

Factors Affecting Learners' Inaccurate Simple Sentence Structure Writing: Case of Nampula Secondary School, Grade 12

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Abstract

This paper is a research on “Factors Affecting Learners’ Inaccurate Simple Sentence Structure Writing. This study was conducted at Nampula Secondary School, grade 12. The main objective of this study is to find out the factors affecting learners’ inaccurate simple sentence structure writing. To achieve the objective, four instruments of data collection were used which are *interview, observation, tests and documents analysis*, and 87 participants were involved of which 2 teachers of English and 85 students of four streams of grade 12, 40 female and 45 male. The study employed pragmatic paradigm and mixed approaches, the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches for data analysis. The researcher observed lessons to find out how teachers deal with simple sentence structure writing, that is activities, correction, motivation and feedback. In addition to, both students and teachers were interviewed. After all, students were administrated tests to find out the types of simple sentences structures they understand. The results of the study demonstrate that the main factors affecting inaccurate simple sentence structure writing are: lack of knowledge, lack of exposure and lack of motivation on simple sentence structure writing. Therefore, Teachers ignore to teach simple sentence structure, consequently they do not give activities to the students to practice inside as well as outside the school and they do not motivate them to improve it. Thus, among the recommendation given are: Dynamism about adapting topics to cover students’ need, exposure to English inside and outside the school and promotion of workshops and seminars for the teachers from different schools to discuss methods and procedures to teach the language skills effectively.

Keywords: Inaccurate simple sentence structure writing, factors, learners.

1. Introduction

It is commonly believed that nowadays more information is in written form other than in painting and oral form. Many school books, short stories, warning, loving, encouraging message, which in turn let people informed about a certain subject, intention etc. are in written form.

A good written sentence is that which obeys grammatical rules. Therefore, inaccurate sentence structure in writing can lead to a poor writing as well as it can deviate people from the meaning it convey. In this light, according to Mohamed (2002), writing involves structures- the grammatical relationship between words. That means to be able to tell whether a word has been used as a noun, verb, adjective, adverb, etc. by looking at the words that come before or after it in order to have sense.

However, it was found out that most of the grade 12 students at Nampula Secondary School fail to write grammatically correct sentences. That is, when the students were before free writing tasks that were assigned by the teachers at the Practice as well as Production stage, in a PPP lesson, most of students deviated from the *Subject, Verb and Object* (SVO) structure. Moreover, the students faced problems in the conjugation of verbs especially in the 3rd person singular, present simple as they wrote. Apart from that, for the free writing which they were given as homework almost half of the class copied from the internet and shared it with other students. The worst part was in the tests where most of the students left the composition section without writing a word. For those who tried, normally wrote inaccurately by not using the SVO structure or wrote unfinished sentences.

Thus, with all previously mentioned aspects, this paper intends to find out the factors affecting learners' inaccurate simple sentence structure writing so as to propose effective methodology to overcome such issues.

2. Merit of the study

English Language Teaching has been implemented in our schools, in Mozambique, to be taught from grade 6 upward. Thus, it would be appropriate, if students at the secondary level mastered the simple sentence structure. If students passed all the grades from 6, studying English to reach the secondary standard 12, they should be able to write simple sentences correctly. This means that, being able to figure out order and place the right word in the sentence, according to the grammatical rules. However, the grade 12 students, at Nampula Secondary School, face problems in constructing grammatical correct simple sentences, which in turn, can affect their speaking skill later on. That is why it was decided to conduct a research so as to discover the factors behind inaccurate simple sentence structure writing and suggest ways to change this situation according to the reality encountered.

Therefore, the finding of this research will be helpful to: Secondary School Councils to promote an effective teaching and learning of writing skill, so that students may be proficient writers later on. Help teachers to use appropriate methods and techniques to teach simple sentence structure and make students aware of different activities for improvements of their sentence structure writing.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Concept of the term *factor*

According to Rundell (2003, p 245), a *factor* is “one of the things that make something to happens, while Summers (1983, p 214) sees *factor* as “any of the forces, condition, influences, etc. that brings about a result”.

Taking into account the writers concept of the term *factor*, it can be concluded that a *factor* is the same as cause or element since it is something which influences the result of something or makes something to happen in a certain way.

3.2. Sentence

Aarts (2001, p. 3) defines sentence as “a string of words that begins in a capital letter and ends in a full stop, and is typically used to express a state of affairs in the world”. Devine (2002:6) says

that “a sentence expresses a complete thought”. In order to express a complete thought, a sentence is comprised of a subject and a predicate. The subject is the part of the sentence that tells what the sentence is about. It can be one or more words. The predicate is the part of the sentence that explains something about the subject. It can also be one or more words.

For example: *I play football.*

Wekker and Haegeman (1996, p. 25) affirm that “sentences can generally be used to give information, and they can be used to ask for information”. The authors continue saying that “sentences used to ask questions are *interrogative* sentences; sentences used to supply information are *declarative* sentences”. In the same line of thinking, Miller (2002:24), says that “declarative construction (reflects the idea that the speaker or writer declares something to be the case) and an interrogative construction, used by speakers who wish to ask whether the event took place, that is, speakers who wish to interrogate the person or persons they are addressing (their addressees)”.

For example: a) *The wealthy young man bought that piano for his secret fiancée.*

b) *Did the wealthy young man buy that piano for his secret fiancée?*

The authors define the term in different ways, but it can be seen that they end up talking about the same thing: *something used to express what we feel and think*. So it can be concluded that a sentence is a group of words with meaning to express thoughts and feelings. For this reason, it is very important that one masters or have the basic structures of sentence production for him/her to be able to share his/her ideas to other people or keep record of thoughts.

Many authors agree that a sentence can be a declarative, the one used to express our ideas, and the interrogatives when we want to ask about something or look for specific information.

2.4. Structure

Burton-Roberts (2011, p 6) says that “the concept of *structure* is fundamental to the study of syntax”. He continues saying that a *structure* is a very general concept and there are four (4) aspects that should be taken into consideration to say that something has a structure:

1. It's divisible into parts (called *constituents*);
2. There are different kinds of parts (different *categories* of constituents);
3. The constituents are *arranged* in a specifiable way;
4. That each constituent has a certain specifiable FUNCTION in the structure of the thing as a whole.

The structure is a rule to be followed, where each of the elements have a pre-determined place and order. The elements have to complement the other to express a complete meaning.

2.5. Importance of writing

Learning a foreign language entails learning to write. The power of writing is so strong that writing about one's feelings and experiences can be beneficial psychologically and physiologically because it can reduce depression, lower blood pressure, etc. Nacira (2010, p. 36)

In addition to this point of view, Ur (2009, p. 163) discloses that the "importance of writing, in principle, is the expression of ideas, the conveying of message to the reader; so the ideas themselves should arguably be seen as the most important aspect of the writing.

Harmer (1998) unveils that by far the most importance of writing, of course, is that it is a basic language skill, just as important as speaking, listening and reading. Students need to know how to write letters, how to present written reports together, how to know to reply to advertises and increasingly, how to write using electronic media.

in addition to the previous point, the same writer, says that the importance of writing is to let student aware of some of writings conventions (punctuation, paragraph, construction etc.) just as they need to know how to pronounce spoken English appropriately They need to know some of writings conventions (punctuation, paragraph, construction etc.) just as they need to know how to pronounce spoken English appropriately.

If we pay close attention to the importance stated by the writers above, it is crystal clear that they can be summarized into two major parts, which are: follow sentence structure and convey message. Therefore, follow sentence structure means to obey rules which, that is, to know what word category will come first and agreement between subject, verb noun etc. so that the sentence

may be well written to convey mean. On the other hand, if the sentence does not obey grammatical rules it may sound senseless.

2.6. Simple sentence structure

According to Devine (2002, p. 6), simple sentence structures are “an independent clause (one which expresses a complete thought and can stand alone).”

For example: *I like Syntax. She does not like Syntax.*

In this light, Tallerman (2011, p 73) says that, simple sentence is “a technical term, meaning ‘consisting of just one clause’”. To avoid conflict with the (non-linguistic) idea of a sentence as something that starts with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, the more precise term to be used is clause.

The term ‘clause’ has a specific meaning: it’s a sentence that contains one predicate.” The author continues saying that a simple sentence contains just one predicate, that is, one clause. The simple sentences stand alone: they are not attached to any other clause and are therefore known as *independent sentences* or *independent clauses*. In English, and typically in other languages, an independent clause must contain a finite verb. A finite verb in English can be identified by the fact that it expresses tense information, about the time of the event. Zapletalová (2001) summarizes all these ideas by saying that a simple sentence is a sentence that contains only one clause called *the main clause*.

It can be seen that different authors define the same thing in different ways, but they all tend to give the same idea which is: *simple sentence is the one that has one verb and can stand alone to express an idea*. All these aspects should be taken into account when someone wants to produce a simple sentence, written or spoken. The sentences are the keys to language, and the simple sentences are the bases to learn different things related to this language. Tallerman (2011, p. 19), affirms that “in English, the word order is pretty fixed”. The author continues saying that there are three main elements in the sentence, as shown in the example: Kim drank the tea.: Kim, the one who drank the tea; drank, the verb, which expresses what Kim did; and the tea, expressing what was being drunk.

Harmer (2001) says that one way of describing different kinds of sentences is to use the terms Subject, Object, Verb, Complement and Adverbial. The author continues saying that a simple sentence such as 'The dog bit the man' contains a subject ('The dog'), a verb ('bit') and an object (the man).

Harmer (2001) gives a brief explanation on other types of sentences shown as follows:

i) Complement: is used with verbs like 'be', 'seem', 'look', etc, to give information about the subject. An example of this is 'She seems happy' contains a subject 'she', a verb 'seem' and a complement 'happy'.

ii) Subject + verb only: some sentences are formed with only subjects and verbs (e.g. 'He laughed', 'They disagreed'). Verbs such as these, which can't take an object, are called intransitive. Although some verbs can either be transitive or intransitive, e.g. He opened the door/ The door opened.

iii) Two objects: there are two kinds of objects, direct and indirect. Direct objects refer to things or persons affected by the verb, e.g. 'He sang a song'. 'She loved him'.

An indirect object refers to persons or thing that (in one grammarian's phrase) 'benefits' from the action, e.g. 'He sang me a song', 'She painted him a picture', 'I gave a ring to my girlfriend'.

iv) Adverbial (phrases): adverbials or adverbial phrases complement the verb in the same way that a complement "complements" the subject, e.g. "He lived in Paris." (adverbial of place), "They arrived late/at night" (adverbial of time).

From all these ideas given by Harmer, it is simple to have an idea on how the simple sentences can be structured and the way they look like. The simple sentence structure takes the SVO structure to mean that it is a sentence with a single verb. It is said that simple sentences have the power to communicate clearly an idea and make important points, which is why they are easy to be understood in a conversation of any type.

2.7. Factors affecting learners' inaccurate writing

This part of the literature review, we unveil some factors that make students not write simple sentence structure accurately.

2.7.1. Motivation

According to Harmer (1991:5), “motivation is deemed as some kind of internal drive that encourages somebody to pursue a course of action in order to achieve a certain goal, either long or short term goal.”

Nacira (2010 cited in Dornyei, 2005:72) says that it is extremely necessary for students to be motivated in order to carry out their writing tasks and achieve a satisfactory level in writing in English.

Therefore, taking into account the point of view of the writers, it can be understood that if the learners are highly motivated, they are more likely to have a better writing than less motivated learners. Motivated ones become more eager to take part in the activities and pay more attention to discriminate the structures of the target language, and grasp any opportunities for using the target language. However, those who are less motivated they go from worse to worst.

Ellis (1985) distinguishes two types of motivation which are *Integrative* - when learners study a language because they are interested in the people and culture of the target language and *Instrumental*- when learners' goals for learning the second language are functional, for example, they need the language to get a better job. As cited in Brown (1994:155) claim that students' motivation can be intrinsic and extrinsic, where the “Intrinsically motivated activities are ones for which there is no apparent reward except the activity itself (...) The extrinsically motivated behaviors expect a reward, for example, money, a praise or positive feedback.

2.7.2. Personality

Walter (2008) defines personality as “the type of person you are, which is shown by the way you behave, feel and think: introverted or extroverted.”

Stern (1993, p 28) unveils that "extroverts, who are sociable and open to other people, are more successful in learning many aspect of language than introverts because they have more contact

with L2. On the other hand, well-organized and serious introverts are seen as better learners as far as the systematic study is concerned.

In this light, it is absolutely true, for it is something which happens in our surroundings, at school, in the classroom, outside school, etc. There are students who most of the time are quiet, hardly ever we see them talk with friends, partner or classmate at school, or even say something during the lessons. These are Introversive students. However, there are those who act differently from introverted students. These students are always speaking, making friends. They are volunaries in the classroom and make contributions, etc. These are extroversive students. Therefore, extroversive students who are always active and curious, they are more likely to acquire a better writing skill in target language than introversive.

2.7.3. Exposure

Magno et al (2009, p 2) views *exposure* as “the total amount of time in which an individual has contact with a language, it may be in verbal or written form, formal or informal ways (...).” On the same string of thought, British Council (2015) sees exposure as the contact that a learners have with the language that they are trying to learn, either inside or outside the classroom setting

According to the writers’ opinion on the exposure factor, it is clear that the more students are exposed to write teaching and activity they are more like to learn how to write well because of the number of contact they have with activities. Not only in the school, but also outside the school, practicing, writing and doing their homework etc.

2.7.4. Mother tongue of the Student

Learner’s L1 may influence positively or negatively on learning L2. Positively, when they have *similar structure* and negatively *different structure, language transfer*. (Yoshida, 2009).

For Yule (1996) “transfer means using sounds, expressions or structures from the L1 when performing the L2.”

For example: Tu *comes bem* vs. You *eats* well.

Ela *tem* uma casa *bonita* vs. She *have* a house *beautiful*.

Taking into account the concepts of the writers above, it gives us a clear understanding of what is behind *mother tongue of the students* as one of the factors affecting learning students inaccurate simple sentence structure writing. Therefore, writers above impart us that if a learner's first language is completely different from learners second languages or target language, specially in the the structure of the words in sentences, then learners are more likely to fail to write sentences well.

2.7.5. Aptitude

Walter (2008) states that aptitude "is a natural ability or skill." Learners learn differently. Each one has got its own learning styles. Thus, Reid's (1987), identified four learning modalities: visual (seeing), auditory (listening), kinesthetic (moving) or tactile (touching). He claims that:

Visual learners learn through seeing. They prefer to see a teacher during a lesson, learn by visuals: pictures, wall displays, diagrams, videos. They make notes during lectures and use lists to organize their thoughts. Auditory learners learn through listening. They prefer verbal instructions, like dialogues, discussions, and plays, solve problems by talking about them, use rhythm and sound as memory aids. Kinesthetic learners learn through moving and doing. They learn best when they are active. It is difficult for them to sit still for long periods. Tactile learners learn through touching. They use writing and drawing. They learn well in hands-on activities like projects and demonstrations.

Zhang (2009, p 8) says "however, it does not mean that learners who have higher aptitude will be successful but the others will not" thus no matter the differences, all students can learn how to write well.

2.8. The simple sentence structures writing

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2.9. How to teach simple sentence structure writing

Maxom (2009, p 158), argues that "the problem for many students is that they do not understand what a sentence actually is". Without a basic grammar rule, they tend to come up with 'sentences' like these: e.g. *The blue bag there. Chicken, fish, and pork, for example. Is very nice here.*

The author continues saying that, a good sentence needs a noun and a verb at least. A basic rule shows us 'subject + predicate', the idea is that there is a person/thing doing something or being something. Applying this principle, we can have sentences like:

For example: The blue bag is there; I like chicken, fish, and pork.

Maxom makes us think a bit about our reality, where the students probably do not know the structure of a simple sentence and making it difficult for them to produce written language. So, it is important to spend some time teaching the students about the structure and other grammatical aspects of the language. That is to equip them with the basic rules to practice the language being learned. Another thing that is important to note is that the structures of the sentences are fixed in the grammar.

2.10. Simple sentence structure writing activities

Doff (1988) outlines some ways of practicing the structure:

i) *Repletion*- the teacher presents the structure and asks students to repeat (students do nothing themselves). He can do this several times and change the sentences. “This might be useful as a first step only, just to make students familiar with the structure”.

e.g. Tr: Let’s play football.

Ss: Let’s play football.

ii) *Substitution*- the teacher writes a sentence and a word, using the same structure (students have to ‘fit in’ the structure). “This would keep the class more active, and give students practice in forming the structure themselves.

e.g. Tr: You want to play football.

Ss: let’s play football.

iii) *Single word prompts*- the teacher gives a word and the students write or produce a sentence using that word (students have to add the verb).

e.g. Tr: Cinema.

Ss: Let’s go to the cinema.

iv) *Picture prompts*- the teacher shows a set of pictures in the classroom and the students have to produce sentences according to the pictures being presented by the teacher (students have to think of the whole sentence).

v) *Free substitution*- the students make up their own sentences (students have to invent a sentence).

e.g. Let's go fishing.

2.11. Classroom writing activities

Doff (1988:150) gives an example of activities that can be used in writing:

vi) *Gap-filling*- the students have to fill the blank spaces left by the teacher, to write out the complete sentences.

E.g. Paper _____ wood. It _____ the _____ Chinese _____.

“Paper is usually made from wood. It was invented by the Chinese in the first century AD”.

vii) *Re-ordering words*-- the teacher can ask students to write the sentences correctly.

E.g. We/six o'clock/and/tea/drink/get up/at.

Then/the patients/wake/go/and/the wards/we/round.

Sometimes/medicines/injections/them/we/or/give.

viii) *Substitution* – the teacher has to write a true sentence and ask students to write a sentence like the one he/she wrote on the board.

e.g. Samir enjoys playing football and reading adventure stories.

Tr: What do you enjoy doing?

Ss: I enjoy sleeping.

There are different activities that can be used to teach the simple sentence structure. It is up to the teacher to choose the ones that he/she thinks are suitable according to the context and students level.

There are many other activities that can be used to teach the sentence structures, some are described below:

a. Use words in sentences - according to Freedman (2000:20), in order to show that students understand the meaning and use of a new vocabulary item, they make up sentences in which they use the new words.

b. *Composition* – according to Freedman (2000:20), the teacher gives the students a topic to write about in the target language. The topic is based upon some aspect of the reading passage of the lesson. Sometimes, instead of creating a composition, students are asked to prepare a precise of the reading passage.

c. *Dictation*- according to Freedman (2000:31), the teacher reads the passage three times. The first time the teacher reads it at a normal speed, while the students just listen. The second time he reads the passage phrase by phrase, pausing long enough to allow students to write down what they have heard. The last time the teacher again reads at a normal speed, and students check their work.

d. *Action sequence*- according to Freedman (2000:31), the teacher can teach or practice the structure with students by giving them three commands in the classroom. The teacher can tell students to point the door, walk to the door, and touch the door. The author says that, as students learn more and more the target language, a longer series of connected commands can be given, which together comprise a whole procedure. Other examples of instructions are:

Take out a pen. Take out a piece of paper. Write a letter (imaginary). Fold the letter. Put it in an envelope. Write the address on the envelope. Put a stamp on the envelope. Mail the letter.

Freeman (2000, p. 117) says that, “these series of commands are called an action sequence, or an operation. Many everyday activities, like writing a letter, can be broken down into an action sequence that students can be asked to perform”.

e. *Scrambled sentences*- according to Freedman (2000:132) the students are given a passage (a text) in which the sentences are in a scrambled order. This may be a passage they have worked with or one they have not seen before. They are told to unscramble the sentence so that the sentences are restored to the original order.

This type of exercise teaches students about the cohesion and coherence properties of language. They learn how sentences are bound together at the supersentential level through formal linguistic devices such as pronouns, which make a text cohesive, and semantic prepositions, which unify a text and make it coherent. In addition to written passages, students might also be asked to unscramble the lines of a mixed-up dialog.

f. Describe someone you know well- according to Ur (1996, p. 165), the teacher can ask students to describe a friend, a family member or a famous person they know when and then present it to the class.

g. *Look at the window and describe the view*- according to Ur (1996, p. 165), the teacher can ask students to look at the window and write a description of what they see outside.

h. *Writing a narrative based on a picture of a series of pictures*- according to Ur (1996, p. 165), the teacher can show a picture to the students so that they can write a narrative from the images they see.

i. *Describe an occasion*- according to Ur (1996, p. 165), the teacher asks students to describe an occasion that they felt disappointed, happy, afraid, surprised, etc.

2.12. Selecting materials

Richard and Renandya (2002) suggest seven (7) features that should be looked at to select material for writing purposes:

1-*Topics*- will they engage the students' interest? What are they based on – experience, materials in the book such as readings and pictures, activities and inquiries beyond the classroom, or out-of-the-blue random topics? Are the topics culturally appropriate for your students? Is the content relevant engaging?

2-*Types of writing*- are the students writing essays, letters, or paragraphs? Is that what they need to be writing?

3-*Opportunities and instruction in methods of generating ideas*-which of the following are included: brainstorming, free writing, listening, mapping, outlining? Which are appropriate for the students?

4.*Instruction on principles of rhetorical organization*- what information is provided to help students organize various types of writing – letters, description, narration, exposition, and argument, for example – and which types do your students need to practice?

5-*Opportunities for collaboration*- is the group work a part of the activities? If so, how are the collaborative activities viewed in your culture?

6-*Opportunities for revision*- are the students encouraged and directed to write drafts? Does the book provide instructions on what to do at various stages? Does your curriculum allow for revision essays?

7-*Instruction in editing and proofreading*- what can students learn from the tasks? What instruction is provided in finding and editing grammatical errors?

The authors suggested 7 features that can be taken into account in selecting material and texts to be used in the classroom to improve the learning process on writing skills. It is up to the teacher to know the questions to ask him/herself when electing material to be used in the lesson. By doing this right the teacher ensures that the material is good and appropriate to be used in a specific classroom and this will ensure that the teacher gains mastery of the matter to be taught.

2.13. Correcting written work

Doff (1988, p 192) says that “*correcting written work is very time-consuming for the teacher (...)*”. So, it is up to the teacher to select or discuss with other fellow teachers in order to come up with good techniques to correct the student's written work. The teachers could use some of the ways described by four teachers cited by Doff (1988:157-158) Tr A. “*I collect the books at the end of the lesson and correct them during the lunch hour. Then I give the books back next day.*” Tr B. “*I just go through the answers and get students to correct their own work. Sometimes I*

write sentences on the board.” Tr C. “I ask students to sit in pairs and correct each other’s work, helping each other. Then we all go through the answers together.” Tr D. “I ask students to exchange their books with the person next to them. Then I go through the answers and they correct each other’s work.”

Doff (1988, p 193). also gives other techniques that can be used:

Correcting work orally in class is a good idea for a large class, as it reduces the teacher’s work load. The teacher has to move around to check if the students are correcting their own work.

Correcting work immediately in class (rather than returning it the next day) means that the teacher can draw students’ attention to problems while they are still fresh in their minds.

Getting students to correct either their own exercise or each other's work (before the teacher gives the correct answer) takes time in the lesson, but it gives students useful practice in reading through what they have written and noticing mistakes. It is a good way of keeping the class involved

When the teacher notices errors made by a number of students, he or she can draw attention to these for the benefit of the whole class.

Doff advises that “correcting exercises in class works best with fairly controlled writing activities, where there are no too many answers”.

The author above gives four (4) different ways on how to correct the written works. The teacher has to choose the best way according to the type of students and lessons that he/she has taught. Doff (1988, p. 158), suggests that, “the teachers have to discuss the advantage and disadvantages of each technique, and how suitable they are for their own classes (get ideas on any technique that other teachers have tried and worked in their class)”. It is up to the teacher to search the best ways to correct the written exercise, although having authors that have exhausted the topic, the teachers should find the appropriate techniques so that the teaching and learning process can take place in the classroom environment.

2.14. The roles of the teacher Vs learner

It is known that the teacher plays different roles according to the task or lesson, Harmer (2007) brings forth three roles that a teacher should play during written tasks. They are described as follows:

- i) **Motivator**- one of the principal roles in writing tasks will be to motivate the students, creating the right conditions for the generation of ideas, persuading them of the usefulness of the activity, and encouraging them to make as much effort as possible for maximum benefit.
- ii) **Resource**-the teacher should be ready to supply information and language where necessary, especially during more extended writing tasks. The teacher needs to tell students that he or she is available to look at the students work as it progresses, to offer advice and suggestions in constructive and tactful ways.
- iii) **Feedback provider**- the teachers should respond positively and encouragingly to the content of what the students have written. The teacher has to choose what and how much to focus on, taking into account the students need at a particular stage of their studies and on the tasks, that they have undertaken.

Freeman (2000:129), gives some students role to learn a language:

- i) **Communicators**-students are actively engaged in negotiating meaning-trying to make themselves understood and in understanding others even when their knowledge of the target language is incomplete.
- ii) **Responsible managers**- students are the ones responsible for their own learning and who have to show the teacher what they want to learn in order to learn more and more. In addition to that Hedge (2000:34) says that “the students should be responsible for their own learning and continue their learning outside of class, at home, or in self-access facilities”.

This shows that the students play an important role in their learning. The students should do their best to communicate their ideas when they are in the learning context.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section, we bring the methodology of the study: Research paradigm, research design, approach, population and sample, procedures and data analysis techniques, which were used to achieve the objectives.

3.1. Research Paradigm

For this study, it was used the *pragmatic paradigm*. Morgan (2007, p. 71) affirms that “*pragmatic paradigm* relies on a version of abdicative reasoning that move back and forth between induction and deduction to connect theory and data. It can convert observations into theories and then assess those theories through action.”

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This paradigm was useful for the research under study because it comprised mixed method in analyzing and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data.

3.2. Research design

This is a descriptive research design, “concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual or of a group” (Kothari, 2004. p. 37). The study selects this design because it believes that probing and studying intensely one typical case can lead to insights into our understanding of individuals, events, social units (Kothari, 2004:83). In this light, William (2006, p. 10) affirms that “the descriptive design relies on observation as a mean of collecting data, and depending on the type of information sought, people can be interviewed, questionnaires distributed”.

This design was appropriate for the research because helped to do intensive description that lead to insights into our understanding of the way teacher dealt with simple sentence structure teaching in the classroom.

3.3. Research approach

For this study, mixed approach was used, comprising *qualitative and quantitative* approach. Kauark et al. (2010, p. 27) says that “qualitative research (...) does not need the use of statistics techniques. The natural environment is the direct source for the data collection and the researcher is the key – instrument, while "Quantitative research generates statistics (...)"(Dawson, 2002, p. 14). This approach was appropriate for this study because it facilitated to draw conclusions from more than one data set. It helped to analyse numerical data as well as the content result that were answered by the interviewee and lesson observed.

3.4. Research instrument

For this study, three instruments to collect data were used namely *interview, observation, tests and documents analysis*. *Interview* was useful to collect data from the teachers and the students. For the teachers, it was administered to collect data about methodology they used to teach it, correction, tasks and motivation, activities they gave to the students. As for the students, it was administered to find out their interesting in learning simple sentence structure writing, how much their teacher teach it in the classroom, activities they do outside the school. *Observation* was useful to discover how the teachers deal with simple sentence structure writing in the classroom, involving correction, activities, motivation and feedback etc. *Documents analysis (syllabus and scheme of work)* was very crucial to confirm whether simple sentence structure content appeared in the syllabus and scheme of work. Finally, the test was administered only for the students to find out how much they master simple sentence structure writing and its types.

3.5. Population

The populations of the study were all students of grade 12 at Nampula Secondary School, dayshift, corresponding to 850 students. 450 students were male and 400 students were female of 17 – 18 years old.

3.5.1. Sample and sampling technique

The study had 87 participants of which 85 are students of 4 streams of grade 12, 21 from each stream and last stream 22. Ten (10) female and eleven (11) male each streams and two (2)

English teachers of the same grade. The 4 streams were observed having English lesson. Two (2) teachers and the four (4) students, one of each stream, were interviewed. The study employed a probability sampling technique, the participants were chosen randomly.

3.6. Procedures

The data collection process took place at Nampula secondary School in three weeks. So, semi – structured Interview was administered to collect information from 2 teachers of English, teaching grade 12 students, and from 4 students of the same grade. Observation was conducted to observe four (4) grade 12 streams, six (6) lessons were observed, three lesson each teacher, to find out the factors affecting learners' inaccurate simple sentence structure writing (S.V.O/C), specifically, the sorts of tasks or activities of sentence structure writing they gave to the students, the way they corrected it or gave feedback to the students and the way they motivated the students.

The teachers were interviewed in the first and second week as soon as they were observed to prevent them from knowing the matters and change their behavior while teaching. Each teacher was observed three days teaching, each day one lesson for each teacher. The first week was observed one teacher and the second week another teacher. So, three (3) observed lessons for each teacher correspond to six (6) observed lessons in total and two (2) interviewed teachers. Students were interviewed in the second week, 1 student each day, 2 male and 2 female. Thus, four (4) days corresponding to four (4) interviewed students. Finally, tests were administered to eighty- five (85) students on the third week, in one day. Students were given 45 minutes to answer the test and then the tests were collected.

3.7. Data analysis technique

Two forms of analysis were used, quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative were used to analyse the tests and frequency of activities of lessons that were observed. For quantitative, the numbers shows a set of responses in a specific question or activities and its specific percentage. After that, the narrative description of what the numbers meant was done while qualitative was used to analyse the content of words from teachers' interview and students' interview. The Teachers' interview and students' responses were analyzed in a narrative description way or discourse analysis.

3.8. Limitation of the study

It is seen that this study took place almost at the end of the third term in secondary schools; some students did not attend the classes (it happens most of the times after they write their final test). And since the teachers were told in advance about the day that they would be observed, they changed their behavior of teaching to give positive results during the lesson delivery. Apart from that, some students did not answer to the interview accordingly for being afraid.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In this section, we dealt with the analyses of data from interview, observation and tests. However, first of all, we started by presenting the data and then analyse it.

4.1. Data Presentation and analysis of data from the student's test

This test was administered to students in order to find out types of simple sentence structure they master.

Table 2: students' test results

Ord.	Types of Simple Sentence Structure	Total Numbers of Items	Student who did well	Percentage (%)	Student who did not do well	Percentage (%)
1	Declarative	85=100%	36	42.35%	49	57.65%
2	Declarative Negative		21	24.7%	64	75.9%
3	Interrogative		17	20%	68	80%
4	Interrogative negative		9	10.6%	76	89.4%

Reserchers' source

With regards to the type one of simple sentence structure, the table has shown that declarative sentence, which the students were asked to use a pronouns in third person as the subject of the sentence, just 36 students, corresponding to 42.35% did well, while 49 corresponding to 57.65 % did not do well, so they wrote the sentences inaccurately, they did not agree the subject with the verb. Declarative is seen as the first type of sentence students learn, because it is the one we use to give information, Wekker and Haegeman (1996:25), affirm that “sentences can generally be used to give information, and they can be used to ask for information and sentences used to supply information are *declarative* sentences”. In the same line of thinking, Miller (2002:24), says that “*declarative construction* (reflects the idea that the speaker or writer declares something to be the case). So, the results have clearly shown that the majority of students of grade 12 cannot write declarative simple sentence structure. Taking into account the answer in the teacher’s interview, it can be concluded that teachers do not teach the types simple sentence just because it does not appear in the syllabus.

The result has also shown that students could not place accurately the particle *not*. they just placed after subject in SVO sentence, *she not go to school*, removing the auxiliary *do/ does*. This fact the table as left clear that 21 students corresponding to 24.7% did well while 64 students corresponding to 75.9 % did not do well. It reveals the absence of teaching systematically the simple sentence structure. Most students are not aware of how to formulate the declarative negative sentence. They forget the present of the verb to do to make negative.

The table crystal clear that the result concerning the questions 3, which students were asked to change the declarative negative into interrogative, 17 students corresponding to 20 % did well while 68 students corresponding to 80% did not do well. Therefore, the results has unveiled that most students face serious problem in the declarative simple sentence structure, as a result they also do not master interrogative, because interrogative is more complex than declarative in in terms of internal structure. Miller (2002:24), says that interrogative construction is used by speakers who wish to ask whether the event took place, that is, speakers who wish to interrogate the person or persons they are addressing (their addressees)”. Taking into account the writers’ point, we can conclude that students face great problems addressing a question in writing. For lack of knowledge how to do it. In addition the could not manage to follow the following structure *aux+sub+v+o/c*, for example: *doe she go to school?*

The table has shown that interrogative negative; only 9 students corresponding to 10.6% did well while 76 corresponding to 89.4% did not do well. This point is more complex than the previous one. And the issue relies on the same problems, the lack of knowledge, which is very dangerous for students who started studying English for almost six or seven years. Here were asked to do so: *doesn't she go to school?*

4.2. Presentation and analyses of data from interviews

This section was addressed to teachers in order to discover the frequency they deal with simple sentence structure in the classroom, types of simple sentence structure they give their students to practice in the classroom as well as outside the school and how they do to motivate their student to improve their simple sentence structure writing.

4.2.1. The frequency of simple sentence structure teaching

This shows that Tr do not teach simple sentence structure very often because it does not appear in the syllabus. So, it is one of the factors affecting learners' inaccurate simple sentence structure writing. In this light, Ss also declared that their teachers do not teach simple sentence structure. Therefore, below are answers.

Teacher 1 said the following: “, *there are times that we look at structures but not with focus on the simple sentence structure as such.*”

The idea Teacher 2 said: “*we rarely talk about this in the classroom, because our lessons are based on the program. I do not teach about it very often.*”

However, students 1 responded the following “*Sometimes the teachers try to bring activities about it, but not with specially focus on the writing simple sentence structure.*”

As for students 2: “*I do not know what simple sentence structure is, my teacher only send us to do research and composition about holidays.*”

The way Students 3 answered: “*My teacher do not talk about it, we only copy text and match and answer comprehension activities because teacher says that is try to help us to understand provincial tests.*”

As for students 4 said: *“my teacher gives works to do home, for example composition, which he takes to mark and gives us our mark. He does not say anything about simple sentence structure.”*

However, it was found that the grade 12 syllabus (see annex I grade 12 syllabus) brings simple sentence structure as grammar focus. Nevertheless, teachers ignore to include this crucial content in the scheme of work to teach about it (see annex II term I scheme of work, annex III term II scheme of work and annex IV term III scheme of work). As a result, students lack knowledge to write simple sentence structure accurately.

4.2.2. Activities for simple sentences structure writing activities practiced outside the school

This also shows that since teachers do not touch on simple sentence structure as such driving their students into inaccurate writing, they do not even touch on the types. This means, students do not hold the knowledge related to simple sentence structure because of their teacher lack of teaching this crucial topic. Most students declared that their teacher do not teach simple sentence structure types. However, this shows that teachers touch on the composition, which is one of types of simple sentence structure writing.

Therefore, Teacher 1 answered so: *“I do not teach about simple structure as such, it means that I do not teach even the types.”*

As teacher 2 said: *“I do not teach about sentence structure, which means I do not touch on the types. I do not remember having talked about it in the classroom, grade 12.”*

However, student 1 answered in the following way: *“I know it not because of the school, but my on interesting and personal effort”*

As for Student 2: *“My teacher does not teach and I do not do any type.”*

However, student 3 responded: *“Sometimes they teach, but it sounds like they do not teacher with strong willing.”*

As student 4 said this: *“I do not do anything related this.”*

4.2.3. Activities for simple sentences structure writing practiced in the classroom.

The data affirms that teachers give composition, however, taking into account the observed lessons, the teachers did not consider the structure of simple sentence structure writing, they just focused on the content of the topic they gave students while they were correcting the composition. In addition to this, Ss affirmed that Tr do not even gives activities' related to types of simple sentence structure writing to be practiced inside the classroom.

So, teacher 1 answered: *“Sometimes I give them some research and composition to see how they write. This is the exercises I give them to do outside the school.*

As teacher 2 said: *“I said that the syllabus does not bring simple sentence structure as contents.”*

However, students 1 answered: hum, I think that *“it is the same question, the answer is the same.”*

Likewise Students 2: *“nothing, I think I have already answered it.”*

As for Students 3: that is the same, we do not do outside the school even inside the classroom, who wants to learn it, may look for somebody to give him some explanation.

However, students 4 replied: *Yap, as I said that my English teach do not talk about simple sentence structure, nor the types and we do not do it.*

4.2.4. Other things teacher do to improve learners willingness to learn simple sentence structure

Teachers claim to motivate their students. However, students were unanimous by saying that their teachers do not motivate them. It was found that even though the teacher motivated their students, the motivation would not be for improvement of simple sentence structure writing. Therefore, below are responses

So, teacher 1 said: *I use picture when I present vocabulary to motivate them and I teach activities related to the reality.*

As for Teacher 2: *“I motivate them to study hard; I teach them what to do to improve certain topics.”*

However, student 1 said : *No, just he gets angry with students and criticizes when we make mistakes*

As for student 2: *“we do not feel motivate”*

Likewise student 3: *he frighten students, I do not believe that he motivates us to improve ours English.”*

And student 4 said: *No, my teacher does not motivate us. But last grade 10, we had a trainee here who behaved like a father. He motivated us and most of us started to like English, but unfortunately he had to go.*

4.3. Presentation and analyses of data from the observed lesson

This subsection presents and analyses the data collected from observation. The data presented in this section are results of 6 observed lessons from 2 teachers who teach grade 12 in stream A, B, and C and E at Nampula Secondary School. The qualifications of a lesson were done by dividing the time of the lesson in 9 blocks of 5 minutes each in a 45 minutes’ lesson. A mark was used as the activity being observed took place. The frequency was calculated according to the number of occurrence of the activity. See the outcome below:

Table 3: Observed lesson results

Ord.	Observed behavior	Frequency
1	The teacher teaching simple sentence structure.	5.5%
2	The teacher teaching different types of simple sentence structure.	3.7%
3	Teacher giving simple sentence structure writing activities to the students.	27.7%
4	Teacher correcting students’ writing mistake.	55.5%
5	Teacher motivating students to improve their simple sentence structure.	11.1%
6	Teacher giving feedback of the mistake	51.9%

Researchers’ source

The table is clear that in the six observed lesson, the teacher rarely thought simple sentence structure, neither verb nor subjects. That was just a text reading and comprehension.

The table shows that the teacher rarely teaches about the types of simple sentence structure. Doff (1988:70), outlines some ways of practicing the structure and this ways teacher should adapt or incorporate into the lesson he was giving. For example the teacher should *use repetition, substitution, single word prompts and many other classroom activities.*

The table is crystal that although teacher rarely taught about simple sentence structure. However, unconsciously they seldom gave to the students some activities strictly related to simple sentence structure, for example, gap filling, match etc. therefore, it should sound good if they gave it in response to the lesson to be practiced inside the classroom.

The observed lesson has shown that the teacher sometimes corrected students' mistake. However, since the lesson was not actually based on writing, teacher' focus was on the content of comprehension. That is, the teacher ignored some students' writing mistakes. Doff (1988, p. 157-158) suggest the following ways of correcting mistakes according to his experience "*I collect the books at the end of the lesson and correct them during the lunch hour. Then I give the books back next day.*" *I just go through the answers and get students to correct their own work*" *Sometimes I write sentences on the board.*" *I ask students to sit in pairs and correct each other's work, helping each other. Then we all go through the answers together.*". *I ask students to exchange their books with the person next to them. Then I go through the answers and they correct each other's work.*". These ways are one of the best ways to correct sentence structure writing.

The table has shown that the issue concerning' motivation for students to improve their simple sentence structure writing, teachers seldom acted as to encourage the students to improve it. On the contrary, in the interview, the teacher tended to cover this truth declaring that they motivate.

The table has clearly unveiled that teachers sometimes gave Feedback as well as correcting mistakes. But this point was considered just because it happened. That is, the feedback was not systematically related to writing as such, however the teacher tended to say something related to inaccurate writing in general without mention the simple sentence structure or verb agreement. If the focus was on the simple sentence structure, it would work. However, in general, students do not real know where and how they made mistakes or the feedback was based on.

4.5. Discussion

This subsection focuses on the discussion of the data presented and analyzed in the previous sections. To do so, the specific objectives were taken into account to discuss the findings. It is structured in the following way: (1) frequency of teaching types of simple sentence structure writing and its types; (2) simple sentence structure writing activities and procedures practiced inside and outside the school; (3) motivation and writing of simple sentence structure writing; (4) correction and feedback, and (5) documents analysis.

4.5.1. Frequency of teaching types of simple sentences structure writing and its types

The findings have shown that the majority of English teachers rarely teach simple sentence structure and its types. Since teachers rarely teach simple sentence structure writing and its types, students write simple sentence inaccurately for the lack of holding knowledge regarding it, this fact can be found in observation as well as the test analysis. All these show the *lack of knowledge* on the students' side through the teachers' failure in dealing with simple sentence structure in the classroom.

In addition to this point, Maxom (2009, p 158) argues that “the problem for many students is that they do not understand what a sentence actually is”. Without a basic grammar rule, they tend to come up with ‘sentences’ like these: e.g. *The blue bag there. She not go to school*, which is dangerous for students in grade 12. That is why students face problems in writing all possible types of simple sentence structures.

Therefore, teachers should do something for their students concerning this matter. It is believed that teacher should cover students' need, not just follow the syllabus blindly. If the reality is different, better try to look for a way round to deal with in order to help the students' progress, especially in writing skill because later on they may be asked to write an application letter, cv etc, in English, how will they cope? So, it very important that teacher incorporate simple sentence structure writing because it from this point student later on can come with their own sentences and complex structures.

4.5.2. Simple sentence structure writing activities and procedures practiced inside and outside the school

The findings has clearly shown that teachers do not give activities related to simple sentence structure writing in the classroom as well as activities for the student to practice outside the school, except composition. Therefore, as evidence of this fact can be seen in the interview outcomes where the majority of teachers affirm that they do not teacher simple sentence structure writing because this content does not appear in syllabus. Consequently, students do not do any activity related to simple sentence structure outside the school to improve their writing since their teachers do not talk about it, because if we take into account our reality, most students depend on the teacher. However, some try to talk about but unconsciously, that is to say, they teacher it without any planning and the lesson this way becomes unsystematic becoming hard for the student to understand.

Although teachers claim that the content related to simple sentence structure does not appear in the syllabus, however after being analysed the syllabus and the scheme of work was found that the syllabus (see annex I) brings the content related to sentence structure writing but teacher just ignore to include in the scheme of work (see annex II, III and IV) and to teacher to their students. So, this issue is clearly seen as the *lack of exposure in simple sentence structure*.

According to Magno et al (2009, p. 2) “the total amount of time in which an individual has contact with a language, it may be in verbal or written form, formal or informal ways (...).” On the same string of thought, British Council (2015) sees exposure as the contact that a learners have with the language that they are trying to learn, either inside or outside the classroom setting. In relation to composition, the findings have shown that the focus of this activity is not on the structure, but on the content of the topics that teachers assign their students.

So, at level of simple sentence structure that students are found through the test score they did, the findings have shown that composition may be very advanced for them and this point Thompson (2001:98) says that “the progression from writing simple sentences in English to English compositions is a very big leap”. The author continues saying that, “you must progress very gradually and carefully from giving students controlled and guided writing activities to encouraging their creativity in free writing”. In this view, Doff (1998:33), argues that it is important to show what the structure means and how it is used, by giving examples; and show clearly how the structure is formed, for students to make their own sentences. To say that the students should first master the sentence structures before going to advanced activities.

In addition to this crucial point, Richard and Rogers (1986, p. 157) suggest that, it is important to select different activities at different levels of learners need to attain a particular level of proficiency. As for Doff (1988:70) outlines some ways of practicing the structure and this ways teacher should adapt or incorporate into the lesson he was giving. For example the teacher should use repletion, substitution, single word prompts and many other classroom activities.

Therefore, it is believed that teachers are responsible to choose the appropriate activities according to the students' level of understanding because if the activities are too difficult for the students to practice, then students will not make effort to solve them. So, teachers should take some of their times dealing with simple sentence structure step by step and check their progress through composition with focus on the content as well as in the simple sentence structure. So, learners' inaccurate simple sentence structure writing is for the lack of knowledge because teachers do not teach about it.

4.5.3. Motivation for improvement of simple sentence structure writing

The issue concerning' motivation for students to improve their simple sentence structure, the majority of results have shown that teachers do not motivate the students to improve their simple sentence structure writing. In the interview, majority of teachers tended to hide this issue claiming that they motivate the students.

However, the students' responses were totally different from the point of view of the teachers. Students responded likewise affirming that their teachers do not motivate them as to improve their writing skills. On the contrary, they just frighten them when they make mistake. In addition to this, the observed lesson has shown that teachers seldom motivated students concerning simple sentence structure writing. Therefore, this point reveals that the *lack of motivation as one of the factors affecting learners inaccurate simple sentence structure writing*.

According to Harmer (1991:5), "motivation is deemed as some kind of internal drive that encourages somebody to pursue a course of action in order to achieve a certain goal, either long or short term goal." As for Nacira (2010 cited in Dornyei, 2005, p 72) "it is extremely necessary for students to be motivated in order to carry out their writing tasks and achieve a satisfactory level in writing in English." Taking into account the contribution of the writers, it is clear that if

teachers motivate the students, they will improve their writing skill is and may become a great writer later on. Students have so many goals, but to reach them, they need an internal drive that will come from their teacher as professional and experimented person. In addition to this point, Harmer (2007:330), sees teacher motivation as one of the teachers most important role, “motivator- one of the principal roles in writing tasks will be to motivate the students, creating the right conditions for the generation of ideas, persuading them of the usefulness of the activity, and encouraging them to make as much effort as possible for maximum benefit” (2007:330). So, teacher should always motivate students. So, students’ lack of motivation is one of the factors’ affecting their inaccurate simple sentence structure writing.

4.5.4. Correction and Feedback

The findings have shown that sometimes teachers correct mistake and give feedback. Actually, it is unbelievable it was observed that there were times that teacher ignored students mistake. That is, some students wrote wrong sentences on the board and teacher simply looked at the content of the sentence ignoring the writing skills and not taking into account the correction of the writing skill. Of course, the lesson was not based on the writing skill, it was actually based on the reading comprehension, even though teachers are the responsible for the correction of any students’ mistake in the classroom either writing or speaking.

Thus, if students are not told their mistake and given correction or feedback at the lesson, when they go out the classroom, they will think that they correct and they will make the same mistake in the future.

Though, teachers do their best in term of correcting and giving feedback, however, they are reinforced to avoid ignoring mistakes in the classroom. In this light, Doff (1988, p. 157) suggests the following ways of correcting writing mistakes according to his experience “*I collect the books at the end of the lesson and correct them during the lunch hour. Then I give the books back next day.*” *I just go through the answers and get students to correct their own work*” *Sometimes I write sentences on the board.*” *“I ask students to sit in pairs and correct each other’s work, helping each other. Then we all go through the answers together.”*. *“I ask students to exchange their books with the person next to them. Then I go through the answers and they*

correct each other's work.". These ways are one of the best ways to correct sentence structure writing.

It is known that the teacher plays different roles according to the task or lesson, Harmer (2007, p. 330) when touches on the teachers role, he says that one of the teachers' role is Feedback provider. The same writer says that teachers should respond positively and encouragingly to the content of what the students have written. The teacher has to choose what and how much to focus on, taking into account the students need at a particular stage of their studies and on the tasks that they have undertaken.

So, for the teacher to respond positively, should take into account the difficult of students to overcome as they provide feedback

Conclusion

This study has shown that among many factors affecting learner's Inaccurate Simple sentence structure writing were selected the following: lack of knowledge on the sentence structure, lack of exposure to the simple sentence structure writing activities inside and outside the school and lack of motivation for improvements . Teachers teach do not teach simple sentence structure because it does not appears in the syllabus, which means even seeing that their students are perishing, making writing mistakes, they do not spend their time to help their students difficult just because it does not appear in the syllabus.. The lack of exposure makes students make many mistakes. Actually, since the teachers do not touch on sentence structure and activities to be practiced inside and outside the classroom, students are not exposed to it. Nobody does any job if he is not motivated, so students will never improve their writing if they cannot contemplate the reasons why behind the improvements. Therefore, lack of motivation on the students is a great factors affecting learner's inaccurate simple sentence structure writing. Teachers see students simple sentence writing mistakes and just leave like that, they do not use their words to tell them the benefit behind learning how to write accurately.

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