, I incorporate verbatim quotes from my own reflections and my learners' works. So doing satisfies Bertram and Christiansen's (2014) emphasis that researchers should ensure "the claims are supported by the data and not generalised beyond what the case can warrant" (p. 43). I also did the same to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the study as explained in Section 3.8.

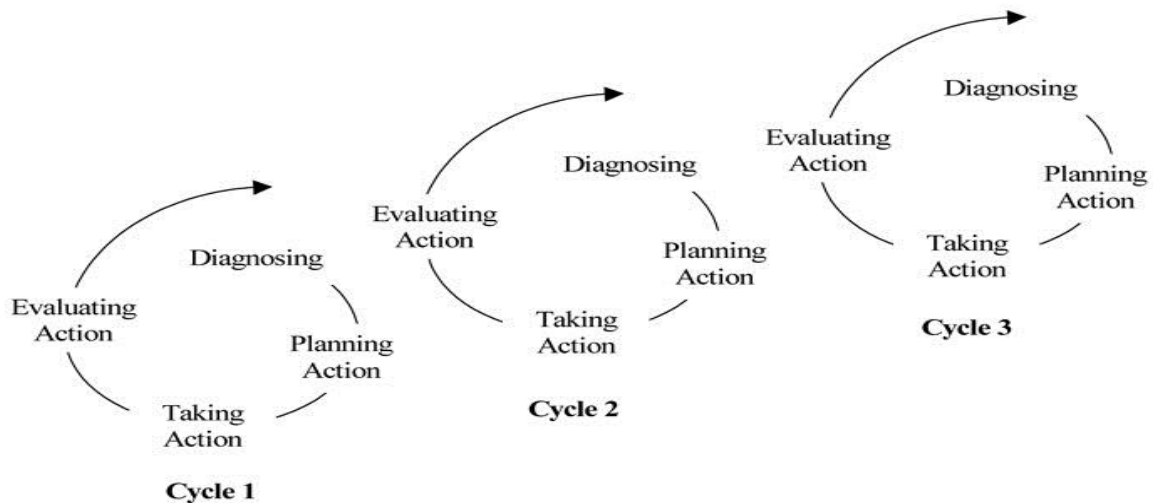
### **3.4 Action Research**

AR is defined as:

A form of collective self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out. (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, cited in Kemmis, 2011, p. 13).

McNiff (2010, p. 6) defines AR as a "practitioner based research or self-reflective practice". Kemmis (2011) explains the notion of practitioner based, citing Schatzki (1996) that; "if action research is to grasp practice in its social as well as its individual features, then it will best be undertaken as both an individual and a collective process by those whose action and interactions constitute the practice" (p. 13). That should be done in order "to embrace the perspectives of those involved from the subject or participant perspective, each in relation to the others involved" (Schatzki, 1996, cited in Kemmins, 2011, p. 13) and involving all participants in the research "as the agents of the research (not as 'objects' or only as observers)" (p. 13).

In attempt to research 'with' my learners as agents of this research, I carried out this AR in accordance with Coghlan and Brannick's (2001) AR cycles (Figure 4) below. It comprised two cycles, with the initial one aimed at diagnosing the learners' strengths and weaknesses in writing explanation texts and the second being the implementation of the GBA intervention. Due to time constraints and the nature of this study [half-thesis] we did not reach the third cycle.



**Figure 4: Action Research cycles**

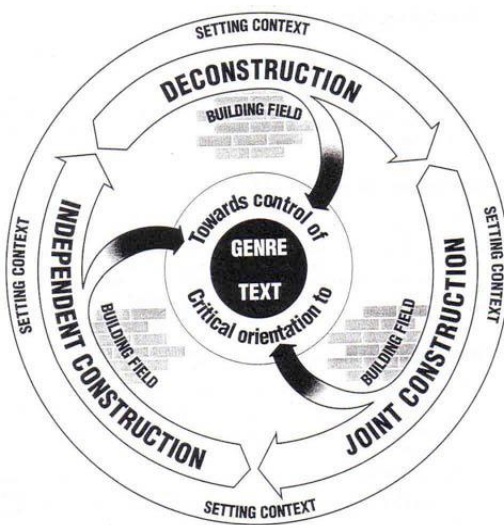
*(Adapted from Coghlan & Brannick, 2001, p. 19)*

The following is a description of what happened in practice and in relation to the components of the AR cycles above.

1. Diagnosing: I diagnosed a problem of my learners not being well versant with writing continuous pieces required in the ESL Syllabus, and an absence of explanation texts in the ESL syllabus.
2. Planning: I planned my initial lesson (see Section 3.4.1 and Appendix 2a) to be a needs analysis aimed at exploring what my learners could do independently in the writing of explanation texts without my assistance
3. Action: I implemented the lesson and gave a group activity and an individual activity in which learners produced written works (explanations) for my evaluation. It is worth sharing that my implementation of the Lesson one completed my first cycle of the AR.
4. Evaluating action: I assessed the learners works produced in the first lesson and jotted down the strengths and weaknesses I spotted in their work. It is such aspects that led to my planning of a GBA intervention in accordance with the Genre Pedagogic Cycle (GPC) by Rothery and Stenglin (1995), reproduced in Ong (2016, p. 37) Figure 5 below.

The GPC consists of the deconstruction, joint construction and independent construction which Ong (2016, p. 37) describes as “the three-step approach ... of the scaffolding principles for the

teaching of writing, where students are gradually eased into independent composition ... via observation and guided or joint writing sessions” (Ong, 2016, p. 37).



**Figure 5: Genre pedagogy cycle**

*(Rothery & Stenglin 1995, reproduced in Ong, 2016, p. 37)*

The following is what I did in accordance with the GPC stages.

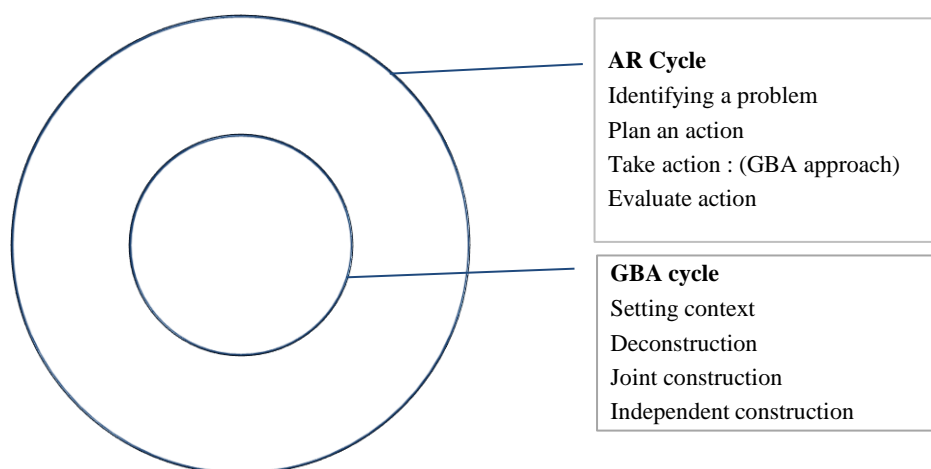
1. Setting context: (Lesson One) I exposed learners to visuals on the processes of the flushing toilet and allowed them to brainstorm; with the purpose of building their field knowledge on system explanation which this study concentrated on.
2. Modelling: (Lesson Two) I gave learners a handout with an explanation of how breathing happens (Appendix 3b) and discussed its conventions (generic and linguistic) without analysing it deeply (which could be deconstruction). It is worth sharing that an explanation on how breathing happens is also a system explanation which this study concentrates on.
3. Deconstruction: (Lesson Three & Four) I gave my learners copies of written explanation texts from textbooks (Appendix 3c) and three purposively chosen copies of learners’ pre-test written explanation for analysis in terms of their generic and linguistic features respectively. To do that, they marked the presence of such features using marking rubrics Table 6 and Table 7.
4. Joint construction (Lesson Five): I asked my learners to brainstorm on the topic of pollination (Appendix 3d), figure out the parts and the role they play in pollination

(cause and effect) and share their works with me. I then jotted the details on the board, afforded them a chance to propose the cohesive devices and together we produced an explanation titled “How flowers are pollinated”( See Chapter Four, Section 4.8)

5. Individual construction: (Lesson Six): I assigned my learners to write individual explanations on the system explanation of a flushing toilet, employing the conventions I have taught them.

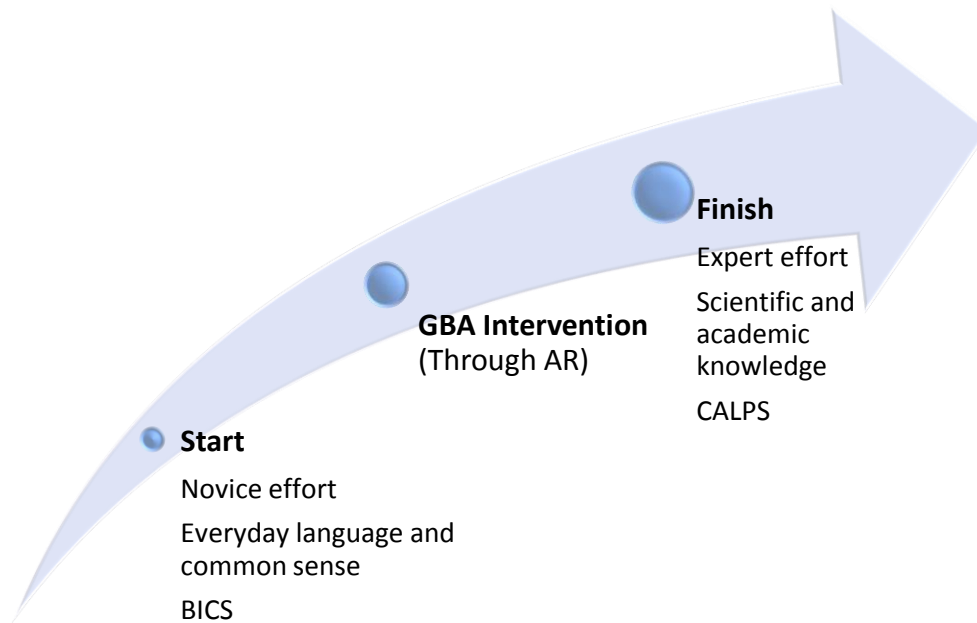
In essence, the AR cycle acted as the macro cycle aimed at identifying the weaknesses and finding a solution thereof, whereas the GBA cycle acted as a presumed pedagogic solution to the identified problem. It is worth sharing that, whereas the AR cycle does not change, the employment of the GPC is subjected to change if it is not reaching the intended results to fulfil the objectives of the AR.

Below is a depiction of the relationship between the AR cycle and the GPC in this study.



**Figure 6: The genre cycle as embedded in the action research cycle**

I did all that with the aim to enhance my pedagogic skills in the teaching of genre writing which could put me in a better position to enhance my learners’ academic English proficiency as per the learning continuum arrow below.



**Figure 7: A genre-writing language proficiency learning continuum**

Throughout this AR I worked alongside my learners in unpacking the features (generic and linguistic) of writing explanation texts. Drawing from Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-constructivism theory (See Section 2.6.2) and formative assessment for learning (Section 2.6.3), the implementation involved group works, whole class activities and individual works that were either assessed by me as a teacher, or assessed by learners through peer or self-assessment. That afforded me, as a teacher, a better chance to map out my learners’ ZPD with regards to the writing of explanation text; to assume the roles of the MKO on aspects of genre writing; as well as to work on the need for increasing or decreasing ‘scaffolding’.

### **3.5 The GBA lesson unit**

Since this study employed AR cycles on a macro level with GBA cycles on a micro level as discussed in Section 3.3, I planned a lesson unit around the system explanation of how a flushing toilet works and it consisted of seven lessons taught in seven days. The lessons were not consecutive, but rather spanned a two weeks period. Such lessons were taught during the normal teaching time, and data of what happened at each stage was collected through document analysis of my learners pre- and post-tests, their daily lesson reflections, my personal research journal and a whole class closing discussion (see discussion in Section 3.6).

To collect baseline data aimed at spotting out the strengths and weaknesses my learners have in writing of explanation texts, I gave them a cold written task without familiarising them with such conventions. The explanation was on how a flushing toilet works, whereby learners had to explain both the flushing and refilling processes. The rationale behind choosing the flushing toilet is simply because all learners in the school in general and the Grade 11 (under study) in particular had access to flushing toilets in the school, so it was not a foreign thing to them. Additionally, my option for a system explanation was necessitated by Brisk (2015) views that system explanation are good for older learners as it requires critical thinking (see description in Section 2.4.1). The following is a tabulated broad outline of the lessons of my GBA intervention, followed by detailed descriptions of individual lessons.

	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Topic</b>
<b>Lesson 1</b>	Establishing baseline data	Identifying learners' strengths and weaknesses in explaining	Flushing of a toilet
<b>Lesson 2</b>	Building the field	Familiarising learners with conventions of writing explanations	Breathing
<b>Lesson 3</b>	Deconstruction (generic)	Familiarising learners with structural (generic) features of explanations	How taps work
<b>Lesson 4</b>	Deconstruction (linguistic)	Familiarising learners with linguistic features of explanation	Breathing
<b>Lesson 5</b>	Joint construction	Collaborative writing of an explanation	Pollination
<b>Lesson 6</b>	Individual construction	Individual writing of an explanation [Post-intervention test]	Flushing of a toilet
<b>Lesson 7</b>	Reflection/Review	Joint reflection and closing discussion	Oral reflection on the whole intervention

**Table 4: A broad outline of the lessons of the GBA intervention**

### 3.5.1 Lesson One: Needs analysis

Drawing from 'identifying the gap' which is the initial step of formative assessment and diagnosing which is the first step of AR, I designed this lesson to identify the gap in my learners' writing of explanation texts. Although I was already aware that my learners struggle in this in other texts, this lesson aimed at making a 'formal' diagnosis to give rise to the planning and implementation of the AR. To do that, I had purposively given my learners a pre-

test to specifically figure out what was that that they lacked specifically in the writing of explanations.

I started the lesson with a YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hAxAyoSMQhI>) depicting how a flushing toilet works. I chose the video for three purposes. The first being, to stimulate learners' interest by making the initial phase of the GBA intervention different from normal teaching in which I sporadically incorporate media. Secondly, to expose learners to a depiction and explanation of how a flushing toilet works, which is in line with Alimenaj (2010) who indicates that YouTube helps in English language teaching and learning by serving as a tool for improving listening skills. Thirdly, to cut on the water wastage because we could have gone to the bathroom and flush the toilets, but we heed the universal call to preserve water and to flush the toilet only when necessary. The learners therefore had to watch the YouTube and jot down the parts involved as well as the cause and effect leading to the flushing and refilling processes of the toilet. Above all, I am aware of the challenges YouTube poses as indicated that:


Even though YouTube offers a vast array of clips of authentic examples of 'everyday' English used by 'everyday' people within a wide range of contexts, the poor sound quality, pronunciation, and slang featured in many of these short videos can also make them more difficult to understand than traditional listening platforms (Alimenaj, 2010, cited in Alwehaibi, 2015, p. 122).

As a supplement, video watching was followed by visual stimuli (Appendix 3a) which I gave to my learners for two reasons; the first being to allow learners to be able to follow the flushing and filling processes in a still picture in their hands as opposed to the motion pictures (video) that might have been fast for some learners. Secondly, to familiarise learners with technical terms that are a linguistic component of explanations as discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.4.3). In terms of the GBA video watching and visualisations falls under building the field knowledge. It is in that vein that I used them to do the same with regards to enhancing my learners' knowledge of writing explanations on the processes of a flushing toilet.

It was therefore after the fore discussed activities that learners had to do a group activity (Figure 8) below. Considering the fact that explanation texts are an absent genre in the NCBE and ESL Syllabus documents, it is worth sharing that the activities I gave were in no way based on authentic examination format type of questions. They indeed were just based on my own instructions.

ACTIVITY ONE

Study the following picture and answer the questions below



1. What is this?  
2. How does it work?

**Figure 8: A group activity instruction**

It was then after the group activity that learners had to work individually to write an explanation under a topic “How a flushing toilet works” in which they had to share the flushing and refilling processes as per the instruction below.

Write an explanation on how a flushing toilet works, describing both the flush and refill processes. Your title should be:

How a flushing toilet works

**Table 5: The pre- and post-test instruction**

It is that instruction that informed pre- and post-tests, of which I marked using a rubric with descriptors of what is done well, partially or not at all (Appendix 4b). The results of the two tests and some examples of learners’ explanations are shared in Chapter Four.

### 3.5.2 Lesson Two: Setting context

This was a familiarisation lesson in which I made known to my learners that we were dealing with the genre of explanation. The lesson centred on the three questions below:

- a) What is an explanation?

- b) How is its structure?
- c) What are its linguistic features?

In the GPC this is setting context/building the field whereby learners have to be exposed to the genre under review. Alike, in terms of formative assessment, this is just another form of identifying the gap in learners' prior knowledge of the phenomenon under study, in this context the conventions of explanation texts. I therefore took a centre role in this lesson to expose my learners to both the generic and linguistic features of the explanation texts. To do that, I gave them a handout with an explanation titled "How do we breathe?" (Appendix 3b). I specifically did that with the purpose of affording learners an opportunity to see an authentically produced explanation text, which is a text type similar to what I requested them to write in Lesson One as discussed above. Since the main aim was specifically to familiarise learners to the explanation text, I did not give them any task. However, data of what unfolded has been collected through my personal journal and the learners' daily reflections and is reported in Chapter Four.

### **3.5.3 Lesson Three: Deconstruction of generic features**

Deconstruction being a second stage of the GPC, in this lesson I aimed at enhancing learners' knowledge and understanding of the generic features in context of an authentic explanation. To do that, I gave my learners two written explanations titled "How taps work" (Appendix 3c) adapted from (Burkett, Chambers, Murray, Robertson, & Smuts, 2010, pp. 157 – 158). The choice for the explanations extracts was necessitated by the fact that, although all the two explanations had the same focus "How taps work", they are not written the same. One addressed the generic conventions of explanations well in terms of introduction, body and conclusion; whereas the other had a mixed up sequence. The learners had to read, analyse and assess (in groups) the presence of the generic features in the two passages without my involvement. To do that, they had to use the rubric below that I specifically designed to assess the generic features of explanations. To ensure uniformity rubric was used throughout to assess generic features in written works (explanations) produced in this GBA intervention.

Name:			
Class:			
<b>Generic structure features</b>	<b>definitely</b>	<b>partially</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
Uses a how and why question as a title and focus			
Writes a clear opening statement ( <i>a description of the thing to be explained</i> )			
Writes the explanation in a logical sequence (explaining a series of actions following a logical order)			
Writes a concluding statement (possibly a general comment or statements in line with the explained thing)			
Definitely = 2		0 – 3 = poor	
Partially = 1		4 – 6 = average	
Not at all = 0		7 – 8 = excellent	
Marks and remarks _____ and _____			

**Table 6: Generic features' marking rubric**

**3.5.4 Lesson Four: Deconstruction of language features**

In terms of GPC, this lesson falls under the same umbrella as Lesson Three because they all aimed at breaking down the text and analyse its features be it generic, linguistic or both. Hence, I designed this lesson to familiarise learners specifically with the language features of the explanation texts (refer to section 2.4.3). To do that, my learners had to read and analyse a written explanation in which the linguistic features featured. Initially, I planned to use a handout with an explanation on how breathing happens (Appendix 3b), but I changed later to avoid boring my learners because they encountered the same reading in the second lesson (See Section 3.4.2). I therefore replaced the initial reading with three copies of three different learners' pre-test explanations (Appendix 5b), drawing from the point of Airasian (1997) that learners learn better when they are exposed to authentic texts (Section 2.6.3). My learners therefore had to work in groups to critically analyse the presence of the items listed in the rubric below, which I specifically designed to mark linguistic features of an explanation. Similarly, to ensure uniformity the same rubric was used throughout to assess linguistic features in all

explanations produced in this GBA intervention. As per the ethical consideration (discussed in section 3.9), permission was sought prior to duplicating the works, and learners' names were withheld to protect their identities.

Name:			
Class:			
<b>Language features</b>	<b>Definitely</b>	<b>Partially</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
Writes in the timeless present tense			
Introduces and uses technical words to explain the phenomenon			
Uses action verbs			
Uses linking words (conjunctions and connectives) to link and sequence events			
Uses passive voice to link cause and effect			
Definitely = 2		0 - 4 = poor	
Partially = 1		5 - 7 = average	
Not at all = 0		8 - 10 = excellent	
Marks and remarks _____ and _____			

**Table 7: Linguistic features' marking rubric**

### 3.5.5 Lesson Five: Joint construction

This lesson aimed at affording my learners and I a chance to practice language usage for achieving a social purpose which is explaining. It also acted as a lesson in which my learners had to organise ideas in a cause and effect way to be able to write an explanation text collaboratively. In terms of the GPC, this is the third stage 'joint construction' whereby the learners have to collaborate in constructing a text employing the generic and linguistic features they analysed in the deconstruction stages. In my planning, I based this lesson on the topic of pollination, which is more of a science (Biology, Life Science and Agriculture) topic. I chose pollination to indicate the overarching role of explanations so that my learners will know that the skill of explaining is not bound to ESL as a subject only, but rather applicable in content

subjects as well. I also wanted to assess the power of teaching through a GBA in enhancing academic English proficiency in learners as per the learning continuum diagram (Figure 7).

The lesson therefore started with building of the field whereby without any visualisation or video watching the learners brainstormed on the parts and actions involved in the pollination of flowers. That was followed by handing out of a diagram with a cross section of a flower (Appendix 3d) which each learner had to study individually and then write the parts and their contribution to pollination on a fish bone diagram (Appendix 3e). Example: *anther = produce pollen grains*. It is after the learners have filled in details in their fishbone diagrams that they had to work collaboratively (in groups) to fill in the pollination sequence in a chain sequence diagram (Appendix 3f). Whereas each learner had a fishbone diagram, for the chain sequence diagram each group only had a single copy. That is due to the reason that it depended on discussion and reaching of consensus by learners in groups as to which one is the first action etc.

The chain sequence details for each group had to be shared with the whole class, then to form part of what I had to jot on the chalkboard. Cognisance should be taken that I afforded all groups the right to counter on or challenge the reporting group's sequence of events as they share how pollination occurs. Such debate/challenge offered me an opportunity as a teacher to jot down everything that the whole class has agreed on to be the first, second etc. process of pollination, imperative for the correct sequence of writing a single explanation in the same topic. To bolster my learners' grammatical development, I gave them a handout with transitions and connectors (Appendix 3g) from which they had to take and propose cohesive devices for meaningful writing. The end results of this lesson are shared and discussed in Chapter 4.

### **3.5.6 Lesson Six: Individual construction**

I designed this lesson to afford me an opportunity to assess the learners' written explanations as a product of my intervention; and to afford learners an opportunity to correct the mistakes they have done in the pre-test. Affording them a second chance, my learners wrote a system explanation of how a flushing toilet works. I decided to do that in accordance with Guskey (2003) who contrasts the notion of teachers drawing conclusion from activities learners attempted once, which is counterproductive and summative in nature as discussed in section 2.5.1. To do that, my learners had to go through the same sequence of events as in Lesson One. However, due to a clash between my lesson and the Geography lesson that normally uses the

computer lab in which video watching occurs, I had to change and strike out video watching from the proceedings of the lesson.

That found me restructuring my lesson plan with the major change being giving back my learners' pre-test scripts with marking rubrics clearly indicating where they covered the aspects very well, averagely or not at all. I did that with a belief that, if learners can clearly see the weaknesses in their written work, they are unlikely to repeat the same mistakes. They therefore had to study their initial writing and the handouts given to them in Lesson 1; and apply the taught conventions in order to be able to produce an explanation of "How a flushing toilet works". To ensure that they have covered all the major features of explanations, I gave each learner a marking rubric (Appendix 4b) to self-assess their works before submitting. It is the same rubric that I also used to mark their work as I took stock of their mastery of the conventions of writing explanation texts I taught them through employing a GBA. The results of learners' written works and the overall performance results of the whole are shared in Chapter Four.

### **3.5.7 Lesson Seven: Feedback and evaluation**

This was the last lesson of the intervention aimed at garnering learners' views of the whole intervention. To do that, I first gave them their post-test scripts and asked them to compare their performances to their pre-test ones. I then shared with them the 'change score' table (Table 8), with the proportion of how learners performed at each of the three categories (excellent, average and poor). After that, I shared the aspects I diagnosed to be the positive and negative both in the pre-and post-test (shared in Chapter 4), which I believe led to the results and performance being the way it is.

It was after my remarks that I afforded learners an opportunity to reflect (verbally) on their performances, as well as their experiences of individual lessons and/or the whole intervention. The reflection was guided by three aspects; what went well, what did not go well, and suggestions for future improvements. To capture their experiences, I invited in a research assistant, who is a colleague, to video record the discussion phase of the lesson. It is worth sharing that the research assistant had no say in the lesson proceedings, and did not render any feedback. Her sole responsibility was just to video record the lesson for my interpretation. In order to accommodate all the learners, I indiscriminately afforded all my learners an opportunity to share their views; meaning whoever wanted to share his/her experience was

welcome to do that. So doing provided me with rich data that I shared as validation for claims I have made in Chapter 4.

### **3.6 Data collection**

As indicated in the early chapters, I collected through document analysis of my learners' pre- and post-tests and their daily reflection sheets; my personal research journal, and a whole class closing discussion. The following is a thorough description of each and how it played out in practice.

#### **3.6.1 Document analysis**

Hopkins (1993, cited in Josua, 2009, p. 43) maintains that document analysis “provides context, background and understanding of issues that would not otherwise be available”. It is also believed to involve “studying documentary evidence such as policies, minutes of meeting, teachers' planning records and students' work” (Mbelani, 2007, p. 42). In this study the pre- and post-tests, and my learners' daily reflections served as the documents that provided data. The following is a description of each.

##### **3.6.1.1 Learners' pre- and post- activities**

In this study, I gave a pre- and post-test to my learners to ascertain their understanding of writing explanation texts prior to and after implementing the GBA intervention. The tests were all based on the same topic “How a flushing toilet works” only with a difference that the pre-test was conducted before I familiarised learners with the conventions of writing explanation while the post-test was carried out after I have run and implemented the intervention. I did that to gain a picture or uncover the deficiencies that learners had in terms of the convention of writing explanation texts in the pre-test; as well as to assess in the post-test the changes in performance or stagnation brought about by the employment of the GBA.

The tests covered on a wider range the usage of the correct structural features and the linguistic features, as well as the overall organisation of the text. As indicated earlier, they were marked with an overall text marking rubric (Appendix 4b) which had generic features, linguistic features and overall text organisation marked in terms of definitely, partially and not at all. It is therefore the individual scores and the whole class scores that formed the basis of the quantitative data shared in this study as shared in the next chapter. Other than test scores, my

marking of the tests also provided rich data of my learners' areas of strengths and weaknesses in writing explanation. Such data describes and gives meaning to the numbers presented.

### **3.6.1.2 Learners' daily lesson reflections**

As a measure to capture my learners' experiences of each lesson, I designed a lesson reflection sheet (Appendix 4c) aimed at garnering their experiences of each lesson. I opted for a reflection sheet other than learners' personally kept journals to avoid loss of information because learners are more likely to lose the personal journals, which could have resulted in drawbacks in the data for this study. I therefore kept giving out the reflection sheets at the end of each lesson presentation which learners had to fill in during the last five minutes of each lesson. All reflections had to be handed to me immediately after the lesson and there was no provision for one to write it at home. I did that to avoid data loss and problems of compelling learners to submit their possibly pending reflections, which could infringe the ethical considerations explained herein (Section 3.9).

The daily reflections were guided by three main questions; what have you learnt and understood? What do you think you need to learn again? and What should be done if the lesson was to be taught again? (See Appendix 4c). In principle, the questions are subsets of the three questions in (Section 3.7) that govern data collection and analysis for this study.

### **3.6.2 My personal research journal**

I kept a journal in which I self-reflected on statistics of the number of learners present, the duration it took to complete a lesson, as well as the level of learners' participation during the lesson presentation. I also documented what, in my views, went well in the lesson, what did not go well and what could be changed if the lesson were to be taught in the future; same questions that form the basis for analysis. In essence, I entered details in my research journal in the last five minutes of the lesson which were devoted to reflection for me and my learners. That was done for a reason that by that time the minds' memories were still fresh and we could easily remember the happenings of the lessons as opposed to waiting at a later stage. It is worth sharing that, I avoided instantiation writing of entries whilst presenting lessons, because that could have obstructed learners' concentration, and could have hindered the lesson presentations.

### **3.6.3 Whole class closing discussion**

To gather the learners' experiences of the whole GBA intervention in general and the individual lessons in particular, I afforded my learners a chance to discuss openly their experiences of the GBA through a whole class discussion. In practice, whole class discussion involves a lot of participants at the same time more than a focus group; which according to Denscombe (2007), consists of a small group of people usually between six and nine in number

Acting as a sum up reflection, I carried out the discussion on the seventh and final lesson specifically aimed at reflection (see Section 3.4.7). First, I gave the learners their pre- and post-test marked explanations and presented to them the percentage scores of the whole class in both the pre-test and the post-test. Other than that, I also shared my findings of their weaknesses particularly in the pre-test such as lack of paragraphing and wrong tense used (See Chapter 4). It was after that then that I afforded learners a chance to share their experiences.

In practice, five learners participated voluntarily. Their reflections were based on their own performances and their beliefs on what they felt contributed to their categories in both pre- and the post-tests, their experiences of individual lessons, as well as their experiences of the whole intervention. Overall, the focus was on what went well, what did not go well and possible suggestions for the future. The discussions were video recorded. However, due to the length I did not transcribe the whole recording. I have rather incorporated extracts of the salient aspects in relation to the claims I have made (See Chapter 4). The full video will be safely kept in my research archive.

### **3.7 Data analysis and discussion**

Koshy (2005) states that data analysis seeks to identify themes, patterns and relationships in order to present robust evidence for claims being made. In this study, and as shared earlier, I collected quantitative and qualitative data from the various sources (indicated in Section 3.6). The following is a description of how I analysed my data.

Firstly, I quantitatively analysed the data from the pre- and post-tests in terms of individual learners and the whole class' score in terms of excellent, average and poor. I then collated and tabulated that data (Table 8) to paint a picture of my learners' genre writing position prior to and after the GBA intervention had been implemented. To give meaning to the numbers, I analysed learners' written explanation in terms of strengths and weaknesses in the generic,

linguistic and overall organization of the explanation texts as per the items of the marking rubric (Appendix 4b).

Secondly, I deductively analysed qualitative data from my personal journal, the learners' daily reflections and the whole class closing discussion. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014) a deductive approach to data analysis means "the researcher starts with a set of categories generated from a theoretical or conceptual framework" (p. 131). For this study, I followed the following set of three questions, as adapted from Mbelani (2007, p. 44).

1. What went well
2. What did not go well
3. What needed to be improved if the same lesson were to be taught in future?

Identification of such aspects is important to me in a sense that, it will afford me an opportunity to identify and retain the positive aspects for future use, I will eliminate or change the negative aspects to benefit me and my learners, and I will assess and adopt the possible suggestions so that they could possibly inform and influence other cycles of this intervention, that will not form part of this study. Since I have employed numerous data collection methods, I triangulate the data. Dezin (1978, cited in Johnson et al, 2007) defines triangulation as "the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon".

All such data is imperative for painting a picture of how my two cycles of the intervention has played out in practice, and offer lenses to zoom into the efficacy of the GBA in the teaching of explanation texts in a Grade 11 classroom which is the basis of this study.

### **3.8 Validity and trustworthiness**

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), to ensure the validity of the research, a variety of data collecting methods should be used. I used three data collection instruments from which data gathered can be triangulated. Maxwell (1996, p. 93) explains that "triangulation reduces the risk of chances associations and systemic bias, and relies on information collected from a diverse range of individuals, teams and settings, using a variety of methods". I know that my position as a participant researcher might have influenced the results; however I strived to be honest in the reflecting of my actions. Hence, I ensured that my personal reflections were as

honest as possible as I drew from Cohen et al (2000) who declare that “in qualitative research, data validity might be addressed through the honesty of the researcher”.

As for the pre- and post-tests, I ensured that I marked all the activities using the same rubric in order to avoid biasness. Alike, the learners’ lesson reflections were written immediately after the lesson to avoid forgetfulness and manipulation of data. To authenticate the claims I have made, I incorporate verbatim extracts from the learners and my reflections of what played out in each lesson of the lesson unit. I also incorporated samples and extracts of my own and my learners’ works. The rest of the tools will be safely kept in my research archive.

### **3.9 Ethical issues**

Ethical issues have to do with moral values and right conducts (Schmuck, 2006), or with “behaviour that is considered right or wrong” (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014, p. 65). It includes “privacy, anonymity and confidentiality guaranteed by informed consent” (Mutenda, 2008, p. 42). In this study, I did the following to ensure the privacy of the research site and the research participants.

#### **3.9.1 Obtaining permission**

In this study, although I am employed in the school, I sought permission from the office of the Regional Director of Ohangwena Region, under which the school falls. I also sought further permission from the office of the school principal, as the head of the institution. In all cases, permission was sought through formal letters of consent to avoid putting myself and my institution (Rhodes University) into disrepute. (See Appendix 1a – 1d, for copies of these letters).

Since my study involved learners, it would have been ethical to ask for consent from the parents. However, due to the fact that the study was conducted during the normal teaching time and no learner had to remain at school after the normal teaching time, the principal advised me that it was not ideal to involve parents on condition that; I will withhold the participants’ names and no photograph of learners will be used in my study.

#### **3.9.2 Participants’ privacy**

Further, to ensure privacy and confidentiality of the school, participants and all concerned parties; the name of the school and the names of the participants will be kept anonymous and

pseudonyms used instead. Similarly, the lesson reflections had a slot for pseudonyms, which are specifically aimed for referencing purposes but not for any participant's identification.

Alike, where copies of learners' texts had to be used, I had to seek their permission prior to using them. As a measure, their names have to be kept anonymous and instead used 'Text A, Text B etc'.

All in all, I am aware that I cannot guarantee utmost privacy for this thesis because those in the know, know me and know where I work. However, in writing up this research I tried to do as much as I could to not directly identify school personnel and individual learners.

### **3.10 Conclusions**

In this chapter, I shared the research design and the paradigm in which this study falls. I also shared the sampling procedures in terms of the participants and the site. I then expounded the rationale behind action research and its suitability to this study, as well as the design of the lesson unit from which data of this study was collected. I then shared how data was analysed, the validity and trustworthiness aspects, as well as the ethical issues in terms of obtaining permission and the ensuring of participants privacy.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION & ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents and discusses the data from individual lessons of the GBA intervention in a way that realises the goals of this research which were to;

- Improve my pedagogic practice in the teaching of genre as an ESL teacher
- Develop my Grade 11 learners' academic language proficiency in genre writing

First, I give a summary of my learners' performance in the pre- and post-test and discuss what those findings mean in terms of the efficacy of the GBA. Secondly, I summarise what my learners and I did in each lesson in the introduction, presentation and conclusion phases, followed by an analysis of data on what worked well, what did not go well and what needed to be improved in the future. As evidence of the products of my intervention, I incorporated synopsis/extracts of my own, and my learners' contributions to authenticate the claims I have made.

### **4.2 Selection of the lesson unit**

As shared earlier, the intervention was based on a lesson unit (Section 3.4) theoretically informed by the genre and socio-constructivism theories and assessed formatively (Section 2.6). The lesson unit comprised seven lessons which spanned over two weeks. Its planning, initially, was based on my own anticipation of a unit of teaching based on vast literature that indicates how the GBA should be carried out as per the GPC (Figure 5). However, I came to learn that a lot of GBA interventions shared by researchers (Hyland, 1992; Josua, 2009; Derewianka & Jones, 2010; Martinez Lirola, 2015) do not have a needs analysis as the initial component. The absence of needs analysis implied that lessons taught under that guise assumed that all learners have the same strengths and/or weaknesses in the writing of genres. To contrast that assumption, I planned to accommodate the needs of my learners which I explored in the pre-test (proceedings of Lesson 1). It is therefore the findings of such test that gave rise to the whole planning, with changes and alterations made to align individual lessons in accordance with the proceedings of the previous lesson, and in line with the learners' level of strengths and weaknesses in genre writing. It drew from the requirements of the Namibia. NCBE (2010) and the ESL syllabus which advocate for the teaching of genres as discussed in the early chapters.

### 4.3 The pre- and post-test results

As a product of my GBA intervention, the following table reflects the performance-score for my learners that I collected and collated to gain a picture of the effectiveness of my pedagogic practices through a GBA.

	poor		average		excellent		Total	
Pre-test	10	25.6%	29	74.4%	-	-	39	100%
Post-test	-	-	12	30.77%	27	69.23%	39	100%

**Table 8: The change -score results**

The pre-test results show baseline data I collected from the needs analysis (Lesson One) in which learners worked on their own to unpack the features of the explanation texts. The post-test shows the post-instructional performance after we worked together in unpacking the features of the explanation texts. As indicated earlier, they were all based on the same instruction (see Table 5).

Evidently, there is a significant shift in the performance of the learners after my employing of the GBA. Like Ong (2016), I attribute this success to the tackling of writing from the level of the whole text, which is a tenet of genre theory, and the deconstruction and joint construction which allowed learners to engage actively in their learning and opposed to being made passive listeners. Such is in line with the principles of shared and borrowed consciousness (Hyland, 2007) that are tenets of the Vygotskian socio-constructivism theory. I can also attribute it to formative assessment which helped me identify the needs of my learners and adapt lessons and approaches to help my learners reach the desired learning goal as shared by Heritage (2007).

The above results have also answered the second research question in a sense that, by employing a GBA my learners' academic English language development was strengthened. The end results of which is the production of coherent and meaningful explanations of a satisfactory length in accordance with the structural, linguistic and overall text organisations as per the marking rubric (Appendix 4b).

Whereas my concentration in this study was on the genre of explanation, the positive shift on my learners' performance as per the table above demonstrates how my working alongside the learners in unpacking the features of a text type improves learners' genre writing knowledge and skills. It has also proved Martinez Lirola's (2015, p. 189) findings that, "exposing students

to good models of different text types, paying special attention to explanations, and asking them to write texts based on these models, improves students’ texts from the grammatical and textual points of view”. Below I share the happenings of each lesson, and what in my, and my learners’ view went well, did not go well and possible suggestions for future improvements.

#### 4.4 Lesson One

Terming it “the needs analysis”, this was a ground breaking lesson into my intervention. It aimed at gathering baseline data of my learners’ knowledge of the conventions of writing explanation texts. Such data is imperative for informing my pedagogic choices as a teacher in terms of the necessary support I should render in unpacking the features of writing explanation texts with my learners. The following is a tabulated summary of the lesson proceedings and the language skills involved. For a detailed description for this lesson, and so are other lessons of this GBA intervention, see Section 3.4.

Needs analysis				
<b>Introduction</b>	Introduced learners to building of the field on explanation			
<b>Tasks</b>	Watching a YouTube and take notes Read/View labelled diagram of a flushing toilet Oral discussion group works Group(s) written response to questions Individual writing on the same topic			
<b>Closing</b>	Written reflections			
Skills				
reading	writing	listening	speaking	Grammar and usage
√	√	√	√	√

**Table 9: Summary of Lesson One**

##### 4.4.1 What went well?

My learners actively engaged in the lesson and worked collaboratively in groups to do the first activity. The active engagement was the results of learners brainstorming together on a new topic, which could have been otherwise tough if they were to do it individually. Since my duty in that lesson was nothing but rather to serve as the MKO, I went around the class inspecting the groups. My assessment revealed that my learners were actively talking to each other, which echoed Vygotsky’s (1978) need for social interaction to enhance learning. Some learners even went to an extent of asking me the tense and the length of what they were writing; in essence involving me in as a MKO. I was quick to spot that should I give the correct answers, it would jeopardise my chances of gaining a clear picture of my learners’ position in terms of the

conventions of writing explanations. Hence, my answer was: “*Just write!*” Alike, my observation, as I went around whilst doing a group work, I spotted that their writings were going on amidst confusion. Other than that, I also realised that most of the works had grammatical errors and flaws in paragraphing. It was however beyond my level to intervene and correct them because it could have jeopardised the aims of the lesson, as stated earlier.

Below are samples of learners’ group explanations. Cognisance should be taken that there are grammatical errors in such works that I am aware of. However, in order to maintain the authenticity of the learners’ works I copied them ‘*verbatim*’. For original works see Appendix 5a.

#### Sample One

*When ever someone uses and then turn the handle the water in the tank flows into the pot, forcing everything that is in the pot to go into the pipe that take it to the manhole (Group 1).*

#### Sample Two

*The toilet user press the button after using the toilet. Water in the water reservior flow because of pressure, then wastes are moved out of the toilet pot (Group 4).*

#### Sample Three

*It has a pot that contains water where wastes are droped. It also has a container that contained water use for flashing when a handle” (Group 9).*

My analysis of the above explanation indicated that those brief explanations lacked in cohesive devices, used a wrong tense and were not paragraphed. In essence, they have failed most, if not all the features of formality shared by van der Mescht (2017) (Table 1) and have matched the lack of discursive realities (Bhatia, 2008) and intricacies of writing genres’ coherently (Merlose, 1995, cited in Derewianka, 2003).

In terms of structural features, the produced texts are suitable for content subjects such as Life Science which requires brief explanations and where a full structure in terms of title and conclusion are not necessarily required. However, they are not suitable for ESL which mostly requires a full textual structure. That finding underscores the need for me as an ESL teacher to tackle the teaching of genre to highlight the salient features that content subjects may not often

address as indicated by Lyster and Ranta (1997). It also proves the validity of Snow (2005) sentiments that content teaching in schools may not necessarily be good language teaching. In terms of socio-constructivism theories, productions of such explanations demonstrated a need for me as a teacher to assume the role of a MKO in enhancing my learners' genre writing to address the weaknesses I have spotted.

In terms of the GPC, the brainstorming and production of the above texts in groups satisfies the building of the field, where learners are becoming familiar with the language and or conventions of the field. For this study, it also acted as a build on for an individual activity (the pre-test) that was written in the same lesson.

I was however, fast at realising that, if I were to allow my learners to write a pre-test with their group explanation in hands, some learners could have copied from them. That could have jeopardised my chances of exploring individual strengths and weakness which was the aim of the individual activity. So, I asked the learners to hand in their group explanations; which found each learner grappling with the given copies to figure out his way into completing the task. Whereas the group activity was just brief and required an explanation n how a flushing toilet works, the individual activity differed to some degree. There, I required learners to individually write individually under a topic "How a flushing toilet works", explaining both the flushing and refilling processes. I opted for both processes because I believed that a focus on one process could lead to writing of shorter explanations that would not give me a clear picture of how learners are good at sequencing ideas and paragraphing. Below I shared some of the individual works, copied verbatim.

#### Sample A [**Explanation 1**]

##### *How a flushing toilet works*

*Pull down the handle, the tube fill up with water. The bal-cock pull up the float and expand. the float rod move down.*

*The lift cable pull down the move water in tube.*

*The lift cable pull down the trip lever.*

*The float rod pull down the float ball. The tube overflow, and the stopper and flush valve pull down.*

Having used a marking rubric that is descriptive enough in terms of both the generic and linguistic features of an explanation text, this explanation scored five marks which is a poor since it falls in the range of 0-10 as per the remarks of the rubric. My analysis reveals that, in terms of the structural features the text has only definitely covered the title, and did not address, satisfactorily, any other item. As for language features, the text lacks in cohesive devices, used a wrong text, did not use active and passive voice but has partially addressed the incorporation of technical terms. Such writing confirmed the notion of the lack of discursive realities in writing genres as shared by Bhatia (2008).

Nevertheless, and although it did not satisfy the requirements of the said rubric, the learner had demonstrated knowledge of the aspects of a flushing toilet. The problem could just be the language barrier with regards to register (Dare, 2010; Derewianka & Jones, 2010), which in this context required technical, formal, written explanations (Dare, 2010) (See Figure 1). Such findings underscore the need for both BICS and CALP in education contexts as advocated for by Cummins (2008) and the need for exploring learners' ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978) with regards to aspects under discussion if teachers are to render the necessary support 'scaffolding' in line with the learners' strengths and weaknesses on the phenomenon.

### Sample B [**Explanation 3**]

#### *How a flushing toilet works*

*When a flushing handle is turned, the trip lever moves up lifting the liftcable to remove the stopper and flash valve. As this happens the water filled up in the tank than starts to move down the flashing valve flowing into a bowl of the toilet. The water that is flowing into the bowl will give a pressure to the other water that was found in already with wastes forcing it to move down the passage-way to the trap and then to the waste piping carrying along waste.*

*As the water with wastes wove from the waste piping it the goes to the main pipe. Back at the bowl, the water that is entering the bowl from the tank will then reach the low level and then stop flowing. As the tank is now almost empty the ball-cock will fill the overflow tube making the water to overflow and then it will fill the tank making the float ball move up until it reaches a certain level indicating that the tank is filled with water. In the bowl there will be some water that was left in there which is clear.*

On the issue of paragraphing which is part of the general text organisation as per the marking rubric (Appendix 4b) and van der Mescht's (2017) level of formality table (Table 1), some learners wrote single paragraphed explanations as per the example below. Such texts are difficult to analyse generically because they do not have 'identifiable properties', which is the beginning, middle and end (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996).

#### Sample C [Explanation 2]

##### *How a flushing toilet works*

*A flushing toilet contains a bowl and a flush tank. If you push down a flush lever on on the tank, the lift cable inside the tank will lift up the stopper and flush valve that are on the bottom of the tank and mainly they are to block water from passing through. After the stopper and flush valve have been lifted up the water will pass through to te bowl until it reach the trap. It passess through the wax ring to the closet bend and to the passageway and than to the waste piping. After this water from the supply tube moves upward to the ball cock and passes through to the overflow tube until it refill the tank.*

In the process of analysing those texts, and in line with the purpose of the lesson, I jotted down the following items in my research journal.

- No introduction of the phenomenon
- Wrong tense used instead of timeless present
- Flaws in paragraphing or no paragraphing
- Learners failed to capture the correct sequence between the flushing and refilling processes.

Whereas such aspects may sound negative, for this study they are positive aspects in a sense that they are specific weaknesses I have spotted in my learners' works. Drawing from Vygotsky's (1978) socio-constructivism theory, that is an indication of what my learners could do independently with regards to the writing of explanation texts and the gap I have identified (ZPD) to which I had to render the necessary support 'scaffolding'.

Other than my own recording of what went well, my learners also shared their views in the daily reflection (Appendix 4c). From the data, however, my learners' reflections deviated from

the main task (which is genre writing) and concentrated more on the learning supporting materials used, particularly the YouTube. To that, some learners felt exhilarated and reinvigorated by the video they watched which led to a high level of engagement in the lesson as validated by the following sentiments “*watching a video ... brought me into the mood for the lesson ...*” (Nkondowasizwe, Male, 19 years). Such sentiments underscore the significance of YouTube in education as explained in Chapter 3 (Section 3.4.1). Supplementing the video with a labelled diagram of a flushing toilet (Appendix 3a) further aroused the learners’ concentration because having in their hands a depiction of the process they have been viewing made them to follow closely in order to figure out the parts involved. One learner indicated that “*It was interesting because the the (sic) video watched, was supplemented with some picture in a paper of what we were watching recently to make it easier when one is writing*” (JaxDave, male, 20 years). Such sentiments confirm the cognitive demanding nature of CALP as per the quadrants (Figure 2) which by default was the register required for the explanations produced. It also proves the cognitive demanding nature of system explanations as shared by Brisk (2015).

Although the learners’ reflections did not expound more on the nature of the lesson, I was already in a better position to understand their level of academic language proficiency in the writing of explanations drawing from the group activity and the findings of their pre-test as shared above. It is therefore that information I got that led to my planning and implementation of the GBA lesson as an ‘antidote’ to my learners’ genre writing needs and to my ‘how’ of teaching genres as a MKO.

#### **4.4.2 What did not go well?**

Although incorporation of media in my lesson was an interesting part, it did not happen easily. That can be attributed to the delay I had before starting the lesson because there was no connection between the personal computer (PC) and the digital projector. So, I had to restart the PC and reconnect the devices, which took me around seven (7) minutes. My own failure to test the equipment prior to the lesson presentation shows how poor planning from the level of the teacher who is to act as a MKO for the learners could stifle learners’ curiosity, and possibly affect their academic language proficiency development.

Other than that, the sound of the YouTube clip was also inaudible to most of the learners. Inaudibility was caused by the size of the speakers that I normally use in the normal classroom

but could not be loud enough in a computer laboratory to where we shifted on that day. The decision for shifting to a different venue was necessitated by the conduciveness of the computer laboratory room because it has curtains (to prevent glare) and a digital projector (for displaying the video) which were all imperative for the lesson presentation.

In their reflections, my learners also indicated inaudibility and the commentator's tempo as having been problematic. Reflecting that, "*The video was very fast and was not very clear. The volume was very low.*" (Icky, Female, 18 years); and "... *the sound of the video was very low I couldnot catch up with what the presenter was saying*" (Adorable, Female, 17 years). "*The display of the video ... was just fast and the speaker in it was also speaking so fast that you couldn't catch up everything* (Penny, female, 18 years). "*The explanation was too fast, as I have not catch up all the things that were stated*" (Thulo, Male, 18 years).

The poor sound quality and the commentator's tempo underscores the disadvantages of YouTube in education as indicated in Alwehaibi (2015) (Section 3.4.1).

Time was also a major constraint because I actually planned to finish the presentation in a double lesson (80 minutes) but found myself exceeding with 10 minutes. Meaning, if I were to end the lesson at the exact time, learners would have not completed filling in their reflections, which could have severely affected this study.

#### **4.4.3 What needed to be improved if the lesson were to be taught in the future?**

When technology is to be used, teachers need to set up and test the machines prior to the lesson. That cuts hiccups of struggling with connections or finding speakers that do not only waste time, but also puts learners' curiosity low resulting in poor concentration and participation. In the context of this study which had an element of enhancing learners' academic language proficiency, so doing could also affect learners' acquisition of knowledge which they could have got through listening to the narrator who is a native speaker of the language as discussed in Section 3.4.1.

The issue of time also needs to be put into consideration because this initial lesson should in no way be implemented or trialled in a single lesson because it requires a lot of time for learners to grapple with the content intended for them. Kennedy (Male, 18 years) indicated that "*I think this type of lesson ... requires a lot of minutes*" and advises for it to be carried out in double lessons always.

The issue of familiarisation with realia also emerged from the learners' suggestions with one learner suggesting that "*learners must go directly into the toilets to see how it works*" (Slow, Male, 17 years). It is worth sharing that, a visitation to the toilet formed the initial part of the lesson unit preparation; because I felt it could be wise for learners to observe the flushing and refilling processes from real toilets that are in the school. However, due to the universal call for water conservation, I used a YouTube instead to avoid water wastage. Nevertheless, my change of plans should not deter aspiring researchers from familiarising learners with realia if they are to conduct the same research but on a different concentration other than a system explanation of a flushing toilet.

On the audio-visuals, learners suggest that "*at least the teacher should found a video that is not too fast and the speaker is clearly heard*" (Penny, Female, 18 years). This suggestion compounds the disadvantages of YouTube shared by Alwehaibi (2015) should not be overlooked because a YouTube as an audio-visual has an element of learners seeing and hearing (in this case how a flushing toilet works).

#### **4.5 Lesson Two**

In this lesson I aimed at exploring my learners' prior-knowledge of the text type they wrote the previous day (proceedings of lesson 1) and to familiarise them with an example of an authentic written explanation. To do that, I introduced the word "explanation text" which I wrote on the chalkboard and learners had to brainstorm in groups and answer the following questions.

- What it is (definition)?
- What/How is its structure?
- What are its language features?

By so doing, I afforded learners a chance to collectively share their prior knowledge, because in Hyland's (2007) view "learners working together learn more effectively than individuals working separately, and ... [to] learners working with knowledgeable others develop greater understanding of tasks and ideas" (p. 158). I implemented the lesson immediately the day after the initial lesson was implemented, and I gave the learners an authentic example of an explanation text (Appendix 3b). By so doing, I wanted learners to have a glimpse of an explanation text and - in principle - afford them a chance to assess themselves against what

they have written in terms of the generic and linguistic features (in the pre-test). The following is a tabulated summary of such lesson and the language skills covered.

Setting context and building the field				
<b>Introduction</b>	Garnering learners' knowledge of the activity they wrote as pre-test			
<b>Tasks</b>	Introducing explanation Learners brainstorm and define or state what it entails (group work) Oral feedback Reading an explanation on how we breathe Teacher's explanation of the features of explanation Question and answer			
<b>Closing</b>	Written reflections			
Skills				
reading	writing	Listening	speaking	Grammar and usage
√		√	√	

**Table 10: Summary of Lesson Two**

#### 4.5.1 What went well?

My familiarisation of the learners with an authentic text was a welcomed gesture. Alike, my explanation of the generic and linguistic features assisted my learners in understanding the text we were dealing. I was even happy to learn that the learner that asked a question on the tense in the previous lesson discovered it from my explanation and said: *“Meaning I was supposed to write in the simple present tense”*.

The satisfaction manifested itself further in their reflection as they indicate that *“I really enjoyed the lesson”* based on a premise that; *“The part where we were really taught how the explanation is written, including its layout what you use in there like the tense, It really made me laugh when I compared my explanation that I wrote the previous day was and even its layout, and comparing it to the one that we were just taught, mine really didn't make sense and the tense that I used was really wrong”* (Delia, Female, 17 years old). Another learner posited that *“Today I have gained more skills ... just to realise that, what I have wrote in the past activity was wrong. I started laughing at myself. But anyways, I really enjoy it when realizing that I was wrong myself. (All blames on me)”* (Kum Laude, Male, 17 years).

Such reflections indicate the significance of tackling the teaching of genre from a level of the whole text as per the genre theory (Section 2.6.1). It further proves how teaching of grammars in context, as opposed to the traditional way (Rose, 2005) helps in enhancing a better understanding of genres. Linking that to my genre writing learning continuum (Figure 7), my

learners reflections indicate a gradual movement of the learners' understanding from BICS to CALP, which as indicated was the default language for explanation writing in this context.

Other than the above, my learners also cited happiness on how learning explanation writing through English; and being given an example from a Biology perspective made them aware of the significance of explanations in general. One reflected that *“Seriously, in this lesson I just find out that I don't know how to explain things according to the question. I think this make me to answer question, not only in English but I can again use it in other science subjects which is really great”* (Hope, Female, 17 years). Another learner showed appreciation for encountering Biology content in an English lesson saying *“I have learnerd Biology through English lesson ...”* (Legend, Male, 18 years). The learners' reflection compounded the overarching role of explanation as a cross-curricular skill and its significance in academic excellence as expounded in Section 2.4.

#### **4.5.2 What did not go well?**

Although the lesson reached its objectives, the learners' participation and concentration was not to my satisfaction. Such situation was aggravated by two variables, namely: the day of the week and time, and the nature of the lesson.

**Time and day:** this lesson was conducted on a Friday, and it was the last lesson of the day which runs 12h35 to 13h15. Learners clearly looked exhausted because they had been attending other lessons. Worst of all, in my introduction I also did not involve a mind refresher like a joke or video clip; which could have put the learners in the mood. One learner indicated the disadvantage of being taught while exhausted saying: *“In this lesson, I find that being taught while you are tired, it does not help anything at all. As a result to this you will not getting anything from the lesson”* (Paper, Female, 18 years). Similarly, Kum Laude (Male, 17 years) states that *“the story of being taught at the last lesson made me to find this lesson much boring and not interesting”*. Annerie (Female, 19 years) better picked up all the two variables as she indicates that *“I was feel sleep, telling that I was exhausted because his lesson was at the end, whereby we were about to knock off or the school to knock and it was even Friday”*.

**Nature of the lesson:** since the lesson aimed at setting context, whereby learners would be exposed to a professionally written explanation, the lesson ended up being more teacher-centred. The element of teacher-centeredness was aggravated by the need for me to explain the generic and structural features together with the learners we analysed the text (Appendix 3b).

That further made the learners passive listeners to my explanation, resulting into boredom. One learner indicated that *“the teacher was only explaining but he did not give us something to do, to see that we get what he is saying”* (N’goloKande, Male, 18 years). Although the lesson may appear to have flouted the LCE approach which is advocated for in the ministerial documents (Section 2.5.3), it was beyond my scope to realign the lesson because if I could have given learners an activity to analyse the text deeply, I could have delved into the deconstruction phase as per the GPC. So doing could have affected the next lesson. Such lesson proves to me the need for teachers to be flexible and avoid being inclined to either TCE or LCE but rather to teach in accordance with the nature of the lesson.

#### **4.5.3 What needed to be improved if the lesson were to be taught in the future?**

In my suggestions, I deem it ideal for the rescheduling of the lesson to be conducted in the morning on a Friday or to completely teach it on a day that is not a Friday if it is to yield positive results. My suggestion matches Nkondwasizwe (Male, 17 years) who suggested that *“choose earlier lessons so that we (learners) will be live and not sleeping because the last lessons we are usually exhausted”*.

Since the explanation given had no pictures or a video for learners to infer, I find it to be my weakness. That was further reflected by some learners suggesting that *“The teacher ... should provide pictures on this explanations”* (Tiote, male, 17 years). Alike, Smith (Male, 18 years) suggested the incorporation of examples and activities based on other subjects as he says: *“Give more examples from subjects such as Geography, to help us answer explanation questions”*.

The two suggestions above reiterate the need for media and visualisations in the teaching of genre writing and the need for striking a balance between the content to be the basis of genre teaching. That gave me a picture of my weakness of basing more on the science aspect and an unintentional neglecting of other subjects such as Geography.

#### **4.6 Lesson Three**

In this lesson I aimed at familiarizing learners with the generic/structural features of an explanation as shared in Section 2.4.2. To do that, I gave them two copies of written explanations with one well-structured and the other not well structured (Appendix 3c).Learners therefore had to critically analyse such two texts titled *“How do taps works?”* and mark the

presence of the generic features using the marking rubric (Table 6) specifically for generic features. Other than that, and to keep my learners abreast with their learning of the genre of explanations, I gave them their written pre-test scripts just for scrutiny and took them back to me. The following is a summary of the lesson and the language features it covered.

<b>Deconstruction (generic features)</b>				
<b>Introduction</b>	Building the field on structural (generic) features of explanation			
<b>Tasks</b>	Studying labelled features of an explanation in a text Marking the presence of generic features in two explanation texts (in groups) Oral feedback on the score/grading Handing out the pre-test scripts for learners' self-scrutiny (to be returned)			
<b>Closing</b>	Written reflections			
<b>Skills</b>				
reading	writing	Listening	speaking	Grammar and usage
√	√	√	√	

**Table 11: Summary of Lesson Three**

Since learners had to mark written explanations (Appendix 3c) in terms of their generic features, learners worked in 10 groups of four learners. The following are the results of how they scored each activity.

	<b>Marks</b>	<b>Remarks</b>	<b>No. of groups</b>
<b>Explanation 1</b>	8	excellent	8
	7	excellent	2
<b>Explanation 2</b>	2	poor	1
	3	poor	5
	4	average	4

**Table 12: Learners' scoring of the generic features' activity**

#### 4.6.1 What went well?

As I anticipated, my learners enjoyed analysing the texts in terms of the generic features. Whilst marking, I went around monitoring where they were putting ticks in relation to the items of the marking rubric, and asked if they needed any assistance. Some even said, "Sir, just wait for us to finish". That statement shows that the learners were so keen to work on their own and were scared that, as a MKO, I would end up giving them answers.

During reporting back orally, I assumed the role of writing the scores on the chalkboard in a tabulated form (See Table 12), assuming the role of a MKO as per Vygotsky (1978) theory. My analysis of the results however showed that there were some groups that overrated

Explanation 2. I referred to my learners to reach a consensus as to whether such explanation fell in the ‘poor’ or ‘average’ category. That livened up the class because learners had to justify their grading, which resulted in those that overrated it realising where they marked wrongly. So doing underscores the need for rendering the necessarily support because at first (before I intervened) all learners felt that they marked well, which could have affected their structuring of their works should I failed to spot such error. So doing confirms, Hyland’s (1992) views that GBA “does not suffocate innovation and personal expression, but it can provide a methodological environment that develops writing skills and encourages creativity” (p. 16).

Enjoyment of the lesson and the activity was also shared by the learners with Rishi (Female, 18 years) having reflected that *“It was fun marking the rubrics and I enjoyed it because we were divided into groups and we marked differently so groups were debating on which rating was correct”*. Likewise, Annel (Female, 18 years) indicated that *“Rating, it was kind of enjoyable because we were like debating, we couldn’t get the same remarks thus were asked to give reasons to what we answered. Curious (Male, 18 years) posits that “Learning how to judge others explanations and solving problems in a written scripts was a pleasure”*.

To promote self-assessment, I gave the learners their marked pre-test scripts so that they could have a glimpse of their initial positions in terms of the generic features. Whilst giving out the scripts, a lot of learners reasoned how they knew already that their writings did not meet the conventions taught to them. Tioté (Male 17 years) posited that *“because we marked the explanation ... it was pleasure to realised that the explanation we wrote the day we started was very very poor”*. Furthermore, Mona KomBlom (Male, 18 years) indicated that *“I got a knowledge on how we are marked what are the think considered and by learning that I can now write accordingly”*. Mbalangadja (Female, 17 years) indicated that *“All I find interesting is the finding out that when you are writing explanation you have to sequence your idea, and I know the explanation which is poor and which is excellent.”* Due to the fact that the pre-test was a crucial part of this intervention, learners had to return the scripts for I was scared of them to be lost.

Working in groups for the learners satisfied the need for LCE which is advocated for in Namibia as a teaching approach (see Section 2.5.3), as it promotes learners to be at the helm of their learning. Social interaction of learners through group works found learners assuming the role of MKO as they helped with marking. Alike, learners exercised their academic language fluency through reasoning and justifying as to why their choices are right and/or why

the other groups' marking were wrong. In relation to Cummins (1984) BICS and CALP quadrants (Figure 2), convincing and reasoning are high cognitive skills because one needs to think critically, use complex language structures and employ field specific vocabulary. Their conducts were therefore an indication of a gradual shift in their academic language in line with the learning proficiency learning continuum (Figure 7).

Similarly, their marking of the activity as per the results above indicates that the learners were developing genre awareness (Ong, 2016) in terms of the generic features that they came to learn more through the deconstruction phase of the GPC. That further compounds the success of tackling genre writing from the level of the whole text which it involves genre analysis and the explicit teaching of the structures, in the process helping learners with placing the language at the centre of writing development through shared understanding and explicit guidance (Hyland, 1992).

#### **4.6.2 What did not go well?**

The debate amongst the learners as to where the tick should be placed resulted in too much noise. I can attribute such weakness to my own failure to set up class rules prior to my implementation of the GBA intervention. Instead, I just kept telling the learners to keep their voices low.

Furthermore, the option on who to justify the reason behind where the ticks are placed led to learners shying away from speaking. That put me in a position to strike a balance between a learners' dominant classroom (which is LCE) and a teacher dominant (TCE) by nominating learners to explain. So doing made the learners to feel a bit uncomfortable because as soon as it was their group to explain, silence prevailed. Lakx (Male, 22 years) validated that by saying *"I was interested in marking but I was interested in speaking since you ask some question which I was unable to answer thus I keep my mouth shut and this make the period little bit boring to my side"*.

#### **4.6.3 What needed to be improved if the lesson were to be taught in the future?**

Instead of giving learners general explanation texts from the books, it could be ideal to incorporate samples of the learners' works from the pre-test/writing. That could have put them in a better position to mark the work they really know was produced in their class by their peers.

Learners suggest that it will be ideal to also afford them an opportunity to mark activities individually in order to be familiar, as opposed to the culture of doing it in groups. Tone (Male, 18 years) indicates that *“I suggest that the next time we should do the marking individually, so that the teacher can see tha all learner are capable to see how things should be written”*. Alike, Liverpool (Male, 18 years) suggests that *“I think group works must come to an end in the next lesson because this affect lazy learners not to benefit anything as they are always dependent”*. Such remarks signify the importance of exploring individual learners’ weaknesses necessary for rendering the individuated scaffolding. It was, however, contrasted by Thangeni (Male, 18 years) who indicates that *“we must continue working in groups so that we can help other and share ideas that other don’t know”*. Such contrast is further compounding the call by Adejoke (2007) who indicates that *“teaching using the learner-centred method allows for communicative and interactive process of learning through pair or group work”* (unpaged). Some learners also suggest the giving of activities individually to be exchanged between peers for assessment. In that line, Mbalangandja (Male, 17 years) states that *“What needs to be done is we must be given an activity to write and swop paper to others to mark”*. That matches the call for a facilitation of learning by doing, and self- and peer assessment (Njabili, 1995; Brandes & Ginnis, 1996; McCombs & Whistler, 1997).

#### 4.7 Lesson Four

This lesson aimed at immersing my learners in the linguistic (language) features of an explanation as shared in Section 2.4.3. I started the lesson with an analysis of an authentic written explanation titled *“How do we breathe?”* (Appendix 3b); followed by a group activity whereby learners analysed three copies of their peers’ pre-test explanation, using a marking rubric (Table 7). As per the ethical consideration, the learners’ work were copied and used with their permission and the names were withheld to protect the writers’ identities. Below is a summary of the lesson and the language skills it covered.

<b>Deconstruction (Language features)</b>				
<b>Introduction</b>	Building the field on language features of explanations			
<b>Tasks</b>	Studying labelled features of an explanation in a text Marking the presence of language features in copies of pre-test work (groups) Oral feedback on the score/grading			
<b>Closing</b>	Written reflections			
<b>Skills</b>				
reading	writing	Listening	speaking	Grammar and usage
√	√	√	√	√

**Table 13: Summary of Lesson Four**

### 4.7.1 What went well?

In my journal I wrote the following:

- This lesson was just interesting and more interactive because the learners were actively engaging themselves in the marking activity.

Like in Lesson Three, I anticipated that the level of engagement and concentration in this lesson was going to be high. The reason being, I exposed my learners to an authentic explanation in Lesson Two, in the process having ‘eased’ the learners into the conventions of writing explanations (Ong, 2016), which of course was the case. Initially, I planned to use an explanation on how breathing happens (Appendix 3b) however, I came to realise that it would lead to boredom since the learners encountered it already in Lesson Two. I therefore replaced that with three copies of my learners’ pre-test writing (Appendix 5b). See also Section 4.9.

Whilst facilitating group works, some learners indicated to me how easy it was becoming for them to figure out the items as per the marking rubric. Some groups called me to go and see how they were doing it. They then read and debated or agreed where to put the tick in terms of ‘definitely, average and not at all’ and marked in my presence. Where I wanted to intervene either to ask a question or give a justification, I was answered: “*Just wait Sir!*” So doing made me feel relaxed because my learners have assumed the role of MKO in their groups, which underscores the importance of for social interaction among learners. It also underscores the significance of tackling the teaching of writing from the level of the whole text, of whose absence would have led to learners learning grammatical features in isolation.

There were nine groups of five learners in the class and below is how they scored the three readings given. Cognisance should be taken that for the pre-test explanation I only kept three copies that I used in the lesson. I therefore presented them in the same sequence as below, in Appendix 5b, and named them Explanation 1 to 3 in Section 4.4.1 for easy referencing and a better understanding.

	<b>Explanation 1</b>	<b>Explanation 2</b>	<b>Explanation 3</b>
<b>Group 1</b>	3	7	<b>8</b>
<b>Group 2</b>	3	5	7
<b>Group 3</b>	<b>5</b>	6	5
<b>Group 4</b>	3	7	6
<b>Group 5</b>	4	7	<b>4</b>
<b>Group 6</b>	3	7	5
<b>Group 7</b>	2	6	7
<b>Group 8</b>	2	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Group 9</b>	4	7	<b>8</b>

**Table 14: Learners' scoring of the linguistic features' activity**

The above results indicate that majority of the groups marked the explanations and classified them in the rightful categories; which satisfies the language awareness and growth along the language learning continuum (Figure 7). I however picked up from the scores that there were some groups (whose scores are highlighted) that had either an overrating or an underscore. While it may sound negative, for this study, it is such difference in rating that made the lesson more interesting. So, I asked the whole class to agree on the rating of each text, with text 1 believed to be ‘poor 0 - 4’, text 2 ‘average 5 -7’ and text 3 ‘average 5-7’. The concerned group therefore had to explain or justify their positions (like in Lesson 3). To do that, they first had to state where they placed their ticks in terms of definitely, partially or not at all which led to other learners in the class objecting and reason accordingly as to why they felt certain ticks were placed in wrong columns. Other than that, some groups concerned instead of justifying the reason behind their awarding of marks, they quickly rectified their mistake and shared how they realised where they placed a wrong tick.

Such interaction further compounds the notion of cognitive demand in order to justify their positions as shared earlier. It also proves the power of LCE that when learners are given autonomy to engage actively in their learning, they are more likely to learn from each other for their ZPD might not be the same. That finds those that know better than the other assuming the role of the MKO others and scaffold others accordingly. Affording my learners an opportunity to actively engage in assessing the works also satisfies the need for formative assessment which affords learners an opportunity to work on and improve their weaknesses as opposed to a summative exam which is deemed a single-shot do or die (Guskey, 2003).

In the activity discussed above, highlighting of the groups that scored above or below the rating signifies the power of the teacher as a MKO in ensuring that learners' learning is facilitated accordingly. If it was not for me to identify such differential scores, all groups could have felt that they have marked correctly which could have resulted in learners writing mistakes, particularly the ones that overrated their scores. Similarly, I sat with my learners from Group 8 because unlike others that made a single mistake, they made two. That indicates the need for me to render the necessary assistance so that all learners could be well versant with the conventions of marking linguistic features. Hence, I asked them whether they knew and understood the components of the marking rubric particularly 'definitely and partially'. Their answer was a 'yes' and they explained accordingly. I then asked them to analyse their marking in order to figure out where they ticked wrongly. That is where they revealed that they were confused by the similarities in the following statements/items in the marking rubric: "uses linking words (conjunctions and connectives) to link and sequence events" and "Uses passive and active voice to link cause and effect" (See Table 7 and Appendix 4b). My learners felt they meant the same thing, resulting in them ticking in the same column for both, which resulted in an overrating. I therefore explained each in details, and thereafter shared the same explanation with the whole class in order for all of them to have the same understanding. Such knowledge is imperative because the language features they were marking are the same features they should employ in their writings, and a lack of understanding in marking them correctly may affect their writings as well.

As for my learners' reflections, they indicate their involvement in marking to be fascinating. Thulo (18 years, male) states that "*The marking process was awesome*", whereas Rishi (18 years, female) indicates that "*it was fun marking the rubrics because we understand and we know what we were doing. Groups have different marking rates and it was*". Similarly, Street Bangers (17 years, Male) indicates that "*every thing as we got a chance to mark 3 paper (explanation) and it was really fun*". Adorable (17 years, female) indicates that "*I found it interesting because I have learnt how to mark an explanation and I can also spot out what is missing in an explanation*".

As a sign of movement from BICS to CALP, some learners indicate knowing the specific tense in which explanations are written to be their best encounter in the lesson. On what went well, Nkondowasizwe (20 years, Male) indicates "*learning the tense to be used in explanations which is simple present tense*". Alike, Penny (18 years, female) indicates "*Learning the*".

*explanation in detaile was very interesting especially the fact that I had to learn that there is a specific tense that we use when writing an explanation”.*

The indication of learners to have learned and understood the tense of explanations implicitly indicates their movement from general conversational language to a more specialised academic language as per Gibbons (1991), Cummins (2008) and van der Mescht’s(2017) ideas. Such movement further satisfies the intended increment learning as per the GBA language learning continuum (Figure 7). Other than that, the challenge between learners in groups as they questioned and corrected each other is in line with the socio-constructivism theory whereby it is indicated that learners learn well when they are interacting with others (Section 2.6.2). The notion of learners demonstrating to me how they mark the work and block my inputs because it could dilute their works informed me on pedagogic practices in a way that, I have to be flexible enough to allow my learners freedom.

#### **4.7.2 What did not go well?**

Although the learners have been participating and actively engaging in their learning, the level of noise was very high in this lesson as well; brought about by discussions in groups and objection to groups’ wrong scores. That indicates the disadvantage of LCE and the socio-constructivism theory which should not be overlooked.

Although Webb (2015) advocates for learners’ works to be assessed with the belief that it offers “more motivation in the students to write well because the writer has a tangible audience to consider and from whom he/she will receive instant feedback (p. 175), it was contrary in my lesson. I found using copies of learners’ works written in their own handwriting as teaching aids to be disadvantageous. In the lesson, I observed that instead of some learners paying attention to the nature of the lesson which is marking the presence of language features, they resorted to scrutinising whose handwritings they were marking. That has the potential of provoking the owners of the explanation which could lead to denying permission for their works to be duplicated in the future. Alike, it has the potential for affecting the owners’ participation in the class particularly those whose works fall in the poor category.

Other than the above, the learners were also getting bored with filling in the daily lesson reflection sheets. I base that on their return rate, whereby only 29 sheets out of 39 had serious reflection in them with the rest written N/A throughout. That had negative effects for the study because it holds back crucial information imperative for my pedagogic and content choices. It

was however beyond my scope to identify the individuals that did not reflect because it could infringe on the ethical issues for this study (Section 3.9).

### 4.7.3 What needed to be improved if the lesson were to be taught in the future?

On the issue of learners' duplicated work, I suggest teachers to type the content of the paper verbatim and use the typed paper instead. That will protect the writers from bullying, and from disengaging themselves from the lesson presentations.

Unfortunately there was no learner who reflected on the possible suggestions in this lesson, hence the absence of their ideas in this section.

## 4.8 Lesson Five

In this lesson I aimed at working collaboratively with my learners to produce a joint explanation text on how flowers are pollinated. To do that, I first gave learners a handout on the parts of the flowers and an activity to build the field around pollination of flowers. Working in groups and brainstorming together, I expected the final product of each group to feed into our jointly written sequence under the same topic.

The following is a summary of what happened and the language features covered.

<b>Joint construction</b>				
<b>Introduction</b>	Building the field on pollination			
<b>Tasks</b>	Studying a cross section of a flower Filling in a fishbone diagram (individually) Filling in a sequence chain diagram (groups) Share group sequences (orally) Study and propose cohesive devices Writing the sequence on the board (teacher)			
<b>Closing</b>	Written reflections			
<b>Skills</b>				
reading	writing	Listening	speaking	Grammar and usage
√	√	√	√	√

**Table 15: Summary of Lesson Five**

### 4.8.1 What went well?

This lesson grounded my learners because they anticipated that it would be as easy as the last two. However, I planned it in such a way that it would act as a 'springboard' to the demand of an individual write up. Hence, I gave them an activity on the topic of pollination (another

Biology and Agriculture topic). Literally, joint construction in most cases is done on the topic in which learners had to write their individual activity, however I did it differently by focusing on the topic of pollination other than on how a flushing toilet works, which forms the basis of the next (Lesson Six). The reason was to avoid boring my learners with the topic on how a flushing toilet works. Similarly, I avoided jointly writing with them on how a flushing toilet works because it could have resulted in the replication of the same explanation in the post-test (see Section 4.8).

I therefore divided my learners in groups where they had to start with an individual activity studying a cross section of a flower (Appendix 3d) and fill in the fishbone diagram (Appendix 3e). The activity was challenging for many learners and some even ended up writing the part of a flower and its definition. Since I was aware of the level of difficulty for the task, I went around the groups and highlighted such mistakes with the whole class so that they improved on them. So doing resulted in my learners doing right. The major challenge however came when they had to transfer details from the fishbone diagram to the chain sequence diagram (Appendix 3f). There learners had to reach consensus on the correct sequence. As indicated earlier, a feeling of discomfort for the learners as engaging in the tasks is not negative for this study, for it shows to me as a MKO the need for support I have to render to my learners. Similarly, discomfort for my learners was not a burden but rather a learning opportunity. Penny (female, 18 years) reflects that *“The challenge of writing an explanation together in class was so interesting. What is challenging is also interesting to me”*.

Having eased them into writing the cause and effect, the onus lied with my learners to fill in their chain sequence diagrams agreeing on the correct sequence. To avoid spoon feeding them, I did not interfere in their discussions because that could resemble a joint activity between me and individual groups or the whole class. Hence without my support, each group proposed what they felt was their first event in the process of pollination. I therefore had to get each group’s first step and so on until we reached consensus on the correct sequence.

Learners therefore proposed cohesive devices in order for me to write the “joint explanation” on the chalkboard. As they kept proposing, I realised that they did not know a lot because they kept repeating ‘from there, and then’. That showed the need for my urgent attention. So, I gave them copies of transitions and connectors (Appendix 3g) from which they confidently started proposing words.

On the reflections of the learners, Gigabyte (Female, 18 years) indicated that *“It was so interesting to debate and the way we stucked ... on how to write an explanation of how pollination occurs was just nice and that’s when we learned that writing is not easy”*.

The teaching of Biology content in ESL was also a welcomed gesture by some learners. Mbalangandja (Male, 17 years) indicated that *“All I found interesting is the bringing of lot of papers, especially those with biology summary that means two subjects in one lesson.”* Other sentiments *“Explanation has linked our thinking abilities between English and other subjects”* (Megan, 18 years, Female).

The tools used to sequence ideas were also applauded. Tloml (Female, 18 years) indicated that *“The fishbone diagram on how to write causes of given effects and the chain sequence gave us a view on how to write series of actions following a logical order”*.

Delia (Female, 17 years) listed her most interesting things of the lesson as follows:

- *Writing in a fishbone diagram where we had to give the causes of given effects individually*
- *Writing in a chain sequence where we had to put our ideas to-gether in groups*
- *Writing a joint construction where we had to put all our ideas together in the whole class from our joint construction to come up with and satisfactory explanation of how pollination occurs.*

Generally, the learners’ reflections indicate the significance of working collaboratively which is the nature of Vygotsky’s socio-constructivism theory which informed this study. They also underscore the significance of LCE and the notion of the need for knowledge of the linguistic features and the technical terms in order to write within the ambits of the topic. The learners’ knowledge of the cohesive devices also indicated how my learners were more on the conversational language plateau, hence my giving of the copies acted as a ‘slider’ towards the CALP plateau.

The end product of our joint construction was as follows:

*How flowers are pollinated*

*Pollination is defined as the transfer of pollen grains from the anther to the stigma. It relies on agents of pollination such as wind, water and insects.*

*To happen, pollen grains that are powdery like are produced in the male parts of a flower, which comprises an anther and a filament. They then have to be transferred to the stigma of which together with the style form the female parts of a flower.*

Unfortunately we did not manage to finish the explanation because of time. However, reading the explanation above indicates the general understanding of both the structural and linguistic features.

#### **4.8.2 What did not go well?**

In my journal I indicate time to be a major barrier. That was exacerbated by my learners finding the first activity tough. Hence, instead of writing the part and its contribution to the process of pollination, they ended up writing the parts of the flower and their definition. Rishi (Female, 18 years) proved that by saying “*We were given a fish diagram to write in but I was confused I didn’t know what to write*”. Lack of ideas on a topic and/or genre is a major drawback for learners because when confused, they are likely to write vaguely or worst to leave the writing exercise completely unattended. Such findings therefore took me aback and somewhat answered the rationale behind my learners leaving questions in the examination unattempted which gave rise to this study (see Section 1.2).

#### **4.8.3 What needed to be improved if the lesson were to be taught in the future?**

The lesson needs incorporation of a video whereby learners will at least be able to see the sequence of events. That will better assist learners in sequencing ideas of which an audio-visual could enhance since learners would hear a commentator explaining. So doing will be imperative for building the field and setting the context, which are aspects of scaffolding learners towards independent writing as per the GPC cycle (Figure 5).

On the issue of time in relation to prolonged debates, the teacher needs to allocate time to each activity and stick to it so that learners will learn how to self-regulate. There is also a need for appointing a timekeeper or setting an alarm to ensure time on task and prevent unnecessary time wastage.

## 4.9 Lesson Six

In this lesson I aimed at assessing the change or stagnation in my learners' genre writing skills as a result of my implementation of the GBA intervention. To do that, learners individually wrote an explanation on how a flushing toilet works; the same activity they encountered in Lesson One. I did that to afford my learners an opportunity to prove that they have learnt and understood the convention of writing explanation texts. Other than that, I also wanted to gain a picture of the efficacy of the GBA for the learners wrote the initial activity without my explanation. Hence, in my belief, affording them a second chance gave me a better chance to draw conclusions. Cognisance that should be taken that the processes of the flushing toilet were never discussed or revised during the teaching of the conventions of writing explanation. Similarly, learners were kept in the dark throughout not knowing that they were returning to the same topic at the end of the intervention. I, primarily, did that to avoid boring my learners with the topic and not to make the flushing toilet the centre of the intervention, but rather to stay on course with the teaching of the generic and linguistic features of explanations.

The following is a tabulated summary of what happened in the lesson and the language skills it covered.

Individual construction				
<b>Introduction</b>	A recap on the process of a flushing toilet			
<b>Tasks</b>	Read/View labelled diagram of a flushing toilet Read/study the pre-test explanation and its marked rubric Question and answer Individual writing on the same topic			
<b>Closing</b>	Written reflections			
Skills				
reading	Writing	Listening	speaking	Grammar and usage
√	√	√	√	√

**Table 16: Summary of Lesson Six**

### 4.9.1 What went well?

My learners were so keen to write, particularly after I told them that they were writing in the same topic as in Lesson One. Their curiosity found them asking constructive questions aimed at structuring and sequencing events correctly such as: “*Where exactly does water pass to go into the bowl?*” and “*To define a flushing toilet, is it a tool, instrument, a machine or a mechanism?*”

In the end, all learners produced written explanation texts which they submitted for my consideration and which fulfilled the aim of my lesson. The results of the post-test are shared in Table 8 (Section 4.3). The following are samples of the learners' post-intervention explanation texts. For the original work, see Appendix 5b.

#### Sample A

##### How a flushing toilet works

*Initially, when a flush lever is pressed down, the trip lever pulls the lift cable up which hangs stopper and flash valve. This causes water to flow within a overflow tube as water in now free to move due to opened flush valve.*

*Water enters a bowl from a flapper. When it enters in, a float ball moves down as water goes into a bowl. This is happening since the the flash valve is opened. Water seal flows faster into the passageway due to the pressure from the flush tank.*

*Passageway pass water seal into waste piping. After all these, cold water supply gives water through a ball-cock assembly. A ball-cock assembly pass cold water into fill valve and enters a tank. When water gets much in the tank and it gets full, it pushes float ball up as water becomes more in the tank. This causes the flush valve to close and to stop water from the cold water supply.*

#### Sample B

##### How a flushing toilet works

*A flushing toilet consist of two process, the flushing process and the refill process. Flushing toilet have a water tank and a bowl. Inside the tank, there is a trip lever, lift cable, a stopper and fill valve.*

*Once the flush lever is pulled down it causes the trip lever to move up with the lift cable then the lift cable lifts up the stopper and the flush valves. After the stopper and flush are lifted up this causes water in tank to flow into the bowl taking away the waste in the bowl into passageway and this is called the flushing process.*

*On the refill process, in the tank there is a flow ball that floats on water and moves down as water flows into the bowl. When it is moving down it opens up the fill valve then the water refills the tank.*

*Flushing toilet are made different or look different but they works in a similar way.*

## Sample C

### *How a flushing toilet works*

*A flushing toilet is a mechanism used to flush away wastes. It works in two processes, namely, the flush and refill process. It consists of many parts which help in these two processes.*

*Whenever a flushing lever is pushed, it pulls up the flapper on the bottom of the tank, opening it allowing water to flow into the bowl. There are small holes alongside the bowl were water is forced through as it enters the bowl. Water then flow through the passage way and this completes the flush process.*

*Back in the water tank, as the water tank is emptied the supply tube supply water into the ball cock and water is released into the tank by the fill tube, some water flows into the overflow tube. As the level of water rises, the floating ball rises along with it, as it reaches the overflow tube height, the floating ball closes the fill valve waiting for another flushing round, that completes the refill process and that is how the flushing toilet works.*

*There are different types of flushing toilets, but they all work in a similar way in the flush process and refill process.*

Whilst marking, I wrote the following in my research journal.

- Improvement in the usage of the timeless present tense
- Improvement in the usage of technical words
- Improvement in paragraphing
- Improvement in the length of the explanations

- Improvement in the usage of passive voice

My analysis of the above explanation indicated proper employment of both the generic and linguistic features in line with the conventions I have explained to my learners. It also indicated a major shift in the length of the texts produced in comparison to the pre-test texts. In essence, the post-test explanations have demonstrated a significant shift of my learners' English from BICS to CALP, and their writing having satisfied most if not all of the features in van der Mescht's (2017) table (Table 1).

In terms of structural features, the produced texts have satisfied all the structural features in terms of topic, introduction, body and conclusion.

For me, such findings cement the significance of the genre theory, Vygotsky socio-constructivism theory and formative assessment as explained in Section 2.6.2 and 2.6.3

The learners' reflections indicate encountering the same explanation as having been the best part of the lesson. To that, Schweinsteiger (18 years, Male) reflects that "*writing an explanation knowing what I am doing, because last time I wrote that explanation I couldn't know what I was writing ...*". Alike Mbalangandja (17 years, male) indicates that "*The writing of the explanation that we wrote previously. There comes a time when a realised that now i am better in writing explanation*".

#### **4.9.2 What did not go well?**

My initial planning of this lesson involved video-watching like we did in the first lesson. However, there was a clash by my lesson and the Geography lesson that uses the computer laboratory sometimes too. Therefore, I had to change the venue and in essence restructure the lesson to implement it without the video. That found me handing back the learners' pre-test scripts with their marked rubrics. I did that to afford learners a chance to spot out the weaknesses in their pre-test and work on them; which was welcomed by learners.

Time, like in other lessons, was also a problem again because although learners were redoing the same activity, they took too long to complete the task. That found us exceeding with ten minutes for I thought/anticipated the lesson to fit in a 40 minutes lesson.

### 4.9.3 What needed to be improved if the lesson were to be taught in the future?

It is imperative for teachers to plan well in advance and to communicate with their colleagues to avoid clashes like the one I had encountered which could have affected the lesson.

### 4.10 Lesson Seven

This lesson was specifically for feedback and evaluation. That implied that I had to give my learners feedback for their post-test that I had pending. In return, I also had to hear from my learners how they experienced the GBA intervention I have implemented with them. To do that, I first gave the learners their marked scripts followed by the whole class percentage-score between their pre-test and their post-test (Table 8). I then shared what I felt contributed to such performances both in the pre- and post-test. In the end, I requested learners to reflect orally their experiences of the intervention in terms of what they think were the best aspects and/or negative aspects. The discussion was not restricted to some learners, but rather aimed the whole class and learners had to participate voluntarily. The discussion was video-recorded by a research assistant whose aim (as shared earlier) was not to analyse my teaching, but rather to record only, for the recorded data is imperative for my reflection of the intervention. The following is a tabulated summary of the lesson and the language skills covered.

Feedback and Reflection				
<b>Introduction</b>	Discussion of the results			
<b>Tasks</b>	Comparative analysis of the pre- and post-test performance Whole class closing discussion			
<b>Closing</b>	Lesson learnt from the intervention			
Skills				
reading	writing	Listening	Speaking	Grammar and usage
√		√	√	

**Table 17: Summary of Lesson Seven**

#### 4.10.1 What went well?

My feedback was well received by the learners as I presented it to them. Most of them indicated how they were already convinced that the results will never be the same since the final activity was easy for them –in their views. Applauding of the provision of feedback underscores the significance of feedback shared in Section 2.6.3.

On the participants, I got five learners (3 boys and two girls) that were willing to share their experiences of the intervention. Below are some extracts from the video on the positive aspects of the intervention, leading to their performance improvement.

*Your lessons. Your lesson at least made me understand something. At first I didn't know anything ... I didn't know how to write an explanation. I didn't know how to start writing an explanation, not even writing ... I didn't know how to write paragraphs, I only wrote one paragraph.*

Another learner indicated the following in support of the intervention.

*I have learnt something, I have learnt from ... I found out that at least I can write something meaningful. .... At first I scored average and now I got an excellent. I have learnt something, I have taken something out of these lessons*

#### **4.10.2 What did not go well?**

After informing my learners in the beginning that the lesson will be recorded primarily for study purposes, a lot of them shied away from speaking. Cognisance should be taken that I have actually explained the ethical considerations to them, but there was nothing I could do to convince them. That can be one of the limitations for this study.

#### **4.10.3 What needed to be improved if the lesson were to be taught in the future?**

In order to overcome learners' shying away from sharing information, I suggest to have the lesson tape/voice recorded whereby the learners' faces will not feature. In my views, so doing will boost their participation and in the process provide rich data. Else, teachers need to have 'trial runs' prior to the main research component in which the lessons will be videoed for the sake of getting learners used to the practice.

#### **4.11 Conclusion**

In this chapter I reflected on the actual happenings of each lesson of the lesson unit and shared data on the pre-test and post-test. I also shared and discussed data in terms of what went well, what did not go well and what are the possible suggestions for future lessons. In all I presented, I validate the claims with the extracts of my own and my learners' reflections and my learners' written explanations.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I present a discussion of the aspects that emerged from the analysis of Chapter Four in terms of the lessons learnt through this GBA intervention. I also share the contributions this intervention has made to my pedagogic practices, and to my learners' academic English language development with regards to writing explanation texts. Limitations and significance of the study are also shared, and in the end, I give suggestions for further research.

### **5.2 Positive aspects for the GBA intervention**

Having implemented two cycles of AR in the teaching of the genre of explanation texts to my Grade 11 ESL learners, I conclude that the whole intervention was a resounding success. Other than that, my implementation of this intervention has proved learning to have happened along the learning continuum arrow (Figure 7) as per my anticipation. I therefore conclude that teaching genre through a GBA enhances good performance, makes positive contributions to the researcher's pedagogic practices, and improves learners' academic language fluency and genre writing proficiency.

#### **5.2.1 GBA enhances meaningful writing**

Drawing from the results of the percentage score of the pre-test and the post-test (Table 8), I conclude that teaching genre writing through a GBA intervention enhances meaningful writing of coherent texts. Prior to the intervention, my learners demonstrated little knowledge of writing explanation texts. They even failed to produce satisfactory explanations of a satisfactory length during the group activity (Figure 8). However, the end results of their post-test shows a significant shift. I attribute that shift to the GPC which afforded us an opportunity to interact with texts collaboratively, (the thing I did not know before) in the end resulting in learners developing a critical awareness of both the generic and linguistic features of the written explanation texts.

Below I profile the contributions this intervention made in my pedagogic knowledge and in my learners' genre writing and academic English proficiency.

### **5.2.2 GBA contribution to my pedagogic knowledge**

As a qualified teacher with six years of experience in teaching ESL, I came to realise that the way I have been teaching the writing of genre to my learners was more inclined to reaching the objectives of the syllabus but not necessarily to attend to the needs of the learners. That was due to the fact that I had been teaching genre writing in whatever shortest time possible which could be a single lesson. Alike, I had been explaining the layout and linguistic features in one lesson and did not offer learners a chance to deconstruct authentic texts. Such teaching, I believe made me a ‘knowledge transmitter’ which in-principle made my learners passive listeners other than active participants. Through this study, I therefore learnt how to plan a series of lessons to address aspects of a genre in totality with a lesson or a number of lessons allocated to a specific aspect. For example, I divided the deconstruction phase into generic and linguistic features to be taught in separate lessons.

Other than that, I also came to realise my weaknesses and wrong assumption of thinking that learners could not mark continuous pieces meaningfully. My belief was that, learners could not spot out all the ‘grammatical’ errors in the texts. After engaging with literature around feedback in this study, I came to learn that my marking was more form feedback than content feedback (Grami, 2005) as discussed in Section 2.6.3. It was therefore after implementing this GBA intervention that I came to realise that through employing a marking rubric one can mark the learners’ works and grade them accordingly without reddening the work trying to spot out grammatical errors. I also realised that, employing a marking rubric afforded learners a greater opportunity to mark their own and their peers’ works, cutting down on a burden of teachers having to mark a lot of books other than engaging learners in marking as well.

I also came to learn and agree with Rose (2005) that, the traditional way of teaching writing that gradually builds from letters, words, sentences, paragraphs then a text is counterproductive and time wasting. Such teaching does not demonstrate the real usage of language in context and hardly familiarises learners with the layout of the text. Hence, after employing the GBA tackling the teaching of writing from the level of the whole text, I came to learn how learners actively engaged with both the language and generic features and developed awareness of how to assess the presence of such features in their own and others’ works.

In terms of the teaching and learning approaches, I came to realise that although the LCE is the canonised approach in the Namibian education system, a total neglect of TCE could impinge

upon the teaching of genre writing. That is due to the fact that, there is a need for some lessons to be more TCE than LCE if they are to reach their objectives. GBA, however, is neither LCE nor TCE; it blends the two. Its implementation, however, requires flexibility if the teacher is to reach the intended lesson objectives.

Finally, I came to realise that, there is no such a thing as a *one-size-fits-all* in content and in assessment. That means, the teaching of learners the same content and employing the same teaching approaches year in and year out hinders individualised learning and masks rendering of the necessary support in line with the immediate needs of the learners. Alike, employing a one size fits all marking rubric impedes learning because learners will not know what they did well and what they did not do well; which calls for provision of feedback as a way of extending learning (Kepner, 1991) as discussed in Section 2.6.3.

### **5.2.3 GBA contribution to my learners' English development and genre writing proficiency**

As indicated in Chapter 1, my learners were struggling to write continuous pieces, the problem that necessitated this study. Alike, in the needs analysis lesson aimed at scouting out their knowledge of the conventions of writing explanations, they scored optimally low as per Table 8(Section 4.3) which virtually proved the existence of the problem. As a result, this needs analysis informed the direction of my GBA intervention. As a result of the GBA intervention, my learners demonstrated a sound understanding of both the generic and linguistic conventions of writing explanation texts, in such a way that they were finally able to produce coherent and meaningful texts. There is also an improvement in their academic language development particularly on the usage of technical terms and the usage of cohesive devices. As a result, the length of their texts improved significantly.

For assessment, my learners demonstrated genre awareness by marking and grading explanation texts accordingly through using a marking rubric with features (generic and linguistic) and descriptive enough and clear on what is that that they should look out for. That therefore led to my conclusion that GBA has the potential to overcome the problem of learners leaving sections unattempted in the examinations; the conduct that loses them a lot of marks and leading to poor performance in English.

#### **5.2.4 Social interaction in GBA promotes learning**

As a tenet of Vygotsky (1978) socio-constructivism theory that learning takes place when there is interaction between novice and a MKO (Section 2.6.2), the same happened in this study. As learners worked together in groups, their ZPD came at play which led to some assuming the role of a MKO, rendering the necessary support to other learners. So doing enhanced learning and in the process saved me much time that I could have wasted if I was to give individual attention to each group or individual learners. Besides that, social interaction through working in groups led to shy learners engaging in the tasks through asking questions to their group member. As a result, the confident learners posed the questions to me, resulting in my answering of the question benefiting all learners.

Alike, the interaction, questioning, reasoning and justifying of groups' positions on aspects of the lesson proved the significance for social interaction in learning. There, learners had to challenge each other in a constructive way, resulting in some groups changing their positions even before they could be asked to justify their choice particularly in marking. So doing indicated the power of engaging learners in their own learning in which the teacher assumes the role of a facilitator.

#### **5.3 Limitations of the study**

In this study, I was both an observer and a participant, and my lesson presentations were not recorded, except Lesson 7 which was specifically for reflection. That meant there could be certain crucial elements that I did not pick up that could have added strength to the data.

Alike, although I have taught and reflected 'honestly' on my lessons, biasness in data cannot be ruled out because no one such as a critical friend or a non-participant observer reflected on my conducting of the lessons. The research assistant that came in was specifically to video record the oral reflections (Lesson Seven) and had no say in the lesson presentations.

From the learners' works, I only made three copies of the pre-test that I reproduced with the owners' permission, because is all I needed for the lesson presentation. In the end, I gave back all the marked scripts and could not get them any longer. That confined my data and led to a repetitious usage of data from the readings. Duplicating a lot of learners' explanation texts could have added more strength to my study.

Since this was a case study in a single Grade 11 class and in the teaching of explanation texts, the results cannot be generalised to other Grade 11 classes, and to the teaching and learning of other text types.

#### **5.4 Significance of the study**

This study is important because it challenges the status quo of little prominence given to research on approaches to enhancing genre writing and academic language in formal schooling, of which senior secondary level is part.

It also underscores the significance of teaching the genre of explanations, despite it not being indicated in the Namibian curriculum at present, and exposes further how its [explanation] teaching assists (in principle) the general understanding of other subjects that are hosts to explanations.

It also creates awareness to teachers and schools where the teaching of genre is still following a traditional way and learners are still side-lined from assessing continuous pieces because of wrong beliefs and assumptions. It also acts as a countermeasure to form feedback which is receiving prominence over content form, which is the more necessarily one for assessing the format and language application in text types.

It also created a platform in which media sources such as YouTube could be incorporated in ELT, for the purpose of building the field knowledge for genre writing, and in general for enhancing the teaching and learning of ESL.

Overall, it makes a contribution to teachers' pedagogic practices in the teaching of continuous writing which is a compulsory skill that learners should master in order to attain better symbols for promotion to the next grade or to gain entry to institutions of higher learning.

#### **5.5 Suggestions for further research**

After my analysis of the results of this study, I found a need for research on the following aspects

1. A similar study to be conducted on/in:
  - other genres other than explanation
  - other phases including upper primary and junior secondary

2. A study on the effectiveness of the current marking rubric (Appendix 4a) in enhancing genre writing
3. A study on the teaching approaches to teaching genre writing teachers employ at all phases (upper primary, junior secondary and senior secondary)

## **5.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I shared aspects that emerged from my data analysis and how the GBA intervention contributed to my pedagogic knowledge and to my learners' genre writing and academic language development. I also shared the limitations to my study and gave suggestions for further research. As concluding remarks, I say: Teachers may try their level best to improve the English performance of learners in schools. However, if they are to keep practicing the same things year in, year out assuming that all learners have the same weaknesses, it will yield no better results. Hence, employing a GBA could be a better solution as it offers them to work on the weaknesses of the learners they teach at that moment or that academic year, to which they will then build on to enhance the performance of the next learners.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 – Permission letters and Responses

#### Appendix 1a Access letter to the Regional Director

09 February 2016

Dear Sir

#### **Request to carry out a research**

I am a registered student at Rhodes University (South Africa) and an English teacher at *name of school*.

I am currently doing a Master of Education degree in English Language Teaching with the stated University on a part time basis. I am intending to carry out research in the field of Language Education focusing on the practice of writing explanatory text. I would like to explore the effectiveness of a Genre-Based Approach in the teaching of explanatory texts in English as a Second Language.

I therefore hereby request your permission to carry out my research at *name of school*, which is my duty station. The research will be carried out by teaching a series of lessons during the normal English Second Language lessons in a Grade 11 class consisting of 39 learners. The requisite procedures as regards research ethics will be adhered to, and the name of the school and the participants will not be revealed in the final document

I hope my request will receive your favourable consideration.

Yours faithfully

---

Linus V. Nekondo (Mr)

03 March 2016

Dear Sir

**Request to carry out a research**

I, **Linus V. Nekondo** (Student number: 613N6679) am a registered student at Rhodes University (South Africa) where I am currently doing a Master of Education degree in English Language Teaching on a part time basis. I wish to carry out research in the field of Language Education focusing on the practice of writing explanatory text. I want to explore the effectiveness of a Genre-Based Approach in the teaching of explanation texts in English as a Second Language.

I therefore hereby request your permission to carry out my research in your school (which, as you know, is also my duty station). If you grant me this permission, the research would be carried out by teaching a series of lessons during the normal English Second Language lesson periods in a Grade 11 class (39 learners). My research would therefore not disrupt the normal schedule of lessons. The requisite procedures as regards research ethics will be adhered to, and neither the name of the school nor the participants will be revealed in the final thesis document.

I hope my request will receive your favourable consideration.

Yours sincerely

---

Linus V. Nekondo (Mr)

*ps: Attached please find the University's approval of the research proposal and the Regional Director's letter granting permission for me to conduct such research.*

24 February 2016

**Subject: Permission to do research at *name of school***

1. Receipt of your letter on the above subject matter is hereby acknowledged.
2. Permission is granted for you to carry out the research on “Exploring the effectiveness of a Genre-Based Approach in the teaching of explanation texts in English as a Second Language as indicated by your letter.
3. This is indeed regarded as a crucial research study as it may bring improvement in the teaching of English Language which is currently poorly performing, especially in the northern regions.
4. As this activity will be done throughout normal teaching, normal lessons should not unduly be interrupted. This office has no objection in you carrying out your research and therefore would like to congratulate you on embarking on this important mission.
5. Please liaise with the school Principal, and your presence at the school should as well be noted by the office of the Inspector of Education in that circuit.

Yours sincerely,

Director: MEAC

Ohangwena Region

14 March 2016

**Subject: Permission to carry out a research at *name of school***

1. Receipt of your letter dated 03 March 2016 on the subject above is hereby acknowledged.
2. Permission is hereby granted, for you to carry out the research on “effectiveness of a Genre-Based Approach in teaching of explanation texts in English as a Second Language”.
3. As per your letter and our verbal discussion on the same issue, this activity will be carried out concurrently with daily, actually planning, teaching and learning of the same subject.
4. Let me register my confidence, that this crucial activity will not interfere with your normal activities and by extension no learner or group of learners will be advantaged or disadvantaged relative to others.
5. *Name of school* is proud to be associated with this important study, and we are confident that it will, ultimately results in the improvement of our performance in English as a second language.

Let me wish you all the best of luck for your study.

Yours in education

Principal

## Appendix 2 – The GBA Lesson Unit

### Appendix 2a Lesson One

Subject: English Second Language Topic: Explanation genre “needs analysis” Skill: Writing	Grade: 11 Date: Duration: 80 minutes
Focus: Writing a wide range of texts	
<b>Lesson objectives:</b> learners will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write appropriately for specific purposes</li> </ul>	
<b>Competencies:</b> Learners should be able to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write in a style appropriate to the audience and register</li> </ul>	
<b>Teaching aids:</b> A handout with labelled diagrams of a flush toilet A YouTube video of a toilet being flushed A labelled diagram of the parts of a toilet	
<b>Lesson proceedings</b>	
1. The teacher will give learners a picture of a flush toilet and ask the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) What it is</li> <li>b) How it works</li> </ul>	
2. The learners will give feedback on the questions asked, and to cement their understanding better; the teacher will play a YouTube indicating how a flushing toilet works. Learners are expected to make notes of the parts and actions involved in the flushing and refill processes.	
3. To broaden the learners understanding of the phenomenon at hand, the teacher will further give a labelled diagram of a flushing toilet to familiarise themselves with the names of the parts they might have not captured well whilst viewing the YouTube	
4. Without further support, learners will write an explanation titled “How a flushing toilet works” explaining both the flushing and refill process	
5. Reflection: filling in the lesson evaluation/reflection rubric	
<b>Homework:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	

Appendix 2b Lesson Two

Subject: English Second Language Topic: Explanation genre “setting context” Skill: Speaking	Grade: 11 Date: Duration: 80 minutes
Focus: responding appropriately	
Lesson objectives: learners will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make appropriate verbal responses in different contexts</li> </ul>	
Competencies: Learners should be able to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrate greater flexibility in dealing with new, topical ideas</li> </ul>	
Teaching aids:	
Lesson proceedings	
<b>1. Introduction:</b> The teacher will ask the learners to state the type of text they have written the previous day, [aimed at garnering learners prior knowledge of the genre]	
<b>2. Body:</b> The teacher will write the word “explanation” be it from the learners answers or introduce it in case it was not mentioned, and ask learners to share their knowledge on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) What it is (definition) or what it entails</li> <li>b) Its structure</li> <li>c) Its language features</li> </ul>	
3. In groups, learners are expected to brainstorm on the given questions and give an oral feedback	
4. The teacher will explain the structure of explanations, that it must have a “how” or “why” as part of the title, an introduction, a body as well as a concluding paragraph.	
5. The teacher will also explain the language features that it must have the following: <i>Timeless present, connectives, as well as verbs indicate action and the cause and effect etc</i>	
Reflection: filling in the lesson evaluation/reflection rubric	
Homework: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners will be tasked to go look for written explanations in books, newspapers or packages and bring them to class</li> </ul>	

Appendix 2c Lesson Three

Subject: English Second Language Topic: Explanation genre “deconstruction” (generic/structural features) Skill: Reading	Grade: 11 Date: Duration: 40 minutes
Focus: critical reading	
Lesson objectives: learners will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read critically materials from different sources</li> </ul>	
Competencies: Learners should be able to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse texts constructively and logically</li> </ul>	
Teaching aids: A written explanation titled “How do we breathe?” A generic structure checklist/marking rubric A text titled “How do we breathe?” with labelled structural features Two texts titled “How taps work”	
<b>Lesson proceedings</b>	
1. <b>Introduction:</b> The teacher will recap with the learners on what the explanation entails both linguistically and generically	
2. <b>Body:</b> The teacher will give learners a written explanation titled: “How do we breathe?” and ask learners to analyse it in terms of the structural conventions taught. After that, the teacher will give a labelled text on its generic structures/features.	
3. <b>Activity:</b> In groups, learners will be given two texts titled “How taps work” and use a generic structure checklist to assess the presence of Title, Introductory paragraph, sequencing of ideas as well as concluding paragraph	
4. The learners will give feedback on which of the two do they deem a complete explanation and why, reasoning based on the results of their (generic) marking rubric	
Reflection: filling in the lesson evaluation/reflection rubric	
Homework: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners will analyse the language features in the given explanation text</li> </ul>	

Appendix 2d Lesson Four

Subject: English Second Language Topic: Explanation genre “Deconstruction (language features) Skill: Reading	Grade: 11 Date: Duration: 80 minutes
Focus: critical reading	
Lesson objectives: learners will	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read critically materials from different sources</li> </ul>	
Competencies: Learners should be able to	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse texts constructively and logically</li> </ul>	
Teaching aids: A written explanation titled “How do we breathe?” A grammatically analysed text titled “How do we breathe?” Explanation texts titled “How taps work	
<b>Lesson proceedings</b>	
<b>1. Introduction:</b> a recap on the structural conventions of the explanatory texts	
2. Body: The teacher will ask learners to share their ideas on the language features they have identified from the given explanation, as part of the previous day homework	
3. To familiarise learners with language features that are the main content of the lesson, the teacher will further explain language features such as timeless present, cohesive devices as well as passive voice.	
4. In groups, learners will analyse the given text “text (a) and (b)” in terms of language features by highlighting/underlining all language features in the passage.	
5. The teacher will further give a language features labelled handout of a text on how we breathe? And explain how genre writing comprises two parts, namely: structural features and language features, and refer learners to the handout where they are well identified	
6. The teacher will ,then, correct or make explanations on the significance of the correct usage of language features, citing examples of using language wrongly which could lead to other genres such as a procedural text.	
Reflection: filling in the lesson evaluation/reflection rubric	
Homework:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners should go and research on the topic of “pollination” and make notes on                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) parts/things involved</li> <li>b) cause and effect</li> <li>c) sequence of events leading to pollination</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	

Appendix 2e Lesson Five

Subject: English Second Language Topic: Explanation genre “joint construction” Skill: writing	Grade: 11 Date: Duration: 40 minutes
Focus: developing and organising ideas into coherent sentences, paragraphs and whole texts	
Lesson objectives: learners will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• produce well organised coherent pieces of writing</li> </ul>	
Competencies: Learners should be able to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use introductory, developmental and concluding paragraphs</li> <li>• link and develop ideas</li> </ul>	
Teaching aids: a picture with labelled parts of a flower A handout with transitions and connectives (cohesive devices)	
<b>Lesson proceedings</b>	
<b>1. Introduction:</b> The teacher will ask the learners to state the structures and language features of the explanation (proceedings of the previous lesson)	
2. Body: The teacher will write “pollination” on the chalkboard and ask learners to share their knowledge on <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Its definition</li> <li>2. How it happens</li> </ol>	
3. The teacher will give a handout with labelled parts of a flower and ask learners to brainstorm on the parts, actions and cause/effect leading to flower pollination; and fill the details in a “Chain sequence diagram or fishbone diagram”	
4. Learners will report back to the class (orally) while the teacher will make notes on the board	
5. The teacher will give learners a handout with/of the connectives and transitions so that they can familiarise themselves with the cohesive devices that will better link the cause and effect as taught in the previous lessons	
6. The learners will then propose cohesive devices that will better link the processes indicated in learners diagrams	
7. Joint construction: the teacher together with the learners will write an explanation on “how flowers are pollinated”	
The explanation will be jointly evaluated using a checklist	
Reflection: filling in the lesson evaluation/reflection rubric	
Homework: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	

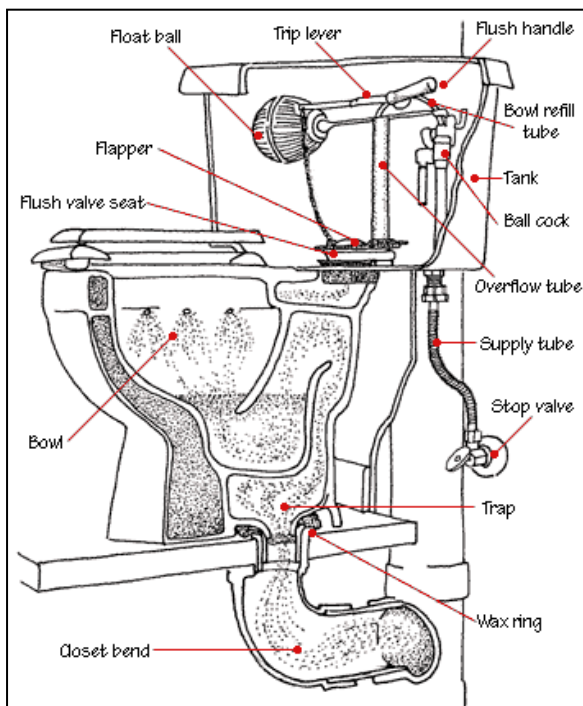
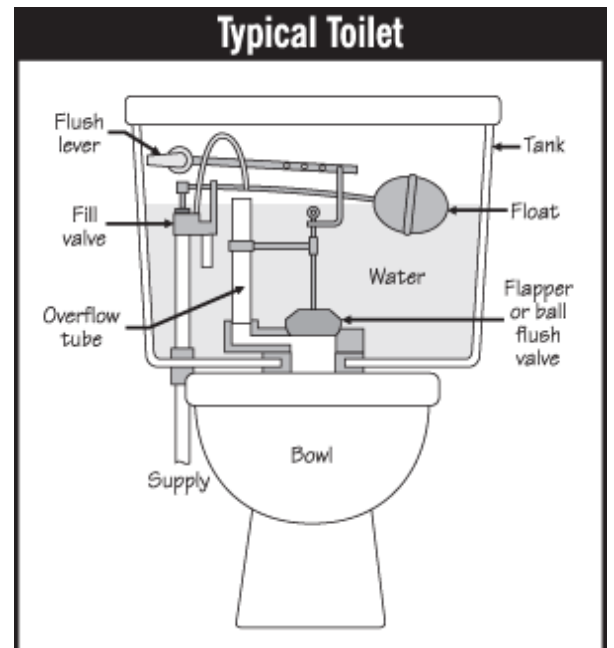
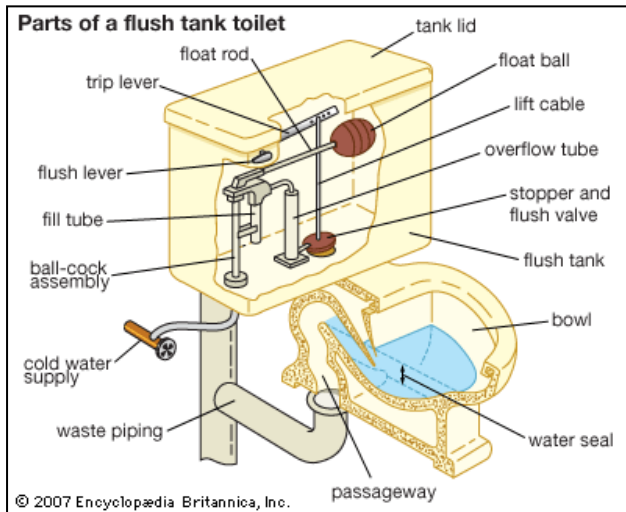
Appendix 2f Lesson Six

Subject: English Second Language Topic: Explanation genre “individual construction” Skill: writing	Grade: 11 Date: Duration: 40 minutes
Focus: Writing a wide range of texts	
Lesson objectives: learners will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write appropriately for specific purposes</li> </ul>	
Competencies: Learners should be able to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write in a style appropriate to the audience and register</li> </ul>	
<b>Teaching aids:</b> A handout with labelled diagrams of a flush toilet A YouTube video of a toilet being flushed	
<b>Lesson proceedings</b>	
<b>1. Introduction:</b> The teacher will project a picture of a flushing toilet and ask learners if they can remember what it is and how it works (from the first lesson). Learners are expected to brainstorm on the parts and processes involved and give an oral feedback	
<b>2. Body:</b> the teacher will then highlight to the learners that they will rewrite an explanation on how flushing toilet works whereby they have to employ the writing conventions taught.	
<b>3.</b> To revive their minds, a teacher will give them a labelled picture of the parts of a flushing toilet (or refer them to the ones handed out already), as well as playing them a YouTube indicating the processes involved	
<b>4. Individual activity:</b> learners are instructed to write an explanation on how a flushing toilet works, and will also be given a checklist to align their work with the items listed therein (self assessment).	
Reflection: filling in the lesson evaluation/reflection rubric	
Homework: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	

### Appendix 3 – Handouts for readings and activities

#### Appendix 3a Handout with parts of a flushing toilet

As an addition to the video you have watched, study the pictures below to familiarise yourself with the parts you might not have captured whilst watching



## **How do we breathe?**

The nose, trachea and lungs are the main organs which make up the respiratory system. This system allows the exchange of gases which are needed for us to live.

Breathing happens when the brain sends a message through the nerves to the intercostal muscles which lie between the ribs and the diaphragm. When the instruction is received, the muscles pull the ribs outwards and the diaphragm relaxes so that the space in the chest gets bigger. Because the pressure in the chest gets lower, air rushes in to fill the lungs.

This air is first taken in through the nose or mouth. It then travels into the throat (the pharynx) and on through the voice box (the larynx). The opening to the voice box has a cover over it called the epiglottis.

This cover opens when a breath is taken. In this way, the air is able to flow down the trachea but food is kept out.

After passing down the trachea the air travels into the lung down either the right or left bronchus, through the bronchioles and at last into tiny air sacs called alveoli. These are covered with small blood vessels called capillaries. From here, oxygen is finally taken into the blood stream and carbon dioxide is passed back to the lungs.

The intercostal muscles then push the rib cage back inwards. As a result, the space in the chest gets smaller and the pressure rises, thus pushing the carbon dioxide back out of the lungs.

And it all happens in the space of a single breath!

Adapted from

[http://assets.readingeggsassets.com/teacher\\_resources/rex/writing/pdfs/upper/explanation\\_text\\_introduction\\_and\\_overview-fp-916c1fe4.pdf](http://assets.readingeggsassets.com/teacher_resources/rex/writing/pdfs/upper/explanation_text_introduction_and_overview-fp-916c1fe4.pdf)

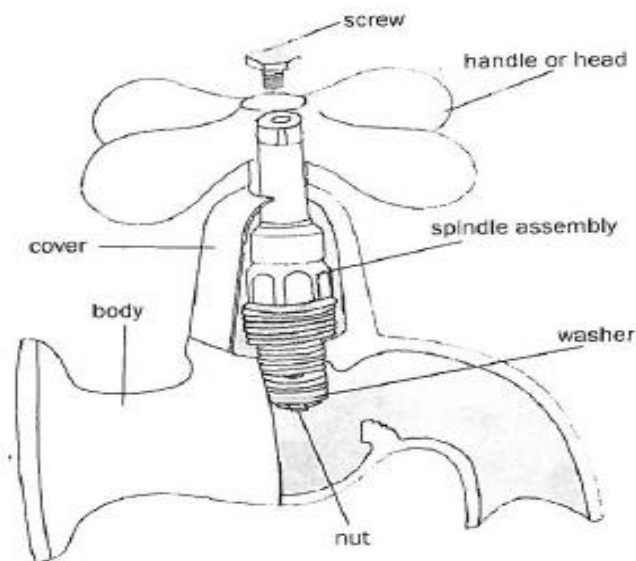
## Appendix 3c Readings on “How taps work”

### Explanation 1: How taps work

Taps are mechanisms that control the flow of water through pipes. A tap consists of a head or handle, a jumper valve, two kinds of washers, a nut and a valve seat.

The inside parts of a tap work like a screw. When you twist the head of the tap this causes the inside parts to turn and move. This movement opens the valve and allows the water to flow through the opening. When the valve is closed water cannot flow through the tap. The washer acts as a seal and prevents any leaks.

Taps come in different shapes and sizes but the inside mechanisms all work in a similar way.



### Explanation.2: How taps work

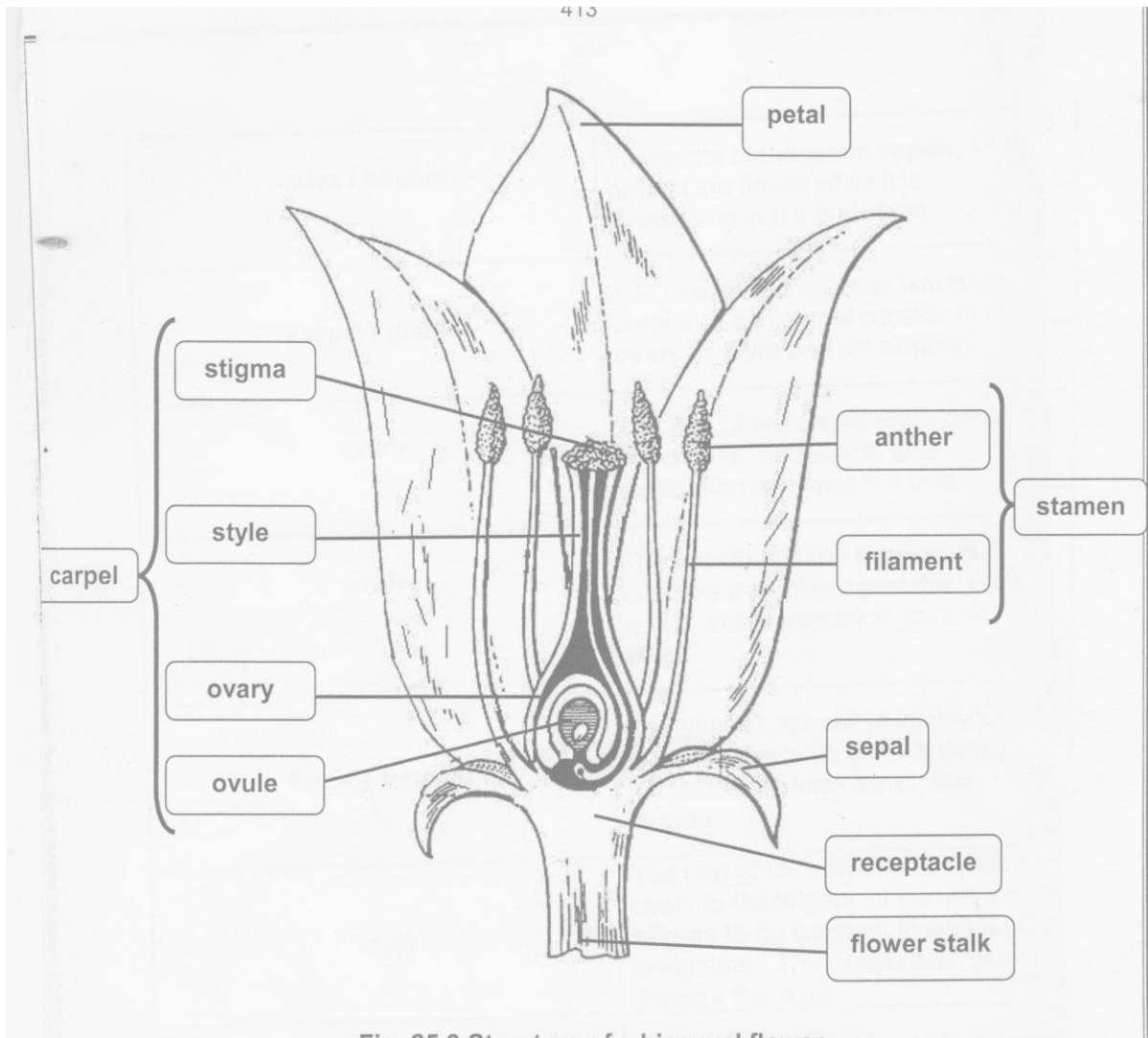
A tap has a handle, a cover and inside it has a jumper valve, washers, a nut and a valve seat. The washer stops water from leaking through the valve.

When you want water to come out of a pipe, you turn the tap on. This makes the valve lift and unplug the hole, so that water can pass through it.

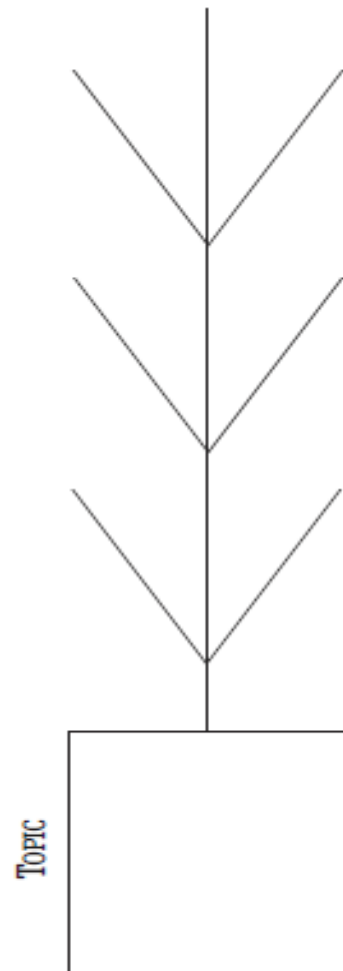
It is the valve inside the tap that makes it work. When this valve is closed, or the tap is turned off, water cannot pass through.

*Adapted Burkett, Chambers, Murray, Robertson, & Smuts (2010, p. 157–158.)*

Appendix 3d A picture of a cross section of a flower



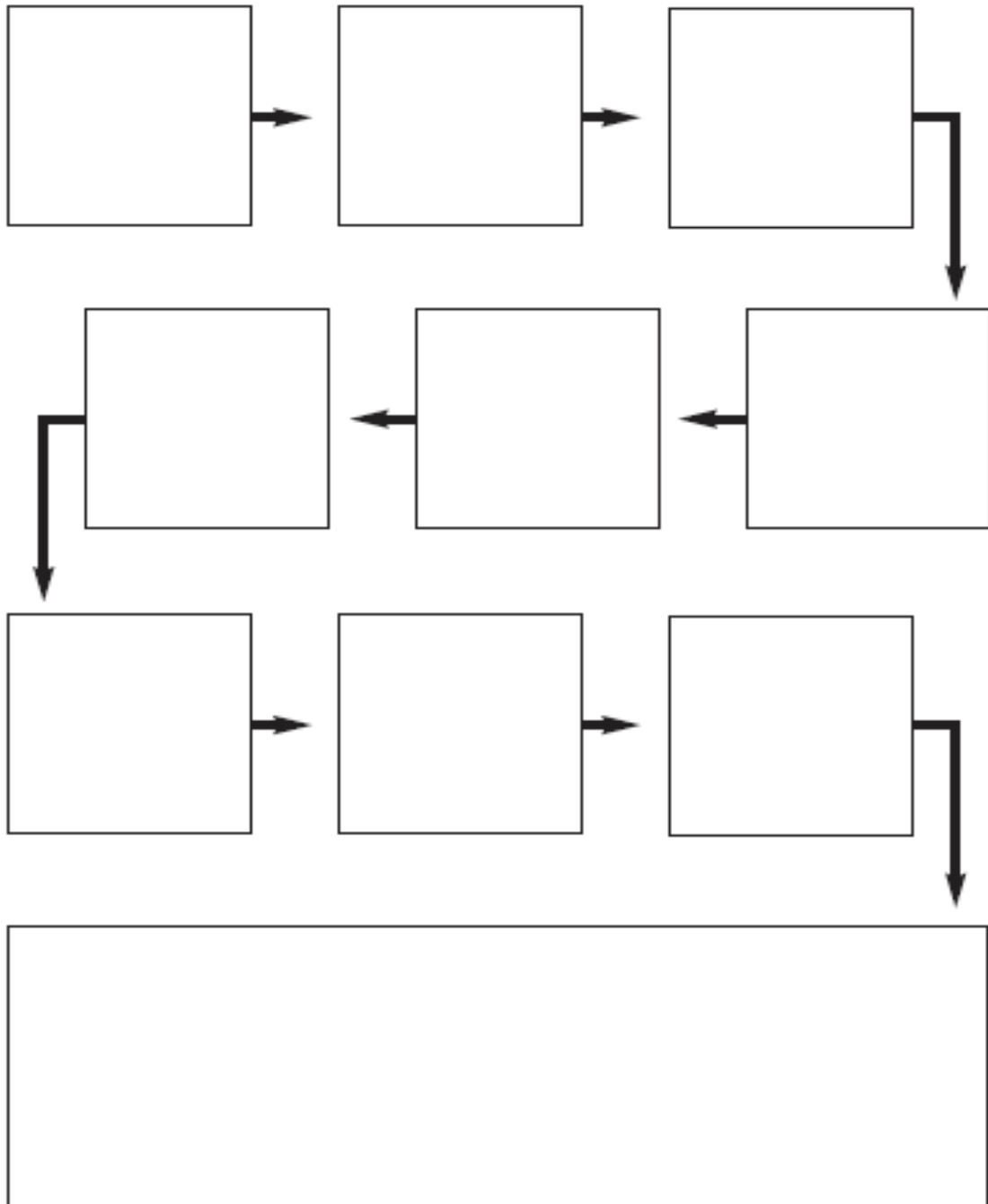
Appendix 3e A fishbone diagram



Slide Education Fully Reproducible

Adapted from  
[http://assets.readingeggsassets.com/teacher\\_resources/rex/writing/pdfs/upper/explanation\\_text\\_introduction\\_and\\_overview-fp-916c1fe4.pdf](http://assets.readingeggsassets.com/teacher_resources/rex/writing/pdfs/upper/explanation_text_introduction_and_overview-fp-916c1fe4.pdf)

## A Chain Sequence



## Appendix 3g A handout of the cohesive devices

Linking Words - A complete list of Transition Words & Conjunctions also called Cohesive Devices - Connecting Words

### Transition Words and Phrases

<p>in the first place not only ... but also as a matter of fact in like manner in addition coupled with in the same fashion / way first, second, third in the light of not to mention to say nothing of equally important by the same token</p>	<p>again to and also then equally identically uniquely like as too</p>	<p>moreover as well as together with of course likewise comparatively correspondingly similarly furthermore additionally</p>	<p>for thus because the then hence</p> <p>but (and) still unlike or (and) yet while albeit besides as much as even though</p>	<p>consequently therefore thereupon forthwith accordingly</p>
<p>in other words to put it differently for one thing as an illustration in this case for this reason to put it another way that is to say with attention to by all means</p>	<p>notably including like to be sure namely chiefly truly indeed certainly surely</p>	<p>in fact in general in particular in detail to demonstrate to emphasize to repeat to clarify to explain to enumerate</p>	<p>although this may be true in contrast different from of course ..., but on the other hand on the contrary at the same time in spite of even so / though be that as it may then again above all in reality after all</p>	<p>although instead whereas despite conversely otherwise however rather nevertheless nonetheless regardless notwithstanding</p>
<p>important to realize another key point first thing to remember most compelling evidence must be remembered point often overlooked on the negative side on the positives ide</p>	<p>markedly especially specifically expressively surprisingly frequently significantly</p>	<p>such as for example for instance to point out with this in mind</p>	<p>if ... then unless when whenever since while because of as since while lest</p>	<p>in case provided that given that only / even if so that so as to owing to due to inasmuch as</p>
<p>Agreement / Addition / Similarity</p>	<p>Opposition / Limitation / Contradiction</p>	<p>Cause / Condition / Purpose</p>	<p>Effect / Result / Consequence</p>	

## Appendix 4 –Marking rubrics and Reflection sheets

### Appendix 4a Namibia. MoE genre writings’ marking rubric

ADDENDUM C: MARKING GRID FOR WRITTEN WORK (PAPER 1&2)

ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE NSSCO		1			2			3			4			5		
		10	12	16	10	12	16	10	12	16	10	12	16	10	12	16
<b>Content and Style</b>		Creative use of vocabulary + idiom Few grammar and spelling mistakes Audience met Interesting paragraphs			Competence in vocabulary + idiom Few grammar + spelling mistakes Some sense of audience Useful paragraphs			Appropriate choice of vocabulary Simple sentences Mistakes do not impede understanding Some lack of sense of audience Paragraphs used			Many grammar, spelling and punctuation errors Basic language used Wrong choice of sense of audience Flaws in paragraphing			Density of error obscures meaning Whole sections impossible to recognise as pieces of English writing No paragraphing		
<b>Language + Structure</b>																
<b>TOTALS</b>																
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Original, creative spark</li> <li>• Instructions followed</li> <li>• Information correctly interpreted</li> <li>• Quality is sustained; Form complements</li> </ul>	9-10	11-12	14-16	8	9-10	12-13	7	8	10-11	6	7	9	5	6	8
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convincingly executed</li> <li>• Instruction and information correctly executed; Suitable form</li> <li>• Mistakes do not affect the text</li> </ul>	8	9	12-13	7	8	10-11	6	7	9	5	6	8	4	5	7
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fairly convincing</li> <li>• Some instructions used</li> <li>• Irrelevant information used</li> <li>• Fulfils the task. Form acceptable</li> <li>• Average content</li> </ul>	7	8	10-11	6	7	9	5	6	8	4	5	7	3	4	5-6
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content not particularly relevant</li> <li>• Mistakes hamper precision</li> <li>• Most instructions not met</li> <li>• Form inconsistent</li> <li>• There may be repetition</li> </ul>	6	7	9	5	6	8	4	5	7	3	4	5-6	2	2-3	3-4
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very little engagement with task</li> <li>• Instructions not followed; Lack of form</li> <li>• Occasional patch of clarity</li> </ul>	5	6	8	4	5	7	3	4	5-6	2	2-3	3-4	0-1	0-1	0-2

**Example: (If Content and Style = level 3 and Language and Structure = level 4)**

**Calculation:**      **Content & Style**      **3**      **4 or 5 or 7**  
    **Language & Structure**      **4**      **10    12    16**

*If topic is totally misinterpreted, no mark will be awarded.*

Appendix 4b Explanation texts marking rubric

Use this rubric to mark the overall organisation and language features of an explanation, and total as indicated

Name:			
Class:			
<b>Generic structure</b>	<b>Definitely</b>	<b>Partially</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
Uses a how and why question as a title and focus			
Writes a clear opening statement ( <i>a description of the thing to be explained</i> )			
Writes the explanation in a logical sequence (explaining a series of actions following a logical order)			
Writes a concluding statement (possibly a general comment or statements in line with the explained thing)			
<b>Language structure/features</b>	<b>Definitely</b>	<b>Partially</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
Writes in the timeless present tense			
Introduces and uses technical words to explain the phenomenon			
Uses action verbs			
Uses linking words (conjunctions and connectives) to link and sequence events			
Uses passive voice to link cause and effect			
<b>General text organisation</b>	<b>Definitely</b>	<b>Partially</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
Introduces the reader to the subject			
Writes clearly organised paragraphs			
Sequences all the events in a correct order			
Includes sufficient information to show knowledge of the field			
Demonstrates an understanding of the purpose of an explanation			

Definitely = 2	0 – 10 = poor
Partially = 1	11 - 20 = average
Not at all = 0	21 - 30 = excellent

Marks: \_\_\_\_\_

Remarks: \_\_\_\_\_

### Lesson evaluation Sheet

*Please, reflect as honestly as possible*

Genre:.....

Skill(s): .....

Stage: .....

What did you find interesting in this lesson?

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What did you find not interesting in this lesson?

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What needs to be done to improve this stage next time?

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How can you rate the lesson (*cross*)      0 (poor)      1(average)      2(excellent)

Reason(s):

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Thank you!!

Name (*Pseudonym*): .....

## Appendix 5 - Samples of learners' written works

### Appendix 5a Synopsis of learners' group explanations

1. What is this? flushing toilet system
2. How does it work?

When ever some one uses and then turn the handle the water in the tank flows into the pot, forcing ~~the waste in~~ everything that is in the pot to go into the pipe that take it to the manhole.

1. What is this? - toilet pot
2. How does it work?

It flushes waste

The toilet user press the button after using the toilet. Water in the water reservoir flow because of pressure, then the wastes are moved out of the toilet pot.

Page 1

1. What is this? - toilet
2. How does it work?

-It has a pot that contains water where wastes are dropped. It also has a container that contained water use for flushing when a handle

## Explanation 1

### How a flushing toilet works

poor  
⑤

Pull down the handle, the tube fill up with water.  
The ball - cock pull up the float and expand.  
the float rod move down.

The lift cable pull down the move water  
in ~~the~~ tube.

The lift cable ~~contract~~ pull down  
the trip lever.

The float rod pull down the float  
ball. The tube overflow, and the stopper  
and flush valve pull down.

## Explanation 2

### HOW A FLUSHING TOILET WORKS

A flushing toilet contains a bowl and a flush tank. If you push down a flush lever on the tank, the lift cable inside the tank will lift up the stopper and flush valve that are on the bottom of the tank and mainly they are to block water from passing through. After the stopper and flush valve have been lifted up the water will <sup>pass</sup> through to the bowl and until it reaches the trap. It passes through the wax ring to the closet bend and then to the passageway and then to the waste piping. After this water from the supply tube moves upward to the ball cock and passes through to the overflow tube until it refills the tank.

### Explanation 3

#### How a flushing toilet works

When a ~~hand~~ flushing handle is turned, the trip lever moves up lifting the lift cable to remove the stopper and flush valve. As this happens the water ~~fill~~ filled up in the tank <sup>low</sup> then starts to move down the flushing valve flowing into ~~the~~ a bowl of the toilet. The water that is flowing into the bowl will give a pressure ~~to~~ the other water that was found in already with wastes forcing it to move down the passage-way to the trap and then to the waste piping carrying along the waste. ✓

As the <sup>water with</sup> wastes move from the waste piping it ~~the~~ goes to the main pipe. Back at the bowl, the water that is entering the bowl from the tank will then reach the low level and then stop flowing. As the tank is now almost ~~empty~~ empty the ~~over~~ ball-cock will fill the overflow tube making the water to overflow and then it will fill the tank making the float ball move up until it reaches a certain level indicating that the tank is filled with water, ~~and it~~ In the bowl there will be some water that was left in there which is clear. ✓

Average  
(14)

How a flushing toilet works

Initially, when a flush lever is pressed down, the trip lever pulls the lift cable up which hangs stopper and flush valve. ~~to move~~ This causes water to flow within a overflow tube as water is now free to move due to opened flush valve.

Water enters a bowl from a flapper. When it enters in, a float ball moves down as water goes into the bowl. This is happening since the the flush valve is opened. Water seal flows faster into passageway due to the pressure from the flush tank.

Passageway pass water seal into waste piping. After all these, cold water supply, gives water through a ball-cock assembly. A ball-cock assembly pass cold water into fill valve and enters a tank. When water gets much in the tank and it gets full, it pushes float ball up as water becomes more in the tank. This causes the flush valve to close and to stop water from the cold water supply.

EXcellent!

## How a flushing toilet works

A flushing toilet consist of two process, the flushing process and the refill process. Flushing toilet have a water tank and a bowl. Inside the tank there is a trip lever, lift cable, a stopper and fill valve.

Once the flush lever is pulled down it causes the trip lever to move up with the lift cable then the lift cable lifts up the stopper and flush valve. After the stopper and flush are lifted up this causes water in tank to flow into the bowl taking away the waste in the bowl into passageway and this is called the flushing process.

On the refill process, In the tank there is a float ball that floats on water and moves down as water flows into the bowl. When it is moving down it opens up the fill valve then the water refills the tank.

Flushing toilet are made different or look different but they works in a similar way.

excellent

## How a flushing toilet works

A flushing toilet is a mechanism used to flush away wastes. It works in two processes, namely, the flush and refill process. It consists of many parts which help in these two processes.

Whenever a flushing lever is pushed, it pulls <sup>up</sup> the flapper on the bottom of the tank, opening it allowing water to flow into the bowl. There are small holes alongside the bowl where water is forced through as it enters the bowl. Water then flows through the passage way and this completes the flush process. ✓

Back in the water tank, as the water tank is emptied the supply tube supply water into the ball cock and water is released into the tank by the fill tube, some water flows into the overflow tube. As the level of the water rises, the floating ball rises along with it, as it reaches the overflow tube height, the floating ball closes the fill valve waiting for another flushing round, that completes the refill process and that is how the flushing toilet works.

There are different types of flushing toilets, but they all work in a similar way in the flush process and refill process. ✓