

**English Lingua Franca as Language of Learning and
Teaching in Northern Namibia: A report on Oshiwambo
teachers' experiences**

by
Kristof Ipinge

Student Number: 17324726

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Supervisor: Dr Kate Huddlestone
Co-supervisor: Ms Lauren Onraët
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Department of General Linguistics

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Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I also declare that this thesis, in its entirety or in part has not been submitted at any University for obtaining any qualification.

Kristof Iipinge

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Dedication

Dedicated to my parents; Frans Iiyambo Iipinga and Bonafilia Ailli Nelago Ndanyengwa for their continuous encouragement and support, as well as for all the lessons I learnt from them from my childhood to date.

Abstract

At independence, Namibia chose English as its official language and therefore its language of learning and teaching (LOLT). Since then, government documents and other literature have revealed the poor performance of learners and falling of standards of teaching (Benjamin 2004:25). It seems that teachers are facing several challenges when using English as an LOLT in the classroom. This study therefore investigates the challenges faced by teachers in northern Namibia when using ELF as a LOLT, as well as how teachers overcome these challenges. In this regard, structured, one-on-one interviews were conducted with six Oshiwambo-speaking teachers at a specific homogenous secondary school in the Omusati region of northern Namibia. The findings of this study suggest that teachers believe that the learners' sole advantage of using ELF as the LOLT is that it may benefit them if they further their studies abroad, as possessing knowledge of English would enable them to communicate with people from different countries. Another main finding, in terms of how teachers overcome the challenges posed by using ELF as the LOLT, is that teachers often resort to code-switching to ensure that their students understand the concepts they are being taught.

Opsomming

Met die onafhanklikheidswording het Namibië Engels as amptelike taal gekies en gevolglik ook as die taal van onderrig en leer (LOLT). Sedertdien het staatsdokumente en ander literatuur getoon hoe swak leerders presteer en dat daar 'n daling in onderrigstandaarde is (Benjamin 2004: 25). Dit blyk dat onderwysers verskeie uitdagings met die gebruik van Engels as LOLT in die klaskamer in die gesig staar. Hierdie studie ondersoek dus hierdie uitdagings van onderwysers in die noorde van Namibië wanneer hulle Engels as 'n lingua franca (ELF) as die LOLT moet gebruik, sowel as hoe onderwysers hierdie uitdagings oorkom. In hierdie opsig is gestruktureerde individuele onderhoude met ses Oshiwambo-sprekende onderwysers gevoer by 'n spesifieke homogene sekondere skool in die Omusati omgewing in Noord-Namibië. Die bevindinge van hierdie studie dui aan dat onderwysers glo dat leerders wat ELF as LOLT gebruik net voordeel daaruit sal trek indien hulle hul studies in die buiteland sou voortsit omdat kennis van Engels hulle instaat sou stel om met mense van verskillende lande te kommunikeer. Nog 'n belangrike bevinding is dat onderwysers heel dikwels van kodewisseling gebruikmaak om te verseker dat hulle studente die terme wat aangeleer word wel verstaan.

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Table of Contents

Declaration.....	i
Dedication.....	ii
Abstract	iii
Opsomming	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Research question and objectives.....	2
1.3 Rationale	3
1.4 Research approach.....	4
1.5 Data collection	5
1.6 Thesis outline	5
Chapter 2 Literature Review.....	6
2.1 Introduction.....	6
2.2 Origin and definitions of “lingua franca”	6
2.3 A historical perspective on English as an LOLT in Namibia	9
2.3.1 UNIN’s criteria for the selection of English as Namibia’s LOLT	11
2.3.1.1 Unity.....	12
2.3.1.2 Acceptability.....	13
2.3.1.3 Familiarity	14
2.3.1.4 Feasibility	14
2.3.1.5 Science and Technology.....	15

2.3.1.6 Pan Africanism	16
2.3.1.7 Wider Communication	16
2.3.1.8 United Nations	16
2.4 ELF as a LOLT: Benefits and limitations	17
2.4.1 General benefits of ELF as a LOLT	17
2.4.1.1 Educational benefits	17
2.4.1.2 Economic benefits	18
2.4.1.3 Social, cultural and political benefits	19
2.4.1.4 Linguistic benefits	20
2.4.2 General limitations of ELF as a LOLT	21
2.4.2.1 Learners' lack of exposure	21
2.4.2.2 Teachers' inadequate proficiencies	22
2.4.2.3 The effects of ELF on learners' culture	23
2.4.2.4 The effects of ELF on the perceptions of local languages	24
2.5 Prominent research on ELF as an LOLT	26
2.5.1 Rubagumya's (1998) research on attitudes towards English-medium instruction in Tanzania	27
2.5.2 Harris's (2011) study on LOLTs in Namibian school	27
2.5.3 Benjamin's (2004) research on the influence of English as a LOLT in Namibian schools	28
2.5.4 Probyn's (2001) study on teachers' reflections on English as an additional language as a LOLT	29
2.5.5 De Wet's (2002) study of factors influencing the choice of English as a LOLT	30

2.6 Introducing ELF as LOLT: When is the right time?	31
2.7 Some benefits of mother-tongue education	33
2.7.1 Psychological factors	35
2.7.2 Educational factors	36
2.7.3 Linguistic factors	36
2.7.4 Socio-cultural factors	37
2.7.5 Political factors	38
2.8 Conclusion	38
Chapter 3: Methodology	39
3.1 Introduction	39
3.2 Research design	39
3.3 The population	40
3.4 Sample size and sampling procedure	41
3.5 Data collection	44
3.5.1 Teachers' structured interviews	45
3.5.1.1 Advantages of structured interviews	45
3.5.1.2 Limitations of structured interviews	46
3.6 Data recording	47
3.7 Data analysis	48
3.8 Conclusion	50
Chapter 4: Results and discussion	51
4.1 Introduction	51
4.2 Language preference of teachers	51

4.3 Learners' English proficiency	53
4.4 LOLT preference.....	55
4.5 Advantages of English as an LOLT	56
4.6 Learning through ELF	58
4.7 Challenges in using English as an LOLT	60
4.8 Overcoming challenges met when using English as LOLT	62
4.9 ELF as an LOLT and learners' academic performance.....	65
4.10 The use of Oshiwambo as an LOLT	68
4.11 General comments on English as an LOLT	70
4.12 Conclusion	73
Chapter 5: Conclusion	74
5.1 Introduction.....	74
5.2 Summary of the results.....	74
5.3 Strengths and limitations of the study	76
5.4 Suggestions for further research	77
5.5 Conclusion	78
References	79
Appendix 1: Reference letter	86
Appendix 2: Consent form for participation	87
Appendix 3: Biographical information form	90
Appendix 4: Structured interview questions for teachers	91
Appendix 5: Transcripts of interviews	92

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

After Namibia's independence in 1990, English was chosen by the new government as an official language and therefore a language of learning and teaching (LOLT). This was a paradoxical decision because, at that time, only 0.8% of the Namibian population constituted first language speakers of English (Wolfaardt 2002:67) as English was not widely spoken in Namibian communities and rarely in rural regions (Trewby 1999, in Harris 2011:11). English was only used regularly in the country's capital of Windhoek, and even then, only in the work place. Nevertheless, the decision to adopt English as an official language, and hence as the LOLT, has been well supported as there was an expectation amongst Namibians that learning English as early as possible is important because it will improve one's opportunities in the future (Harris 2011:1).

The Namibian Ministry of Education (MOE)'s language policy (2003:4) stipulates that a child's mother tongue should be used as the LOLT in the first three years of formal education (i.e. from grades one to three), where English is taught as a subject. However, Harris (2011:18) explains that the policy only makes provision for the language of the majority group in that community to be selected as the LOLT during that period, therefore meaning that not all learners are then taught in their home language¹. If, for whatever reason, learners from minority groups cannot attend schools which use the mother tongue as the LOLT, these learners are then forced, by circumstance, to learn in a language other than their mother tongue. Similarly, those learners who find themselves in an urban district with a mixed ethnic community, but do not find schools which use the home language as the LOLT, have the option of attending a school where English is the LOLT (Harris 2011:18). The MOE's

¹ For the purpose of this thesis, the terms "mother tongue", "first language", and "home language" are used interchangeably.

language policy further stipulates that if the school wishes to use English as the LOLT before grade four, permission must be obtained from the MOE with well-grounded, convincing motivations (MOE 2003:4). According to the MOE language policy, English is introduced as a LOLT in grade four, it is taught as a subject, and remains the LOLT up until grade 12. At the same time, the home languages are taught as curriculum subjects from grades four to twelve (MOE: 203).

The implementation of the Namibian MOE's language policy, which calls for learners to be taught in English from grade four onwards, implies that non-native English teachers are expected to teach using English as a *lingua franca* (ELF). Although ELF as a LOLT has been accepted by teachers and learners because of its prestigious status as well as there being an abundance of teaching and learning materials in the language (Penny 2009:2), educators face many challenges when using the medium of English as the LOLT. This study aims to investigate these challenges and what teachers do to overcome them.

1.2 Research question and objectives

The research question for this study is two-fold:

- i) What are the challenges that teachers face using English as a LOLT? and
- ii) What do teachers do to overcome these challenges?

The research objectives of this study are, firstly, to identify teachers' perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of using ELF as a LOLT in an educational setting; secondly, to determine the challenges that teachers face when using ELF as a LOLT, and finally, to establish how teachers overcome these challenges.

1.3 Rationale

This study is rationalized by five vital points. Firstly, Harris (2011:7) found that a high proportion of learners in Namibia are confused by the second language (L2) in which they are taught (i.e. English). Learners want to succeed in their school subjects and in English in particular, but do not understand the subject matter well enough because of their relatively low proficiency in the LOLT. Secondly, most communities, for example, in northern Namibia, only use one mother tongue in the school and in the community itself. As a result, many teachers in these communities hardly ever hear or use English and would therefore not (be able to) use the language for educational or other purposes (Wolfaardt 2002:71). Thirdly, the English proficiency of teachers in Namibia (and in northern Namibia in particular) has been found to be very poor (Kisting 2012). Fourthly, the majority of parents in northern Namibia is not educated in English. This makes it difficult for them to help their children with school work. Finally, parents, teachers and educationalists do not fully understand the problems learners face with language and often attribute poor learner performance to a lack of interest and commitment (Harris 2011:7). This study may thus be significant as its findings could inform and provide educationalists, language policy makers and researchers with more insight regarding the advantages and challenges of using ELF as a LOLT. This would then enable the educational stakeholders with the knowledge of how best to amend the current language policy in schools, how to implement it or perhaps to contemplate coming up with a different new policy that will ensure that all learners learn successfully and achieve their full potential. Ideally, language barriers should not be hindrances to successful learning. One source of information regarding the advantages and challenges of ELF as a LOLT is the teachers themselves as they are at the forefront of curriculum implementation. Therefore, to obtain data for this study, a small number of teachers were interviewed to investigate the

challenges of using ELF as a LOLT in a specific school as well as any strategies they use to overcome these challenges.

1.4 Research approach

In order to answer the research question, data in the form of structured interviews were collected from Oshiwambo-speaking teachers at a school in the Omusati region in northern Namibia. This school, established in 1975, is situated in the centre of a small town where the majority of the inhabitants are Oshiwambo-speaking. The school is a government boarding school which is managed by the school principal with the assistance of three heads of department and a hostel superintendent. In addition, the teaching staff of this school consists of 29 teachers, 19 of whom are female and 10 of whom are male. Nearly all of the teachers speak Oshiwambo as their first language (L1) while only three teachers do not: one is Nigerian and the other two speak Silozi as their L1. All teachers speak English as their L2. The school is attended by 741 learners, 353 of whom are boys and 388 are girls. All of the learners speak English as a L2 while only two are not Oshiwambo-speaking - they speak Silozi as their L1. Given this language distribution, it follows that learners at the school in question hardly speak English after classes or during their free time. Moreover, all of the learners are being educated in ELF while also having English as a L2 as a compulsory school subject. Apart from English Second Language, learners have a choice between Oshikwanyama First Language and Oshindonga First Language as school subjects. Here, it is worth mentioning that Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama are the only two Oshiwambo dialects with established writing systems. For this reason, they are taught in schools as L1s, even to those learners from other ethnic groups who speak different dialects at home² (Ndeutepo 1999, in Zeichner and Dahlstrom 1999:123). As Silozi First Language is not a subject which

² Learners and teachers at the school where the research was carried out speak seven different dialects of Oshiwambo. These dialects are mutual intelligible. Therefore learners who do not speak Oshikwanyama and Oshindonga (the two dialects which are taught as school subjects) are not disadvantaged in any way.

is offered at the school, the two Silozi L1 speaking learners are given another content subject (Development Studies) as a replacement.

1.5 Data collection

For this specific study, the researcher used structured interviews to collect data that were used to answer the research questions. Here, it is important to emphasize that the interviews were conducted after having obtained prior written permission from the education director of the Omusati region, the principal of the school in question as well as the teachers who were interviewed (see Appendix 2). Furthermore, the researcher identified himself with the reference letter that was given to him by the Department of General Linguistics, University of Stellenbosch (see Appendix 1). Structured interviews were chosen because the researcher felt that the interviews would enable him to obtain detailed and insightful data from the teachers. These interviews were recorded, transcribed (see Appendix 5) and then analysed in order to answer the research questions.

1.6 Thesis outline

Following this chapter, chapter 2 constitutes the literature review which includes a discussion of the origin and various definitions of the concept of ‘lingua franca’, the adoption of ELF as a LOLT in Namibia from a historical perspective, general benefits and limitations of using ELF as a LOLT, prominent research in the field of ELF as a LOLT, a consideration of whether there is a “correct time” in which to introduce ELF as a LOLT into schools, and lastly, a brief discussion of the benefits of mother tongue education.

Chapter 3 provides an outline of the research methodology which will cover the process of participants’ selection, the data collection procedures, instruments and analysis pertaining to this study. Chapter 4 contains a presentation and discussion of the results of the data analysis.

Finally, chapter 5 will conclude the study by providing a brief summary of the findings, as well as the strengths and limitations of the study and some suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

At independence, Namibia³ chose English as its official language although it had no history of English as a colonial language and only a few citizens who spoke it as a mother tongue (Harris 2011:1). The aim of introducing English, as was motivated by United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN)⁴ (1981), was to introduce an official language that would steer the people away from lingua-tribal affiliations and differences and would create conditions conducive to national unity in the realm of language. Further, the introduction of English as an official language meant that non-English-speaking learners and teachers were expected to teach and learn respectively in ELF. This chapter briefly reviews the literature concerning the adoption of English as an official language, and hence the use of ELF as LOLT, in Namibia. Furthermore, the concept of ‘lingua franca’ will be explained as well as several notable authors’ definitions and interpretations thereof. As is usually the case, ELF as LOLT has a number of benefits as well as limitations, some of which will be discussed in this chapter. In addition, the question of when is an appropriate time to introduce ELF as LOLT will be addressed, as will the issue of using one’s mother tongue as LOLT.

2.2 Origin and definitions of “lingua franca”

A number of authors have provided different definitions of the term “lingua franca”. Crystal (2011:282) defines it as “an auxiliary language used to enable communication to take place between groups of people who speak different native languages”. Richards and Schmidt (2002:309) define this term further by noting that “a lingua franca could be an internationally used language of communication, it could be the native language of one of the groups, or it

³ Before independence, Namibia was known as South West Africa (SWA).

⁴ The UNIN was an organization established by the UN as support for the South West Africa People’s Organization in Zambia during the liberation struggle.

could be a language which is not spoken natively by any of the groups but has a simplified sentence structure and vocabulary and is often a mixture of two or more languages". Finally, Firth (1996 in Seidlhofer 2005:211), regards a lingua franca as a "contact language" between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication. For the purpose of this study, "lingua franca" is used to refer to a language which is used for communication between speakers who do not share a L1 and which is widely used or taught for use between nationals of the same country for the purpose of learning and teaching.

With these definitions in mind, it is imperative to provide a short description of how lingua francas came into being. To begin with, many areas of the world are populated by people speaking different languages. In these areas where groups need language to enable social or commercial interaction, one language is often negotiated and used upon mutual agreement (Fromkin & Rodman 1978:267). The term "lingua franca" (literally "Frankish language") originated in medieval times (Otaala 2005:101) as a trade language which developed in the Mediterranean ports and was a mix of Italian, French, Spanish, Greek and Arabic. Over time, the meaning of "lingua franca" has shifted to include other languages used in a similar way (Fromkin & Rodman 1978:267). Fromkin and Rodman note that any language can be a lingua franca: English has been called "the *lingua franca* of the whole world", French at a time was "the *lingua franca* of diplomacy", and Latin and Greek were "the *lingua francas* of Christianity" in the west and east respectively, for a millennium (Fromkin & Rodman 1978:267). It is worth mentioning that while certain lingua francas arise naturally, others develop due to government policy and intervention (Fromkin & Rodman 1978:267). For example, most inhabitants of East Africa learn at least some Swahili as a L2. Swahili then assumes the function of a lingua franca as it is used and understood in nearly every market or

trading place. A similar situation exists in West Africa, where Hausa is the lingua franca (Fromkin & Rodman 1978:267).

English as a global lingua franca has been adopted in many parts of the world as a LOLT due to its use in significant international domains such as science and technology, media, entertainment, international aid, administration, and business and marketing (Cluver 1992:128). With this in mind, it seems that the adoption of English as a LOLT in Namibia is a norm rather than an exception.

2.3 A historical perspective of English as a LOLT in Namibia

Many children across Africa begin their schooling in a language that is completely unknown to them (Le Mottee 2008:34). Le Mottee (2008:34) states that in 1990, the newly independent Namibia chose English as its official language in order to steer the people away from linguatribal affiliations and differences and to create conditions conducive to national unity in the realm of language.

Namibia was colonized by South Africa in 1920 and in the years that followed, the Bantu education system promoted the respective vernaculars as languages of learning and as compulsory subjects in the school curriculum (Harlech-Jones 1988:50). The 1975 report from the department of Bantu education states that “in the lower primary [...] the mother tongue is LOLT. In the higher primary classes, Afrikaans, the most widely-spoken language, is the medium employed and a high standard of instruction is maintained throughout the schools” (UNIN 1984:15). According to UNIN (1984:15), at the beginning of 1976 a start was made to introduce the respective mother tongues of the majority groups in Namibia, Oshiwambo and Lozi, as LOLTs from grades one to five and at secondary school level. Afrikaans therefore became the LOLT in secondary schools in all regions of Namibia, except the area of Caprivi where English was used (UNIN 1984:16).

The policy described above was vehemently rejected by those Namibians who favoured modernization and integration and who consequently advocated the use of one supra-ethnic language throughout the education system (Harlech-Jones 1988:50). Most students at that time did not succeed with Afrikaans as their LOLT, as was indicated by the results from the language usage survey conducted by the Language Training Department (LTD) at the Academy for Tertiary Education in Namibia. This survey revealed that Namibians were sceptical about the efficacy of Afrikaans and were in favour of learning in English (UNIN 1984:16). This observation becomes even more significant when looking at the national percentages of the home languages of the respondents in this survey: Silozi (28.8%), Afrikaans (24.1%), Nama/Damara (20.8%), Oshiwambo languages (3.7%), German (3.7%), Setswana (3.7%), Rukwangali (1.9%) and English (0%) (UNIN 1984:16).

Of these respondents, 89% felt that English was the most important language for their own advancement in school and in life. In addition, a substantial number of students felt that the language of learning in the lower grades of primary school (i.e. grades one to three) should be the mother tongue, and in the higher grades of primary school (i.e. grades four to seven), secondary school and at tertiary levels, the LOLT should be English (UNIN 1984:16).

Simultaneously, the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), a liberation organization, identified Afrikaans as the language of oppression while English was identified, somewhat paradoxically, as the language of liberation. The Namibian population was therefore encouraged to switch to the latter as LOLT in schools (Cluver 1992:125). Accordingly, an increasing number of parents requested that their children be taught in English. In 1981, English became the LOLT in Ovambo and in 1988 the University of Namibia opted for English as its LOLT (Cluver 1992:125).

Although English was used in some parts of the country as a language of learning pre-independence, this was not officially endorsed. Therefore, prior to Namibia's independence, English was formally endorsed only by the liberation movement as an official language and as the LOLT in Namibian schools. The intention was to replace Afrikaans, then the dominant language in Namibia and the LOLT in the higher grades of primary schools (and sometimes even earlier), with English (Phillipson 1992:289). This decision was taken by SWAPO in Lusaka in 1981 and it was documented in a seminal paper by UNIN (1984) entitled "Toward education policy for Namibia: perspectives and strategies".

2.3.1 UNIN's criteria for the selection of English as Namibia's LOLT

UNIN's rationale for choosing English as the official language, and hence as the LOLT, was based on eight criteria which will be explained in sections 2.3.1 to 2.3.8 below (cf. Table 1). These eight criteria were selected based on two related purposes: the need to combat South African-engineered divisiveness, and the unity of the Namibians (Phillipson 1992:293). Here, it is imperative to point out that the term "official language" was used more frequently than "medium of instruction" or "LOLT" although English's new role had obvious implications for the education system. It was understood that if English was to become the official language, it would also become the LOLT. This has been eloquently elaborated upon by Cluver (1992:133) when he states that it is in the schools that the governments of new nations must attempt to win the hearts and minds of the new generations. Angula (1990, in Haacke 1996:76) also believes that the establishment of English as an official language takes place in the classroom.

Additionally, it is necessary to mention that English was chosen over and above languages such as German, French and Namibia's indigenous languages as the official language and LOLT of Namibia (Phillipson 1992:91). In table 1, adopted from Phillipson (1992:290), a

brief outline is given of the criteria involved in the rationale behind this choice. In this table, + equals three points, -/+ equals one point, and –equals no points.

Criteria	Indigenous languages	Afrikaans	German	French	English
Unity	-	-	-	+	+
Acceptability	+	-	-	+	+
Familiarity	+	+	+	-	+
Science and technology	-	-	+	+	+
Pan Africanism	-	-	-	-/+	+
Wider communication	-	-	+	+	+
United nations	-	-	-	+	+
Total points	6	3	9	16	21

Table 1: The suitability of nominated languages as Namibia's official language

As is evident in Table 1, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the criteria used to select the official languages are biased toward English (Phillipson 1992:290). What follows is a brief discussion of each above-mentioned criterion used by UNIN in the selection of English as Namibia's official language.

2.3.1.1 Unity

The criterion of unity was of importance because the major priority for the new government in post-independent Namibia was to “minimize any divisive tendencies and practices in the country on the one hand, and on the other hand, to reinforce all such factors that may contribute to national unity, that is, to create conditions conducive to national unity, whether in the realm of politics, economics, religion, culture, race or language” (UNIN 1981, in Phillipson 1992:289).

English was chosen because it was expected to contribute towards the new nation's primary task of achieving unity and national reconstruction in the wake of a deliberate policy of ethno-linguistic fragmentation pursued by the illegal occupying regime. The official language (English) was expected to reinforce national unity and at the same time to minimize competition among indigenous languages (UNIN 1981:37). For example, if the indigenous language of Oshiwambo was chosen over all other local languages, the speakers of the latter may have viewed this decision as discriminatory against them or perhaps felt that their languages are inferior in order to be selected for such a "prestigious" task. In schools, learning and teaching through the medium of English would mean that learners, teachers and other educational stakeholders would be unified, contrary to what occurred in the past. In sum, English was expected to contribute towards achieving unity and national construction by neutralizing any competitive or disruptive sociolinguistic forces (Haacke 1996:60).

However, Bunyi (1999:348) notes that "whereas indigenous languages may divide people along ethnic lines, English divides them along class lines". For example, in Zambia, English has been adopted by competing language groups in the educational sector. Simultaneously, it has divided those who have access to it (typical members of reasonably well-off urban groups) and those who do not (typically the members of poor urban and rural groups) (Cooke & Williams 2002:314). In fact, far from being a source of unity, the use of English in education in many poor countries such as Zambia has become a source of national discord (Cooke & Williams 2002:314)

2.3.1.2 Acceptability

English was also chosen as an official language because of its positive rather than negative associations. This was done to avoid languages that may be associated with the oppression

and injustices which have characterized Namibian history (UNIN 1981:37). Afrikaans was used on a daily basis to perpetuate attitudes of superiority, it was the language in which many Namibians were resettled in so called “homelands” and it was a language in which they were prevented from becoming full citizens in their own country (Cluver 1992:124). Therefore, languages such as Afrikaans could not meet the criterion of acceptability and English was seen by SWAPO to have a positive rather than a negative association. However, it can also be argued that English did not meet this criterion because, to a certain extent, the language was also associated with colonialism in Namibia as it was used during the South African regime in Namibia along with German as a LOLT (Cluver 1992:120).

2.3.1.3 Familiarity

One of the motives in choosing English as an official language was that Namibians had some familiarity with the language due to the small amount of exposure to it they received during their school years (UNIN 1981:38). However, Cluver (1992:126) argued that, at the time of Namibia’s independence, English did not meet this criterion because most Namibians were unfamiliar with the language. In this regard, Cluver is supported by Phillipson (1992:292) who feels that the argumentation in favour of English was unconvincing. Phillipson (1992:292) explains that the experience of migrant labour and exile has probably served to make major Namibians languages, particularly Oshiwambo, more familiar to Namibians than English.

2.3.1.3 Feasibility

The feasibility criterion involved consideration of the finances, logistics and administration required in the promotion of English as an official language in Namibia. English met this criterion because, as was suggested by UNIN (1981:38), there were adequate resources available in English for short-and long-term implementation plans. There were also sufficient

numbers of expatriate professionals who were fluent in English and were available for recruitment in terms of teaching, teacher training, curriculum design, educational administration and other areas crucial for any potential emergency language development situation (UNIN 1981:38). However, Cluver (1992:126) points out that there were no indications that the aforementioned expatriates who had been trained in English at UNIN were indeed returning to Namibia in large numbers and could therefore be recruited in the implementation and promotion of English in Namibia.

2.3.1.5 Science and technology

Haacke (1996:60) states that “SWAPO wanted a language that could be utilized in Namibia’s economic and industrial development”. This is crucial because countries and businesses which cannot communicate with (prospective) partners in the rest of the world, especially in the commercial, political, and scientific and technological sectors, will be left behind (Fandrych 2009:52). However, it is vital to point out that using English as an official language does not guarantee economic and social development (Cooke & Williams 2002:314). Cooke and William (2002:314) go on to explain that poorer countries that use English as a means of accessing development have not hitherto made great strides in terms of economic and social development. For example, in Zambia, where the official language is English, the gross domestic product (GDP) had a real growth rate of -2% in 1998, and in 1993, 86% of the population was estimated to be living below the poverty line (Cooke and Williams 2002:314).

Post-independence, the Namibian government wanted to harness various resources in order to develop the science and technology sectors of their country. Namibia was not different from the rest of the world in that English was seen as a language of wider communication in virtually all fields of science and technology, in addition to being the language used for

publication of materials to facilitate training and research programs inside and outside the country (UNIN 1981:38). One can say that, at that time, languages such as Afrikaans and German also met this criterion but because of other criteria that they could not meet (such as unity and acceptability) these were not chosen as official languages.

2.3.1.6 Pan Africanism

According to this criterion, English was chosen as an official language because it strengthened the bonds between Namibians and other progressive communities in Africa (UNIN 19981:38). The selection of English was advantageous because it was common to many of Namibia's immediate neighbouring countries, as well as being widely spoken throughout Africa (UNIN 1981:38).

2.3.1.7 Wider communication

At independence, Namibia was likely to re-position its outlook from a South African to an international one (UNIN 1981:38). This meant that a language of English's status was needed as an official language because at that time, English was spoken globally as a mother tongue by 300 million people and 374 million speakers spoke it as a L2 (Cluver 1992:127). In short, English was a significant means of connecting Namibia as a country with the rest of the world (Haacke 1996:60). There is no doubt then that English was believed to be aiding Namibia as sea and air communication developed, in addition to the development of international training and negotiations at administrative, diplomatic and commercial levels (UNIN 1981:38).

2.3.1.8 United Nations

The history of Namibia's struggle is intimately linked with the United Nations organization (UN) (UNIN 1981:38) as the citizens of the country were greatly assisted by the UN during

the liberation struggle. SWAPO therefore deemed it necessary to ensure that the official language of Namibia should be one of the principal languages of the UN (Haacke 1996:60) with which Namibian negotiators were then already familiar (UNIN 1981:38). Hence, in relation to this criterion, English was the only language which could be considered to fulfil the role of Namibia's official language, because English was going to give Namibia effective access to the UN (Phillipson 1992:291).

2.4 ELF as an LOLT: benefits and limitations

ELF as a LOLT is used in numerous countries worldwide, and especially in Africa. Using ELF as a LOLT has a number of benefits and limitations, some of which will be discussed in this section. Note that these advantages and disadvantages of ELF as LOLT are discussed in general terms (not always directly relevant to the Namibian setting) and examples from specific settings are used to illustrate the argument. The advantages of ELF as a LOLT, which will be discussed in the following sub-sections, related to: education; economy; society, culture and politics, and language. The disadvantages will be discussed in terms of, amongst others, teachers' inadequate English proficiency, teachers' and learners' lack of exposure to English, and the effects English has on the perceptions and status of local languages.

2.4.1 General benefits of ELF as LOLT

2.4.1.1 Educational benefits

In Africa, a shortage of trained teachers and lack of educational materials in the local languages, which in most cases are the mother tongues of its citizens, make learning through a mother tongue impractical (Otaala 2005:126). Hence, learning through the medium of English would be advantageous because most of the educational texts are written in English

(Moyo 2001:104) and English has also become the main language of technology and the internet (Cluver 1992:129). In addition, because English is a “universal language”, it has a high status and there are numerous methods of teaching it (Otaala 2005:127). Moumouni (1968, in Otaala 2005:125) explains that by using English as a LOLT, countries can work together and exchange resources, teachers and experience. For example, many Namibian English teachers have been trained in the United Kingdom (UK), Nigeria, Australia and so on. Likewise, a number of qualified English volunteers from countries such as the UK, Canada, Australia and Sweden volunteer in Namibia where they teach English in schools and train English teachers. According to Moyo (2001:104), South Africa is witnessing a shift where universities that previously used only Afrikaans as the LOLT are now shifting to English, either as a dual-medium alongside Afrikaans or as the sole LOLT. This indicates that for people to access learning in different fields, learning through English opens the door to wider knowledge acquisition (Moyo 2001:104). One cannot entirely rule out the possibility of using local languages as LOLTs, however, one has to bear in mind that specifically focusing on local languages can lessen a person’s chances “for further education and limit access of specific groups or countries to the international body of knowledge” (Haacke 1996:79).

2.4.1.2 Economic benefits

Another factor in favour of English as LOLT is the economic benefits it has on the educational sector. In short, using English as a LOLT is more cost-effective than if education were to be provided in the various local languages (UNIN 1981:58). In Africa, for example, if the local languages were to be used as LOLTs, it would not be easy to facilitate the transference of knowledge as the educational materials are written in English and not in these local languages (Moyo 2001:110). Hence, it is beneficial to use English as a LOLT as this will avoid the costs involved in developing a language’s writing system (seeing as there are some local languages in Namibia which are only spoken and for which no writing systems

exist, such as !xun language) (Otaala 2005:127). Bunyi (1999:347), however, has argued that producing educational materials, even for languages with very small speech communities, need not to be too expensive. She cites the River Reader project (RRP) which began in 1970 in Nigeria with the aim of producing literacy materials in 20 minority languages. The RRP showed that by making use of uniform formats and illustrations and by using cheaper materials, it was possible to reduce the production costs of educational materials (Williamson 1976, in Bunyi 1999:347).

In addition, using English as a LOLT also means that teachers are trained in one language only. This, in turn, would limit expenses because if teachers are to be trained in the different local languages, costs would increase significantly and this would also limit the opportunities a teacher has to teach in different places or communities. It then becomes necessary to train the producers of these materials, the teacher trainers and the teachers themselves so as to equip them with the necessary skills to enable them to teach in different languages. Lastly, using English as a LOLT is beneficial because English materials are very often donated by the developed countries, therefore lessening the financial burden.

2.4.1.3 Social, cultural and political benefits

It is very near impossible, from a practical point of view, to implement the principle of mother tongue as LOLT in a multilingual country because it is difficult to provide education in the mother tongues for all languages groups, especially if the groups are quite small (Helm in Otaala 2005:128). In addition, conflict may arise if one local language is chosen as the LOLT over another local language. UNIN (1981:58) notes that because European languages are foreign and somewhat neutral, their uses as LOLTs are recommended (however, the question of neutrality is debatable). Thus using English as a LOLT may be beneficial because as Otaala (2005:128) suggests, English educational instruction may prevent racial or tribal

segregation in schools. And because English is the global *lingua franca* of science, technology and commerce (Master 1998:716), using it as a LOLT would aid the nation in achieving globalization, modernization and an economy that will ensure qualitatively better lives for its citizens (Mathew 1997:165). Nevertheless, becoming fluent in English may take up much of the time allocated to the teaching of languages, which may be detrimental to the level of fluency in an African language and the understanding of the cultures of the society (Haacke 1996:59). One also needs to look at how English is perceived in society and the role it plays in determining social status within that society. In Namibia, for example, English is seen as a gateway to a good education and social advancement (Cluver 1992:128). In Nigeria, English has created a new basis for social differentiation in that it distinguishes the less-educated who speak Pidgin English from the well-educated who speak Standard English (Jarmon 1988 in Cluver 1992:135).

2.4.1.4 Linguistic benefits

Otaala (2005:128) states that English provides much scientific and technical terminology required by modern society. English, in its position as the dominant international language, can also be used to set useful language standards for levels of clarity and organization. Evidence of this is provided by Mauranen (1993 in Master 1998:722) who found that English texts were viewed as more user-friendly and less elitist in its reader expectations in comparisons to Finnish texts. Furthermore, Cluver (1992:129) believes that English is an easy language to learn as it assimilates borrowed terms easily rather than making use of loan translations, it makes use of its morphological system thus creating an interesting vocabulary, it uses a phonemic rather than a pictorial writing system, and it is a theme-fronting language with little inflection. However, Tully (1997:157) disagrees with Cluver's reasoning by providing figures from India as an example. Tully found that only 5% of Indians can manage English adequately and some would argue that this figure is even lower. In South Africa, only

30% to 35% of citizens are sufficiently fluent in English to engage in a meaningful political conversation or understand English news broadcast (Swanepoel 1995, in De Wet 2002:120). Various studies have been done in different countries which also suggest that English is not an easy language to learn. Firstly, Machingaize (1998, in Cooke & Williams 2002:307) found that in Zimbabwe; between 60% and 66% of learners have not attained “the desirable levels” of reading in English by the time they reach grade six. Secondly, research by Eisemon (1989, in Bunyi 1999:348) suggests that learners in Kenya are not able to use scientific knowledge acquired or taught in English to solve practical problems in their everyday lives. Finally, in Zambia, there is much evidence which suggests that the vast majority of primary school learners cannot read adequately in English, the sole official LOLT of the country (Cooke & Williams 2002:307). Of course, these statistics are not solely attributed to the factor that English is “not an easy language to learn”. Other factors such; motivation to learn English, intelligence levels of people learning it, age at which English is learnt and the exposure to English also play an important role in the mastery of English language.

2.4.2 General limitations of ELF as LOLT

2.4.2.1 Learners’ lack of exposure

Firstly, in ELF contexts, learners tend to have little occasion to use English outside the classroom due to the lack of native English speakers in schools and their communities (Moyo 2001:103). According to Cooke and Williams (2002:313) teachers’ lack of exposure to the LOLT “leads to low quality education” and learners’ lack of exposure leads to low chances for successful learning. Therefore, Moyo (2001:101) believes that there is an unquestionable need for learners to use English in more authentic and diverse communicative and academic situations if ELF is to remain the major LOLT, language of examination and further study. Teachers also have little or no access to mother tongue speakers to reinforce their

competence. In addition, teachers in the outlying areas are particularly affected because they have no one to converse with in English (Cluver 1992:131).

In South Africa, the majority of non-English mother-tongue learners, even after 10 to 12 years of schooling where English is the LOLT, will display an inability to read or to comprehend texts and questions in English examinations (Moyo 2001:101). Similarly, the English proficiency levels of students at VISTA University in Sebokeng, even after eight or more years of education with English as the LOLT, have been found to be of great concern (Sarinjeive 1997:71). In South Africa, poor English proficiency almost always leads to poor school performance (De Wet: 2002:119). For example, educators in the Free State contend that in 1999, the lack of English proficiency of non-native English learners was the most important reason for the province's higher grade 12 failure rates than other provinces (Smit 1999, in De Wet 2002:119). Moyo (2001:100) posits that what led to this situation is the fact that in L2 school programs, students are often still mentally translating, encoding and storing the L2 input in the context of their L1, even after many years of education in English.

2.4.2.2 Teachers' inadequate proficiency

Another concern, which is always associated with the use of ELF as a LOLT, is that teachers tend to have inadequate proficiency in English. In South Africa, most of the teachers are not sufficiently equipped to explain new concepts in English in the various subjects (Chick 1992:33). They do not have the knowledge and skills to support English language learning and to teach literacy skills across the entire curriculum (De Wet 2002:119). In Botswana, issues of learners' abilities in the classroom are greatly outweighed by those of teachers' competencies due to the latter having an inadequate command of English in order to use it as a LOLT (Bonny & Ridge 1997:173). Similarly, in Namibia, among the 23 000 educators who took the English language proficiency test in September 2011 as part of the education

department's strategy to identify further training needs, only 2% of the teachers actually passed the test (Kisting 2012). Another, perhaps more alarming, finding from this study was that some teachers struggled to complete their own personal particulars, including biographical information, on the first page of the answer sheet (Kisting 2012). In most cases learners learn English by copying the way their teachers use it and as Wolfaardt (2002:75) writes, "it is not in the learners' interest to learn a language from persons who have not mastered the language themselves". One can thus only imagine how these educators must struggle to teach in English if they themselves do not have a good command of the language, and one therefore expects the general performance of learners at school level to be very much below average. In short, given the fact that in most cases both teachers and learners tend to have a poor command of English, this can be an indication that most learners and teachers will not be able to cope with ELF as LOLT and that this will have a severe negative effect on academic performance.

2.4.2.3 The effects of ELF on learners' culture

Using ELF as a LOLT is seen as leading to linguistic uniformity which may affect specific qualities and values of a culture. Master (1998:718) states that, for children whose mother tongue is not English, English is not the language of their cultural heritage or their community, neither is it used to communicate intense personal feelings. Hence, the possibility also exists that if English is the African child's most important (or only) LOLT, the child could become anglicized at the expense of his or her own cultural heritage (De Wet 2002:124). Master's and De Wet's observations are supported by Otaala (2005:124) who feels that education through the medium of what is essentially a foreign language can lead to cultural contamination, where two cultures – that of the mother tongue and that of a foreign language – become intertwined to form a cross-culture which represents neither the one nor the other. It may even result in cultural disorientation where a child becomes totally estranged

from his or her original culture. Master (1998:718) also believes that it is risky to use ELF as a LOLT as the English-language educational resources are not always culturally appropriate. In addition, “English does not necessarily have [...] experts with the appropriate linguistic and cultural understanding for all learning contexts” (Master 1998:718). Indeed, this is why developing communities support mother tongue education as a safeguard against Western culture and linguistic imperialism. Therefore, when using ELF as a LOLT, those in charge of implementing this policy should bear in mind that “what is at stake when English spreads is not merely the substitution or displacement of one language by another language but the imposition of ‘new mental structures’ through English” (Master 1998:718). In opposition to this, Brown (2000) believes that learning a new language does not necessarily imply learning and adopting the culture of that language. He uses English in India as an example and notes that, since one may acquire Indian English in India, this does not necessarily involve taking on the “English culture”, though Indian English is probably a new English rather than ELF. The “Indianization” of English has resulted in the language having few, if any, British or American cultural attributes (Brown 2000:192).

2.4.2.4 The effects of ELF on the perceptions of local languages

The final shortcoming of using ELF as a LOLT is that it can lead to the perception that other languages, especially the indigenous ones, are inferior or even unnecessary (Crystal 2003:15). For example, in northern Namibia, personal observation has led to the realization that grade 12 learners do not put enough effort into studying indigenous languages like Oshikwanyama and Oshindonga, in comparison to the effort they invest in studying English. A possible reason for this is because if one is to enrol at the University of Namibia or at Namibia’s Polytechnic, one needs to pass English with at least a C or a D grade respectively. For the indigenous languages like Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama, there is no specific grade

requirement for admission into tertiary institutions. There is no doubt then that this situation encourages learners to perceive their mother tongues as less important.

Research by Okonkwo (1983, in Phillipson 1992:207) among the Igbo people in Nigeria, where educational failure was widespread, indicated that the attitudes of both learners and their parents were hugely in favour of English rather than the Igbo languages. In India, the negative effect of ELF on the status of indigenous languages is reflected in the observation that parents in India do not want their children to learn through the medium of indigenous Indian languages. A school attached to a central University in the city of Hyderabad, which offers only English-medium education to children of its employees, interviewed the parents to determine the number of those in favour of a mother-tongue stream, since it had been observed that a majority of the students found being educated in ELF to be difficult (Mathew 1997:167). The results showed that the parents were not willing to accept a change to mother-tongue education because they wanted their children to eventually get better jobs than they had themselves (Mathew 1997:167), and they believed that being educated in English was a good way to ensure this.

Here, it is important to note that some chief stakeholders in education, such as senior education officers, donors and teachers, play a major role in amplifying the negative effects that ELF as a LOLT has on indigenous languages. For example, an evaluation of a Norwegian support program for a specific secondary school in northern Namibia found that the only department that had not received any computers or any donor aid was the home language department (Oliver 1994, in Brock-Utne 1997:253). Another example is in India where those with the influence to improve education do not actually send their children to schools with local Indian languages as their LOLTs (Tully 1997:161). Similarly, acclaimed Kenyan author Ngugi wa Thiongo (in Rubagumya 1998:110) notes that any achievement in

spoken and written English was highly rewarded whereas achievements in the indigenous languages were never rewarded.

Interestingly, the society at large can also contribute to the negative effects of ELF as a LOLT depending on how it values and perceives ELF and the indigenous languages. For example, in social interaction in East Africa, the use of English symbolizes education and authority, whereas the use of Swahili or other local languages symbolizes solidarity or local ethnicity (Phillipson 1992:79). In Zambia, parents are consciously using English exclusively in the home with the hope of improving their children's intelligence and, therefore, performance in the classroom (Miti 2008:71). Therefore, the ways in which societies perceive these languages will determine learners' attitudes towards their indigenous languages and the maintenance thereof, as well as the foreign language used as the LOLT.

To conclude this section, it is worth mentioning that "educated" Africans generally prefer to read literature in English, French or Portuguese rather than in African languages (Miti 2008:8). Consequently, publishers of general literature are not interested in publishing books in the African languages because it is not financially profitable to do so (Miti 2008:8).

2.5 Prominent research on ELF as a LOLT

The most distinctive feature of ELF is that, in most cases, it is a contact language between persons who share neither a mother tongue nor a common culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication (Seidlhofer 2005:339). This distinctive feature led to calls for the systematic study of the nature of ELF, in response to which several empirical studies were conducted on the linguistic description of ELF at various levels, including its use in academic settings (Seidlhofer 2005:340). This accumulating body of work is leading to a better understanding of the nature of ELF which is a prerequisite for taking informed decisions, especially in language policy and language teaching (McKay 2002, in

Seidlhofer 2005:340). Consequently, a number of studies that have been conducted in the field of ELF as a LOLT will be described to in this section to provide the necessary background and reports on specific developments in the research field of ELF which are pertinent to this study.

2.5.1 Rubagumya's (1998) research on attitudes toward English-medium instruction in Tanzania

Rubagumya's (1998) study investigated the attitudes towards English as a LOLT and as a means of advancement in Tanzanian society. This research was crucial because if students' attitudes towards the LOLT are positive, then the language learning experience will be pleasant and hence students will be motivated to learn. Ashton and Elyildirin (2006) note that most members of the language teaching profession realize that their students' learning potential increases when attitudes are positive and motivations runs high. Rubagumya administered 207 questionnaires to eight secondary schools in Dar es Salaam to establish the attitudes of learners towards English as a LOLT and as a means of advancement in Tanzanian society. The sample included approximately equal numbers of males and female learners from grade eight to twelve. The data from the questionnaires indicated that the learners' attitudes toward English were far more positive and optimistic than the actual position of the language in the school. Self-assessed competence in English was also greatly exaggerated. However, the research did not mention possible reasons as to why learners had a positive attitude toward ELF as a LOLT, apart from the fact that English is regarded as superior to Kiswahili. Therefore, the present study aims to identify possible perceived advantages of ELF as a LOLT.

2.5.2 Harris's (2011) study on LOLTs in Namibian schools

Harris's (2011) study is one of the most recent comprehensive studies on LOLT completed in Namibia. This study aimed to provide an understanding of how people in education view

their home language, a reflection on how policy makers view the challenges of mother-tongue education and to investigate how to encourage the use of home languages. This study was comprehensive enough because the main stakeholders in education were considered. Harris's study included 167 learners from 19 schools, 138 teachers from 20 primary schools, 40 parents and 38 educational professionals (e.g. regional educational directors, inspectors of education and language policy makers).

The result of this study indicated that, firstly, 83% of learners preferred to use their home language as an LOLT. Secondly, 61% of teachers reported that their students experience difficulties with English. With this in mind, one can also posit that teachers too face a number of challenges when educating their students through the medium of ELF. The next notable finding was that 100% of parents wanted their children to be taught in English even though they do not use English at home or in their respective communities. Finally, all of the educational professionals were also firmly in favour of ELF as the LOLT. Harris's study indicated a knowledge gap to investigate how teachers overcome the challenges they face when using ELF as a LOLT, which the present study attempts to address.

2.5.3 Benjamin's (2004) research on the influence of English as a LOLT in Namibian schools

Benjamin's (2004) study investigated whether English as an LOLT impacted on learners' academic performance. In addition, it established reasons as to why using English as a LOLT might hamper the performance of teachers and learners. The research was conducted in two schools in Namibia, namely, Shikongo Iiping secondary school in northern Namibia and Ella du Plessis secondary school in the capital city of Windhoek. Eighty learners and twelve teachers from the above mentioned schools participated as respondents for this study. Benjamin concluded from her research that the learners' academic performance is both positively and negatively influenced by the use of English as the LOLT. The positive

influences are, firstly, that learners are able to express their views clearly in English, especially in tasks that require critical thinking, and that they are willing to communicate in English despite the fact that other learners have poor proficiencies in the language. It should be emphasized, however, that the positive influence of English as the LOLT on the academic performance of learners is only observed in those who have a solid background in English, i.e. the minority of the learners in question. In contrast to this, Benjamin found that the academic performance of learners is also negatively influenced by the use of English as LOLT in a number of ways. Firstly, the lack of basic language skills (reading, speaking, listening, writing and grammar) is hampering learners' academic performance. Secondly, mother-tongue influence and poor English language backgrounds are also hampering academic performance in that words are misspelled and ideas are translated directly from ones mother tongue into English. Lastly, the learners' academic performance is negatively influenced by the use of English as the LOLT because English textbooks are difficult to read and to comprehend. Consequently, learners are forced to memorize content without actually understanding what they are memorizing.

2.5.4 Probyn's (2001) study on teachers' reflection on English as an additional language as a LOLT

Probyn's (2001) study investigated the perceptions and practices of teachers when using English as an additional language (EAL) as a LOLT in township schools in South Africa. Video recordings were made of the lessons given by five teachers, teaching Mathematics, Accounting, Science, Business Economics and History in EAL. The teachers were also interviewed after the lessons were recorded to give their views on using EAL as the LOLT, where the recordings provided the basis for stimulated recall as they reflected on their classroom practices. Probyn's results indicated that teachers and students teach and learn respectively in a language in which they are unable to communicate freely and this has

negative consequences on the students' learning. In addition, teachers demonstrated that they were able to articulate a wide range of teaching strategies to mediate students' cognitive and emotional needs, most notably, a skilful use of English and isiXhosa code-switching, the latter being the mother tongue of both the students and the teachers. Lastly, this study also concluded that the process of reflection on practice appeared to be useful, both in terms of eliciting a rich and detailed account of teachers' perceptions and practices, and as a developmental process for the teachers concerned.

2.5.5 De Wet's (2002) study of factors influencing the choice of English as LOLT

The majority of South Africans prefer English, not their home language, as their LOLT after four years of schooling (De Wet 2002:119). Because perceptions play an important role in the way languages are considered and used, De Wet (2002) conducted an empirical study to ascertain prevalent perceptions among full-time and part-time B.Ed Honours students studying at the Bloemfontein and Queenstown campuses of Free State University. De Wet investigated the students' perceptions on the importance of languages in politics, education, science and technology, trade and industry, and cultural activities, as well as on educational matters pertaining to the LOLT. In addition, this study also investigated the language abilities of the educators and whether one's home language is an important tool for effective teaching and learning. Finally, De Wet investigated whether the respondents switch between languages to enhance teaching and learning.

The results showed that English was viewed as the most important language in the area of politics, education, science and technology, and trade and industry. They also indicated that a significant percentage of respondents (72.6%) either agreed or strongly agreed that home language education would enhance teaching and learning. Interestingly, the majority of Afrikaans and Indigenous African Languages (IAL) respondents produced a very high self-

assessment of their English language skills as they rated themselves as “proficient and fluent”. Furthermore, 78% of respondents indicated that they switch between languages to enhance their teaching. Finally, 78.9% of the respondents indicated that they believe that home language education enhances teaching and learning.

2.6 Introducing ELF as the LOLT: When is the right time?

As was previously stated, many countries choose ELF as the preferred LOLT in education. This means that the members of the educational sector of these countries need to decide on the appropriate grade in which to introduce and begin using the language as the LOLT. Depending on the language policies, some countries prefer to introduce ELF as the LOLT from grade one, while others choose to use the vernacular languages as LOLTs from grade one and then switch to ELF later on.

Where a decision has been taken to introduce English as the LOLT, it is generally considered more advantageous to introduce the language at an earlier age or as soon as possible (Phillipson 1992:200). Evidence that an all-English approach is pedagogically justified comes from Cummins and Corson’s (1997, in Rollnick & Cleghorn 2002:364) findings that learners in the United States acquired native-like proficiency in English despite considerable amounts of home language use during instructional time. Perhaps this is why, in Kenya’s rural schools and in Zimbabwe, there was pressure from parents, principals and teachers themselves to use English as the LOLT even as early as at preschool level (Rollnick & Cleghorn 2002:364).

Those who advocate the introduction of English as the LOLT as early as grade one believe that “if pupils are exposed to a foreign language as the LOLT from the time they start school, they are not exposed to the psychological shock of a change of LOLT at a later stage” (Otaala 2005:127). However, there is overwhelming evidence that introducing English as a LOLT as early as grade one is not educationally sound. For example, in 1965 the government of

Zambia designated English as the LOLT in all grades (Otaala 2005:103). The result of this policy was that the learners who were exposed to English at an early age could not fully and coherently express what they learnt in school to their parents at home who could only communicate in the local language. At the same time, those learners could not express the knowledge acquired at home to teachers who were using English (Otaala 2005:104). Holmstrand (1980, in Phillipson 1992:208) found that a scheme for starting English as a foreign language subject two years earlier than usual in Swedish schools did not produce better results. Again, in Kenya, the use of English as the LOLT in all primary schools makes it very difficult for children from a poorer back ground to succeed in school. Hence, Phillipson (1992:209) believes that “the effect of teaching in English from early ages has been to consolidate English at the expense of other languages, to perpetuate dependence on aid and expertise from the core speaking countries and raise an insuperable language barrier for the mass of primary learners”. He argues further that there are also economic consequences of teaching in English from early ages as this creates more career opportunities for those who specialize in English, and fewer for those who have majored in other languages. Phillipson (1992:209) believes that trained teachers, well-written textual materials, and improved methods of teaching are more important than the length of time in which English is used as a LOLT.

It is clear that mother-tongue education contributes in significant ways to the cultural, affective, cognitive and socio-psychological development of the child, more than instruction in a foreign language (Le Motte 2008:37). According to Vermeulen (1999, in De Wet 2002:119), the home language is the most appropriate LOLT for imparting reading and writing skills, particularly in the initial years of schooling. Hence, the Namibian educational language policy has mandated learners to be taught in their mother tongues (which are the local languages) from grades one to three, and then to be taught in English from grade four on

wards. However, this LOLT-switching trend also has its flaws. In Ghana, for example, the policy of using local languages as LOLT only in grade one and making the transition to English as the LOLT in grade two was introduced in 1958 (Chinebuah 1981, in Phillipson 1992:204). This policy failed because there was no carefully planned survey of the linguistic competence of both the learners and the teachers and the attitudes of the learners' parents to this recommendation (Phillipson 1992:204). Being educated in one language and suddenly changing to being educated in a L2 is a traumatic experience, and it takes a learner up to seven years to acquire basic language skills in the latter (Nkosi 1997, in De Wet 2002:119). Macdonald (1990, in Probyn 2001:251) found that South African students generally did not have the English language skills to cope with the switch to English LOLT in grade five, even after learning English as a subject for three years. Similarly, Chick (1992, in Moyo 2001:107) found that most of the teachers in South Africa are not well-equipped in English to be able to educate their learners in English. Hence, Phillipson believes that education can have positive results when either the L1 or L2 is used as the LOLT. However, these positive results are reliant upon "the linguistic and societal goals in question, the status of the learners and the relevant languages" (Phillipson 1992:208).

2.7 Some benefits of mother-tongue education

According to Namibia's Ministry of Education (MED) (2010:24), language is the most essential tool for all human communication and learning; it is integral to every person's identity and it is one of the core elements of a culture. In education, language plays a crucial role because it is mainly through the interactions between the teacher and the learners, and amongst the learners themselves, that knowledge is produced and acquired in the teaching-learning process (Bunyi 1999:338). Additionally, within the UN, the universal declaration of linguistic rights has endorsed the right of all people to develop and promote their own languages and to offer children access to education in their own languages (Brown

2000:195). Hence, Brown (2000) recommends that teachers who teach English in foreign countries should have the highest respect for the languages and cultures of their students. Furthermore, the Namibian MED suggests that children learn best in their mother tongues and it is therefore important to ensure that the language being used as the LOLT, should it not be the learners' mother tongue, aids learners to effectively acquire the knowledge they need in their different subjects.

Research on science education in Kenya primary schools shows that not using the learners' mother tongues as LOLT (often Kiswahili) deprives them of valid contextualization and cognitive input and intensifies the learning burden (Phillipson 1992:206). For example, a school which used Luo as the LOLT, Luo, the mother tongue of its learners, to increase comprehension of scientific content fared better in comparison to a school where English was used exclusively, despite the availability of better learning materials and better trained teachers in the latter school (Abagi 1989, in Phillipson 1992:206). The concern over the issue of English vs. Mother tongue education led Kenyan educational officials to establish eight experimental classes to investigate the effects of using the learners' mother tongues in conjunction with a modern primary school curriculum. It was found that because the children and teachers could communicate freely and spontaneously, the class setting was lively, interactive and expressive, an atmosphere even the best English-medium class could not create (in the classroom) (Haacke 1996:66).

In 1971, a six-year primary education project began in Nigeria, the primary aim of which was to investigate the effects of using the local language Yorumba as a LOLT. It was found that the classes in which Yorumba was used as a LOLT obtained better results than the control group which was taught in English, in both the arts and science subjects. The results also indicated that the differential could not be traced back to the teachers or educational aids, with the most plausible explanation being the use of Yorumba as the LOLT (Brock-Utne

1997:254). A different study in Nigeria found that learners who were educated in Yoruba were more proficient in school subjects, including English, than learners who were educated in English (Brock-Utne 1997:254). Finally, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reported on a study conducted in Papua New Guinea in 2003 which found that access to education was enhanced, especially for female learners, and dropout rates decreased as a result of education being conducted in the Papuan vernacular since 1995 (UNESCO 2008:18). Papuan teachers also reported that students were more active and self-confident about learning. Finally, an analysis of primary school students' school reports indicated that the students from the provinces of Papua New Guinea in which vernacular education was first implemented fared better at school than students in other provinces whose education was not conducted in the vernacular.

All of the above-mentioned studies provide support for mother-tongue education. Despite a number of factors that can hamper successful implementation of home languages as LOLTs, it is important to look at the factors that make home languages good contenders for the position of LOLT. These factors are of the psychological, educational, linguistic, socio-cultural and political kinds (Otaala 2005:119) and will briefly be discussed in the sections below.

2.7.1 Psychological factors

Harlech-Jones (1998:4) states that the use of the mother tongue as the LOLT facilitates the adjustment between home and school. In cases where other languages are used rather than the vernacular, feelings of inferiority as well as alienation from the family unity may arise within the learner. Otaala (2005:120) explains further that a child can only reach his or her full intellectual potential if he or she is educated in his or her mother tongue. This is because thinking systems are shaped and developed as concepts are presented in the mother tongue.

With regard to concept formation, UNESCO 1981 (in Otaala 2005:119) is also in agreement that the language used by a child on daily basis-very often the child's mother-tongue-is more conducive to conceptualization than another language of which phonetic and writing systems are different and unfamiliar. Therefore, as Malefo (1986 in Otaala 2005:121) suggests, it is important to use mother tongue as a LOLT so that learners do not think in one language and express themselves in another.

2.7.2 Educational factors

When one is taught in one's mother tongue, one's freedom of expression is maximized and new concepts are able to be grasped easily (Harlech-Jones 1998:4). This implies that learners who are taught in their mother tongues have the confidence to express themselves and are not afraid to ask and answer questions (Otaala 2005:123). Therefore, one can postulate that the academic performance of a child who is educated in his or her mother tongue would be better than that of a child who is educated in a foreign language. Otaala (2005:123) believes that this is the case because learners who are educated in a foreign language do not perform as well academically as what they are intellectually capable of. Hence, they tend to lose interest, develop an inferiority complex and might even start to fear the school situation.

2.7.3 Linguistic factors

Harlech-Jones (1998:4) states that learning to read is easier if it occurs in one's mother tongue because this would eliminate difficulties or interferences caused by a different phonemic or phonological system, which is considered to be the basis of the reading skill. Another advantage of using the mother tongue as the LOLT is that a mother-tongue speaker has unconscious knowledge of his or her mother tongue's deep grammar (e.g. phonology, morphology and syntax) and vocabulary (Otaala 2005:126). This means that the learner will not struggle as much to acquire new vocabulary or the grammar of his or her mother tongue.

Although some people belong to the school of thought that some mother tongues are too undeveloped to express modern ideas, Otaala (2005:126) believes that there is no language which is intrinsically unable to develop linguistically in order to become an adequate LOLT. Combrink (1991, in De Wet 2002:123) uses the linguistic evolution of Afrikaans as an example to demonstrate how, given favourable circumstances, a language that serves a very narrow range of essential domestic purposes for its users may develop to be able to serve a variety of purposes for its users in government, education, science and technology.

2.7.4 Socio-cultural factors

According to UNESCO (1953, in Otaala 2005:124), a child's mother tongue is the best medium of communication because he or she is able to identify with other members of his or her community through its use. As a result, parents who are in favour of mother-tongue education argue that it improves communication between parents and children, as well as enabling children to identify with their parents' culture and religion (Otaala 2005:124). As was previously mentioned, the MED emphasizes that one's mother tongue is integral to one's identity and culture, and must therefore be promoted. This promotion can only be achieved if a mother tongue is used as a LOLT. In addition, Mtuze (1990 in De Wet 2002:120) believes that the development and use of indigenous African languages (IALs) as LOLT will ensure that African learners will have pride and not shame in the culture of their own family and the community. Legere (1996:41) believes that education should promote linguistic and cultural identity in children through the use of the mother tongue as a school subject. Those in favour of a more widespread role of vernacular languages almost always argue that vernacular languages should be used as a bridge to learning the more prestigious language in order to allow for better adjustment and less possibility of cultural or linguistic alienation (Harlech-Jones 1998:4).

2.7.5 Political factors

It has been argued that the political interests of the state are best served by using the mother tongue as the initial LOLT as this enables the education system to be maximally effective in the sense that using the mother tongue in this way will equip learners with the tools to manipulate various genres that constitute academic discourse (Harlech-Jones 1998:4). Mother-tongue education ensures the practice of human rights and the protection of national minorities (Otaala 2005:124). The use of the mother tongue as the LOLT will also serve as a safeguard against western cultural and linguistic imperialism. Occasionally, a foreign language is preferred as a LOLT with the intention of uniting an entire country and helping to form a solid national identity. Unfortunately, in most cases, the foreign language eventually ends up being used as a tool for elite formation and preservation, intranational and international links between elites and international identity (Annamalai 1986, in Master 1998:718). In addition, using a foreign language as a LOLT may interfere with the goal of a truly democratic society by putting power in the hands of a foreign-language-speaking elite (De Wet 2002:120).

2.8 Conclusion

English was chosen as Namibia's official language in 1981 by SWAPO in Lusaka and was officially endorsed in 1990 upon the country's independence. The selection of English as an official language, and hence as the LOLT, was carried out based on eight criteria: unity, familiarity, feasibility, science and technology, pan Africanism, wider communication, and United Nations. These criteria were discussed in detail in this chapter. Furthermore, the benefits and shortcomings of using ELF as a LOLT were also discussed. Finally, two schools of thought in education regarding the most suitable LOLT in schools were reviewed and reported on, the first group advocating the use of the mother tongue as the LOLT and the

second being in favour of a foreign language as the LOLT. This chapter also briefly addressed research on mother-tongue education where a brief overview was provided of the research conducted on schools using mother tongues as their LOLTs as well as the advantages and disadvantages thereof.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology refers to both the theoretical and the practical aspects of conducting research (Oliver 2004:121). It encompasses all the technicalities and strategies used in carrying out the research. In this chapter therefore, the researcher describes the research design employed in this study as well as the participants in this study. Apart from that, this chapter explains the sampling procedures as well as the method used in collecting data. Finally, the researcher gives a comprehensive account of how the collected data were analyzed.

3.2 Research design

This study follows a qualitative research approach. Airasian and Gay (2009:7) defined “qualitative research” as “the collection, analysis and interpretation of comprehensive narrative data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest”. Airasian and Gay (2009:14) explain that the central focus of qualitative research is to provide an understanding of a social setting or activity as viewed from the perspective of the research participants. To achieve this focus, the researcher gathers data directly from the participants, an approach followed in this study. In addition, Pushkin (1993, in Leedy & Ormond 2005:134) is of the opinion that qualitative research enables the researcher to gain new insights, develop new concepts or theoretical perspectives about, or discover the problems that exist within a particular phenomenon. It is against this background that the researcher chose a qualitative research approach in order to elicit and analyze teachers’ perspectives on teaching and learning through ELF and, in the process, identify the challenges they face when using ELF as an LOLT and how they overcome these challenges.

Airasian and Gay (2009:12) identify three main types of qualitative research, namely narrative research, ethnographic research and case study research. This particular study involves case study research. Case study research is an in-depth investigation of an individual, group or institution (Gay 1992:235). This particular study qualifies as case study research because it focuses on a single group or unit, namely, a certain secondary school in the Omusati region of northern Namibia. Airasian and Gay (2009:427) note that one outcome of case study research is a narrative account that provides the researcher (and the reader of the case study) with new insights into the way things are and into the kinds of relationships that exist among participants in the study. However, a common negative aspect of case study research is that its dependence on a single case renders it incapable of providing a generalizing conclusion (Tellis 1997).

3.3 The population

Sekaran (2003:265) defines a population as “the entire group of people, events or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate”. In simpler terms, the total number of individuals to whom the results of the research are intended to apply constitute the research population (Oliver 2004:127). The target population for this research consisted of all non-English L1 teachers teaching with ELF as LOLT in the Omusati educational and political region in northern Namibia, including those in managerial positions. According to Leedy and Ormond (2005:204) the population may be generally homogenous in the sense that the individual units within the population may be similar with respect to the characteristics of interest. Wray (1998, in Marungudzi 2009:49) explains that “in order for responses from a group to be compared, there needs to be some base-line features in common, so that it is clear why a comparison is valid”. The teachers at the school that forms the focus of the present study are alike in two most important aspects. Firstly, they all teach in a homogeneous school. This means that only one mother tongue (Oshiwambo) is used in the school and in the

community (Wolfaardt 2002:67). This also implies that these teachers do not encounter learners from different cultural groups, with different mother tongues in the same class. Secondly, teachers are very similar in their teaching because they are all guided by the same language policy; that is, they all use English as a LOLT from the junior grade (Grade 8) to the senior grade (Grade 12).

To conclude this section, the researcher would like to briefly explain why the particular school was chosen as the research site. First of all the school is not far from the researcher's home, therefore providing easy access to the school for data collection. Secondly, the researcher was not known to the teachers at the school. Finally, the researcher felt that he could not have carried out the research at the school where he currently teaches because of the established relationships with colleagues, which may have lead to the validity of the research results being questioned.

3.4 Sample size and sampling procedure

Sampling refers to the process of selecting a small number of individuals for a study in such a way that they will be key informants who will contribute to the researcher's understanding of a given phenomenon (Airasian & Gay 2009:135). Sampling is fundamental in conducting research as well in the interpretation of the results because, except when a complete census is taken, research is almost invariably conducted by means of a sample, on the basis of which generalizations are made which are applicable to the population from which the sample was obtained (Cochran 1963).

For this study, a small sample of six participants was used. A small sample was opted for in this study because, as Cochran (1963) has explained, if the phenomena under study are homogenous, a small sample is sufficient. In addition, Derek (1997: 41) notes that, "there is no definite answer to the question 'how large should a sample be?' This requires judgment of

feasibility and cost against representativeness. There is no point taking huge samples when smaller ones produce the same results". The intention is normally that the sample is representative of the population, and that the data from the sample can also be applied to the rest of the population (Oliver 2004:127).

Furthermore, Oliver (2004:128) identifies two types of sampling techniques, namely probability and non-probability sampling. In probability sampling, it is possible to specify the chance that each member of the defined population has a chance of being selected for the sample (Gay 1992:126). In other words, this is a sample in which each member of the research population has a known probability of being included in the sample (Oliver 2004:128). Probability sampling techniques include: simple random sampling, systematic random sampling, stratified random sampling, and cluster random sampling (Chris 2005:347). On the other hand, in non-probability sampling, it is not possible to specify the chance that each member of the defined population has of being selected for the sample (Gay 1992:138). Non-probability sampling techniques are a major source of bias and include techniques such as convenience sampling, quota sampling, purposeful sampling and criterion sampling (Chris 2005:347).

For this particular study, the sampling methods that were used were simple random and stratified random sampling. In stratified random sampling, Chris (2005:347) explains that units are selected from different groups that exhibit the phenomena under investigation. Therefore, in this study the researcher was given all the names of teachers teaching content subjects in grade 12 and he categorized them into two groups, one group for female teachers and another for male teachers. This was necessary in order to avoid bias (as stratified random sampling is a good method to avoid this) as well as to ensure that groups within the population are equally represented within the sample. Once the researcher had categorized the names of all of the teachers into two groups, the researcher used the simple random

sampling technique to pick three names at random to be part of the research sample. Next, the researcher enquired and obtained the necessary consent from all of the teachers who were selected. The process was then repeated with the names of all the male grade 12 teachers.

Finally, it is of great importance to justify the use of simple random sampling alongside stratified random sampling in this study. According to Sekaran (2003:270) in simple random sampling, every element in the population has a known and equal chance of being selected as a subject. Sekeran (2003:270) also argues that using the simple random sampling method increases the chances of the pattern distribution of the phenomena under investigation in the population being similarly distributed in the participants which are selected for the study sample. In addition, Chris (2005:347) is of the opinion that, statistically, simple random sampling is regarded as the most bias-free method and the best for reducing error.

Before concluding this section, it is imperative to give some biographical information of the teachers who are part of the sample for this study. This is summarized in Table 2 below.

Participant	Gender	Age	Subject taught	Teaching experience (years)	Position in school	Highest teaching qualification	LOLT at tertiary institution
1	Female	40-44	Economics	11	Teacher	Higher degree	English
2	Male	35-39	Physical Science	3-5	Teacher	Degree	English
3	Female	25-29	Biology	3-5	Teacher	Diploma	English
4	Male	30-34	Mathematics	3-5	Teacher	Degree	English
5	Male	25-29	History	1-2	Teacher	Diploma	English
6	Female	30-34	Geography	6-10	HOD	Degree	English

Table 2. Biographical information of participants

3.5 Data Collection

Data collection involves spending considerable time in the setting under study, immersing oneself in this setting and collecting as much as relevant information as possible and as unobtrusively as possible (Airasian & Gay 2009:366). Data collection can be derived from a number of methods, which include (telephonic) interviews, focus groups, surveys, field notes, recorded social interaction or questionnaires (Heaton 2004:37). It is therefore, up to the researcher to see to it that he or she has chosen the appropriate method for addressing the needs of the research question(s).

For this specific study, the researcher used interviews to collect data because they were the most appropriate method to facilitate a detailed understanding of the challenges faced by teachers when using ELF as LOLT as well as insight into how teachers overcome these challenges. Airasian and Gay (2009:366) explain that many sources of data are acceptable, as long as the collection approach is ethical, feasible, and contributes to an understanding of the phenomenon under study. Moreover, the use of interviews can generate substantial in-depth qualitative information usually from a small number of respondents (Chris 2005:357). Talking to selected respondents on a specific topic to find answers to research questions is the basis of interviewing. The results of the interviews are then analyzed by looking for similarities and differences between responses from participants (Chris 2005:357). The researcher then looks to relate these individual responses hermeneutically to the “bigger picture” set by the research questions (Chris 2005:357). Chris (2005:357) identifies four types of interviews, namely structured, semi-structured, unstructured and focus group interviews. For this particular study, the researcher has used structured interviews.

3.5.1 Teachers' structured interviews

As previously mentioned, structured, one-on-one interviews were used with ten open-ended questions to collect data for this study (See Appendix 4). With open-ended questions, respondents are free to respond as they like. This implies that answers to open-ended questions are more likely to reflect the person's own thinking, and hence, to be more valid (Dey 1993:17). Dey (1993:17) explains that it is much easier to analyze the data afterwards, even if it is more time-consuming. Moreover, in structured interviews, all respondents are asked the same questions with the same wording and in the same sequence (Corbetta 2003:269). In other words, the researcher has a specified set of questions that elicits the same information from all the respondents (Airasian and Gay 2009:371) and which enables the responses of different individuals to be compared (Derek 1997:53). Structured interviews have a number of advantages as well as drawbacks, some of which will be briefly discussed below.

3.5.1.1 Advantages of structured interviews

Structured interviews can be advantageous in that all respondents are asked the same questions in the same way making it easy for the researcher to repeat the interview. When the interviews for this study were being conducted, the uniformity of the questions and their sequence meant that questioning teachers was highly facilitated, and thus the interviews were unproblematic to conduct. Structured interviews give the researcher a chance to probe relevant responses as well as giving the participants the chance to ask questions when necessary (David 2004:160). Hence, when the interviews for this particular study were being conducted, the researcher was able to ask the participants additional questions or to prompt for elaboration when they provided answers which were initially thought to be insufficient. Likewise, on several occasions, the participants asked the researcher to repeat or elaborate

upon certain questions. This was very helpful as this indicated that the researcher needed to reformulate some of the questions in the interviews to make them easier for the participants to understand.

3.5.1.2 Limitations of structured interviews

One of the problems which was encountered when administering the structured interviews for this study was that some questions could not be included (or excluded) from the interview schedule. At times, it was felt that a certain question should have been asked during the interview in order to elicit a specific response. However, this was not possible as the questions that were asked were only those that were planned beforehand by the researcher.

Another shortcoming of structured interviews is that a respondent may interpret or understand the questions posed to them in a different manner from the one that was intended (David 2004:161). However, this is not normally a serious problem because the researcher can usually reformulate the questions so that the participants interpret them in the intended way. Another undesirable consequence of structured interviews is that the presence of the researcher may influence the way in which the respondent answers the questions, sometimes biasing the responses. In this particular study, it was noted that the researcher being present made some of the respondents uncomfortable. The fact that the participants knew that the interviews were being recorded somewhat amplified their discomfort in that they were aware of their language use and feared making language mistakes. However, the aim of the interviews was initially explained in detail to the participants, with specific focus on the fact that the interviews were not aimed at assessing the participants' English competencies.

David (2004:161) notes that structured interviews follow the interview guide too closely and may in fact be the cause of not probing for relevant information. Some of the answers that the respondents furnish may diminish the chance for the interviewer to ask further questions.

That is why, for this particular study, follow-up questions were sometimes unable to be asked due to the nature of the preceding answers which were provided by the respondents. Hence, when found to be in this situation, the researcher could not probe the participants for more information and proceeded to the next question.

3.6 Data recording

After the participants were identified, the interviews were conducted and the data were audio recorded. Recorded data is very useful as it allows for a close analysis thereof as well as enabling analysis to take place at a later stage in the research process. For the data recording for this study, it must be emphasized that these interviews were carried out with written permission from the director of education of the Omusati educational region, as well as from the school and all participating teachers, adhering to the ethical requirements of the study.

The interviews were conducted in an unoccupied room in the corner of the staffroom. Firstly, the participant was informed about the study without revealing too much in order to avoid affecting their responses. Information was provided on the aim of the research, what the research results will be used for, as well as why the study requires an interview with the participant. At this point, the participants were given the opportunity to ask questions if anything was unclear. Subsequently, the participants were given a copy of the informed consent form so that they could read through it and make sure that they understood it. Oliver (2004:136) explains that the principle of informed consent is designed to ensure that researchers provide respondents with all the information necessary for them to decide whether or not they wish to participate. Therefore, after the participants had read the informed consent form, they were encouraged to ask questions if there was something that was still unclear. They were also asked again if they were still willing to be interviewed. Upon indicating that they were still interested in taking part in the interview, the participants

were then reassured of the anonymity and confidentiality regarding any information they furnish during the interview, as well as that the recordings would be kept in a safe and secure place with restricted access. The participants were then asked to sign the informed consent forms as well as to complete the biographical information sheet. The digital voice recorder was placed on the table between the researcher and the participant and the interview was then initiated. The researcher had the structured interview schedule at hand whilst making sure to take notes to refer back to at a later stage.

3.7 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is a process of breaking down data into smaller units, determining their import and putting the pertinent units together in a more general analytical form (Airasian & Gay 2009:450). Simply put, data analysis involves breaking up data into meaningful, understandable and manageable themes, trends and relationships (Mouton 2001:108). Furthermore, Airasian and Gay (2009: 450) emphasize that there is no single “correct” way to organize and analyze data. Different researchers produce different categories from the same data for many reasons, including researcher biases, personal interests, style and interpretive focus. Therefore, for this specific study, the researcher took his own approach to analyze the data and this was done through the following steps.

Firstly, the researcher tried to get to know the data. Airasian and Gay (2009:450) suggest that in order to make the connections needed to analyze and interpret qualitative data, one must know and understand one’s data. For this reason, the first step in the data analysis for this study involved listening to the data recordings several times in order to know and understand them. Whilst listening to the recordings, the researcher noted down some important points which would serve as the foundation for the analysis.

After getting to know and understand the recorded data, the recordings were then transcribed. Data transcriptions enable one to gain a complete picture of what occurred and what was said during the data collection process. In addition, the chances of the analysis being biased is minimised (Ibrahim 2012:5). The transcriptions were then double-checked in terms of accuracy. The process of transcribing the data was helpful as it enabled the researcher to hear the recordings again, hence becoming even more familiar with the recorded data.

Once the transcriptions were completed, the researcher focussed the analysis. Focusing the analysis entails collating all of the data from each question (Fraser 2012:1) in order to identify consistencies and differences in each case and gain a bigger picture of the results (Renner and Tylor-Powell 2003:2). For example, question four on the teachers' structured interview was "How are the learners coping with English as a LOLT?" All of the responses from the six participants were then collated and analysed in terms of their consistencies, differences and any other possible links.

Finally, after collecting all of the data from each question, the information pertaining to each question was then summarized. These summaries entailed the key ideas being expressed within each question as well as the similarities and differences in the way the respondents answered each question. These coherent summaries will be used as the basis for the interpretation and discussion of the data and the study's conclusion.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented a detailed characterization of the present study's research methodology. This study follows a qualitative research approach because it seeks to analyze and interpret comprehensive narrative data in order to gain insights into ELF as a LOLT in northern Namibia. The study is in the format of a case study because it is focused on a single group, namely teachers at the secondary school in question in the Omusati region of northern

Namibia. The research instruments used in this research were structured interviews with open-ended questions. These questions allowed participants to respond freely and to provide their own thoughts. In the next chapter, the research findings for this study will be discussed in depth. The findings will then be related to those reported in the current literature in order to critique the results by supporting or contradicting the findings based on the available literature.

Chapter 4: Results and discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter includes an in-depth discussion of the research findings. Furthermore, it relates these findings to the current literature in order to critique the results by supporting or contradicting the findings based thereon. The discussion of the results of this study will be laid out according to the order of the questions which were asked of the participants.

4.2 Language preference of teachers

The first question asked of the participants investigated which language they felt most comfortable in for expressing themselves clearly to learners. The intention of this question was to determine whether the teachers are comfortable using ELF as a LOLT in order to express themselves clearly to their students. Four out of the six teachers who were interviewed indicated that they are comfortable with ELF as a LOLT, where each respondent gave a different reason why:

Whenever I am talking about something that is serious, English is a bit easier.

(Economics teacher)

English, because [it] is the language in which I was taught the same subject, but I think if I could be taught in my mother tongue how to teach that subject, I think it will be better [in order to know] how to teach in our vernacular.

(Physical science teacher)

When it comes to mathematics, English would be the best since there are a lot of terminologies that were not translated to Oshiwambo, in mathematics.

(Mathematics teacher)

English because it is the medium of instruction from grade 8 to 12.

(Geography teacher)

On the other hand, the biology teacher indicated that she is most comfortable expressing herself clearly to her learners in Oshiwambo. Her response was as follows:

English is not my mother language, most of the words are very difficult, and when it comes to the learners they do not understand most of the words.

(Biology teacher)

Lastly, only one teacher said he is comfortable with both English and Oshiwambo.

I use English and also my mother tongue to make sure that what I mean is clear enough to the learners to grasp the information.

(History teacher)

The majority of teachers in Namibia (98%) have been found to have very poor English proficiency. It is therefore surprising that this study indicates that the majority of teachers who acted as respondents say that they feel comfortable when expressing themselves in English. If teachers decide to express themselves solely in English, as the Namibian educational language policy stipulates, one has to wonder whether learners are truly going to learn reflectively and effectively, given the fact that teachers' English proficiencies are very poor and 83% of learners would prefer to use their mother tongue as the LOLT (Harris 2011). According to Otaala (2005:121), one of the pre-requisites for successful teaching is good communication between the learners and the teacher. Hence, the LOLT must help the learners to understand the lesson presentation. It appears that the majority of the teachers in this study prefer to express themselves in English because it is the official LOLT and perhaps

because in Namibia, English is seen as a gateway to a good education and social advancement (Cluver 1992:128). However, this is not justifiable because in the study done by Harris (2011), 61% of teachers reported that their students experience a lot of difficulties with English.

4.3 Learners' English proficiency

Teachers were subsequently asked to describe their learners' English proficiency. Four teachers rated their learners' English proficiency as 'average' and they believe that this is because learners did not build a stable and sufficient foundation of English at the infant stage and because of lack of exposure to the language, as learners are only taught in English from grade 4 onwards. They indicated that learners' poor proficiencies in English were also due to lack of confidence and motivation to speak English, as well as because most of the learners do not come from English-speaking backgrounds.

Most of them, their English background is not up to standard. So, meaning a lot of them cannot be able to express themselves and they cannot catch up when you are explaining things.

(Mathematics teacher)

One teacher rated his learners' English proficiencies as 'below average' and attributed the cause to the poor linguistic foundations they cannot help but build perhaps due to, amongst other things, limited exposure to the language before the onset of puberty. Saying, *I think they were not taught well the language and how to go about it.*

Finally, one of the teachers interviewed rated her students' English proficiency as very poor. She also blamed learners' poor English backgrounds or foundations for this situation.

The background or the foundation of these learners ...meeting them at grade 11 to 12 is not easy to change them. I might say the level where they are; they are not at the level of learning.

(Economics teacher)

The findings of this study explicitly show that learners' English proficiency is rated by the teachers as being between poor and average. In addition, the majority of the teachers admitted that their own English is not good. Harris (2011) argued that "low English language proficiency among teachers contributes to low English language proficiency among learners." Hence, if this is the case, one cannot expect the learners to have good English proficiency. Indeed, this is not the only factor that contributes to learners' poor English proficiency. The school in question is homogenous in that only one mother tongue is used in the school as well as in the community. This implies that learners would have little occasion to use English outside the classroom due to lack of English speakers in the school and the community (Harris: 2011). Harris's (2011) found that 83% of learners preferred to use their home language as an LOLT, with one of the learner respondents even admitting that they use their home language in the English class to communicate clearly with each other.

Furthermore, the parents of the learners in question generally cannot speak English. This means that learners are unable to speak English at home and hence improve their English proficiency. Those learners who are exposed to English outside the classroom and have parents who can speak English. Research undertaken in a school in Windhoek revealed that learners express their views clearly in English, especially in tasks that require critical thinking (Benjamin 2004). Perhaps this can be attributed to the fact that learners in environments such as these may have better English proficiency and hence can communicate better. Fandrych (2009:52) explains that "without effective communication, there cannot be effective

education” and hence poor school performance can be anticipated. Yet, the success of students is not only hampered by their limited command of English (Benjamin 2004:25). Other factors are also involved which can reinforce the performance of learners, such as the level and quality of training the teachers have received, the quality of teaching and learning materials, and the motivation of the learners themselves.

4.4 LOLT preference

The respondents were asked if there is a necessity for their learners to be taught in English rather than in Oshiwambo, their mother tongue. Four of the respondents clearly indicated that it is necessary for the learners to be taught in English. They felt that this is necessary because the examinations are in English and if learners are to be taught in Oshiwambo, the teachers will also need to be trained how to teach in Oshiwambo. Apart from that, the respondents also indicated that learners must be taught in English because some of them might study abroad after completing school and good knowledge of English will be beneficial as used in a lot of daily activities, especially when members of multi-lingual societies meet. However, two teachers advocated the use of Oshiwambo as a LOLT. They are of the opinion that learners can understand everything if they are taught in Oshiwambo, as opposed to when they are taught in English because, specifically, they cannot interpret questions which are written in English.

If it is possible for the books to be translated to Oshiwambo, I think that would be better for the learners to be taught in Oshiwambo because most of them really, are failing because they cannot interpret questions which are written in English.

(Mathematics teacher)

In a study conducted in South Africa by De Wet (2002), 72% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that home language education would enhance teaching and learning.

Marungudzi (2009) investigated teachers' perspectives of English as a LOLT in Zimbabwe and found that 61% of respondents advocated the use of mother tongue as a LOLT. However, findings of the current study indicate that teachers feel that it is not necessary for the learners to be taught in their mother tongues citing studying abroad and communicating with people from different nations as their main reason for supporting English as a LOLT. It seems the majority of teachers interviewed in the current study did not really consider the effect of English as a LOLT on the academic performance of learners, whereas the respondents in the two above-mentioned studies did take it into account. These findings then support Harris' (2011:7) view that parents, teachers, and educationalists do not fully understand the problems learners face with language and often attribute poor learners' performance to lack of interest and commitment. Teachers who took part in this study also did not also consider the fact that the learners in question actually have very slim chances of studying abroad due to lack of finances and strict admission requirements. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the few respondents in this study who called for the use of Oshiwambo as a LOLT do so in order to enhance academic performance. These respondents understand that learners do not fail because they do not understand the content, but because they do not understand the language in which the content is taught. Thus, this finding is in line with the idea of one of the teachers quoted by Harris (2011) who said: "we have to solve language before we start with the learning problem, every problem we experience is because of language".

4.5 Advantages of English as an LOLT

Respondents were asked to talk about the advantages of using English as a LOLT. One of the respondents indicated that using ELF as a LOLT is beneficial because the examinations are written in English.

If you are teaching them in their mother tongue while the examination will be in English... then I think it is just better to teach them in English.

(Economics teacher)

However, the rest of the respondents pointed out that using ELF as a LOLT is advantageous as if learners happen to travel abroad, especially for studies, they would be able to communicate with people from different countries with the common language that is ELF.

If these learners are to go somewhere around the world, they would be able to communicate with others since English has become now the international language.

(Mathematics teacher)

It is very necessary for them to be taught in English because some of them might get opportunities to study abroad whereby they will be taught in English which is the medium of communication in many countries worldwide.

(History teacher)

The findings of this study show that according to the teachers interviewed, the main advantage of using English as an LOLT is only that if learners are to travel abroad, especially for studies, they would be able to communicate with people from different countries. This finding supports Benjamin's (2004) idea that "learners are satisfied with English as LOLT among other reasons, because English is an international language and that it helps them to communicate with people from different backgrounds". This finding also supports Moyo's (2001:104) view that South Africa, for example, needs English in order to be able to communicate with the rest of Africa and abroad. However, Phillipson (1992:281) does not support this finding as he argues that "English is not the only 'language of wider communication' and not the only 'international link language.'" Also, the argument still

stands that the majority of the learners in question would hardly have a chance of studying abroad. Therefore, using English as a LOLT solely for the sake of facilitating learners' studies abroad is highly questionable.

4.6 Learning through ELF

The fourth question was aimed at establishing how learners cope when learning through ELF. Two of the respondents noted that learners face a lot of problems in this regard. They explained that when they ask the students questions, the students give irrelevant answers because they misinterpret the questions. The teachers believe that English as the LOLT is the reason why there is such a high failure rate in their school. Even though these teachers are aware of the poor academic performance of their learners, which is mainly due to ELF as the LOLT (although other factors may also be involved), most of them still advocate using ELF, rather than Oshiwambo, as the LOLT in the academic setting, as they too believe that knowledge of and fluency in English will be beneficial to them in most, if not all, aspects of their lives.

Another two teachers who were interviewed believe that learners are struggling. They feel that learners are just taught in English because that is what the language policy stipulates. To try and remedy the situation, these teachers organize and conduct remedial classes.

They are struggling... but because of this learner support or remedial classes that they given, you can see is a bit better and they are improving.

(Economics teacher)

Interestingly, one of the respondents noted that the learners are actually coping very well with English as the LOLT.

Very well because we are now using English in most cases, they are getting there.

(History teacher)

Lastly, the geography teacher has observed that learners are coping well with English as the LOLT. However, she warned that this depended on how the teacher adjusts his or her English to match that of the learners and how he or she uses the vernacular to clarify her or his explanations.

When I see that the level of learners' proficiency is 'average', when I am talking to them, I bring them to their level. Where they will understand even though sometimes you can use the mother tongue to explain what do you actual mean.

(Geography teacher)

According to this teacher's view, teaching through the combination of Oshiwambo and English is very important because it enhances both teaching and learning. Therefore, one can say, perhaps teachers need to be encouraged to code-switch when necessary in order to reinforce their learners' performance. Teaching in a combination of two languages has also been reported on in South African classrooms by Young (1995, in Probyn 2001:15). He explains that in South Africa, the language of the classroom is very often not English but a mixture of English and the mother tongue.

Moreover, this finding clearly indicates that learners are finding it very difficult to learn solely through English as a LOLT and hence supports Harris's (2011) opinion that "higher proportions of learners in Namibia are confused by the second language in which they are taught". Harris (2011:7) explains that "learners want to succeed at school in general and in English in particular but do not understand their subject well enough because of problems of language". This finding supports Trewby's (1999) view that "using English as a LOLT is not

a good idea because English is not well spoken or used inside and outside the school environment”. Furthermore, the findings of this study also show that if learners are to cope well with English as a LOLT, English should be used very often and the teachers should ensure that they adjust their English use to match that of their learners. This will foster understanding because ELF speakers exhibit more and different explicit uses of strategies that check for and assure understanding (Smit 2003).

4.7 Challenges in using English as a LOLT

The respondents were asked to talk about the problems or challenges they encounter in using English as a LOLT. The Economics, History and Geography teachers revealed that learners find it difficult to follow explanations provided in English.

In most cases, learners do not really get what the teacher is trying to say because they are not fluent in English yet, despite the fact that they are in grade 12.

(History teacher)

Another teacher mentioned two other challenges that she faces when using English as an LOLT; learners try to ask questions and make comments in Oshiwambo and they have a tendency of laughing at each other when grammatical mistakes are made in English or when they provide incorrect answers.

Whenever you give them chance to ask questions or to make comments, they are trying to do so in their mother language.

(Economics teacher)

Furthermore, one teacher has mentioned that he has a problem because he cannot pronounce some of the English words properly.

You might not even know how to pronounce the word properly and if you do not know how to pronounce the word properly, it means that it becomes difficult for the learners to write it.

(Physical science teacher)

He also said that he does not know the Oshiwambo equivalents of some of the English words which then limit his understanding of those words. On the other hand, the mathematics teacher said that he cannot explain some things well in English in addition to his learners also experiencing difficulty in expressing themselves clearly in the language.

You find that a learner has an idea but because the learner cannot express himself or herself well in English, then the statement that the learner will make will end up being meaningless.

(Mathematics teacher)

Finally, one teacher observed that the learners do not know how to answer questions which is amplified by the fact that learners have poor English vocabularies.

Because sometimes they have low vocabulary, this creates a problem. They have the knowledge of the subject but they lack what is required because of English.

(Geography teacher)

These findings show that teachers believe that the majority of learners find it difficult to follow explanations or lessons delivered in English. This is not surprising because in the study carried out by Harris (2011), 61% of teachers reported that their students experience difficulties with English. And given the fact that the learners in question hardly use English outside of the classroom, it is likely that they will continue experiencing problems with English as a LOLT. Also, the findings of this study indicate that learners find it difficult to understand instructions or questions in English. At the same time, they cannot express

themselves well in English and consequently revert to their mother tongue so that they can express themselves effectively. Helm (1997, in Otaala 2005:121) believes that “a child must be able to think about the lesson content, ask questions and supply answers. Thus mother tongue is the most effective LOLT through which pupils can be meaningfully educated.” Apart from the challenges that learners face, this study has also shown that some teachers have a problem with word pronunciation as well as not knowing how to explain clearly some of their subject’s content in English. In general, the findings of this study fully support the findings of the study done by Benjamin (2004). Benjamin found that learners had difficulties in expressing themselves in English, both verbally and in written form. They also lacked understanding of questions and instructions. They did not understand English concepts well and therefore sometimes simply memorized these concepts without understanding what they have learnt. Moreover, one can argue that the difficulties experienced by learners and teachers with regard to English can also be attributed to the fact that English and Oshiwambo are typologically two very different languages. Speakers find it easier to learn the English features which are similar to those in Oshiwambo, while those features which differ from Oshiwambo will be difficult for them to learn (Pica 1994:52).

4.8 Overcoming challenges when using English as a LOLT

The respondents were questioned about the ways in which they overcame the number of challenges they meet when using English as a LOLT. The Economics, History, and Biology teachers, who noted that learners find it difficult to follow explanations given in English, said that they organize remedial classes and code-switch to Oshiwambo to make sure that learners understand what they are being taught.

In most cases I try to express the key words in vernacular. If I happen to note that some of them are struggling, I elaborate a bit in Oshiwambo.

(Biology teacher)

The Economics teacher explained how she deals with learners who make comments and ask questions in Oshiwambo, as well as with learners who laugh at each other when they make grammatical mistakes or when they provide incorrect answers. She explains that she attempts to overcome these two challenges by telling the learners that the reason they come to school is to learn. She also ignores the learners who speak Oshiwambo in the class and instructs them to speak English if they continue to use Oshiwambo.

I just ignore and repeat what I have said...if I was asking a question, I repeat that question in English and if she or he is still answering in the mother language, I tell the person specifically to answer me in English.

The physical science teacher elaborated on how he handles the situation of not knowing how to pronounce some words in English and not knowing the equivalents of certain English terms in Oshiwambo. He explained that when creating his lesson plans, he makes use of a dictionary to acquire the correct English pronunciations of the terms in question and he looks up the Oshiwambo equivalents of other, more technical English terms.

There is where now you have to go and make a further research. That how we call these words in our vernacular then you try to associate the meaning of the word what you know in your language.

(Physical Science teacher)

Again, the mathematics teacher explained that when he finds it difficult to explain a concept clearly in English, he switches to Oshiwambo to explain it. In addition, when learners furnish

incorrect answers in English, he helps them make correct statements in English by focusing on what the question requires them to do.

Lastly, the geography teacher talked about how she overcomes the challenge of dealing with learners who cannot understand instructions given in English because of poor English vocabulary. She explains that she creates a platform where learners go and search for the problematic words in dictionaries available to them in the classroom. In this way, she takes a small step in enabling the learners to take responsibility for their own learning by giving them the tools and skills which are essential to keep adding to their knowledge of English. She also explains and emphasizes the ways in which one can answer different questions in order to reinforce their question-answering skills.

When this question ask like that, what is required for them? When mostly we emphasize the Bloom taxonomy; the how, the describe, the explain... what does it really mean.

(Geography teacher)

The findings of this study show that the teachers use code-switching to overcome a number of challenges that they face when using English as a LOLT. Code-switching is used to ensure that the learners fully understand their subject content. In addition, the teachers also use code-switching to explain parts of the subject content that they themselves have difficulty explaining in English. This finding fully supports the findings of a study done by De Wet (2002) and Probyn (2001). The majority of respondents in De Wet's (2002) study indicated that they use code-switching to enhance their teaching. Furthermore, Probyn (2001) found that, in South Africa, teachers demonstrated that they were able to articulate a wide range of teaching strategies to mediate students' cognitive and emotional needs, mostly notably, a skilful use of English and isiXhosa code-switching, the latter being the mother tongue of the students. Therefore, the findings of this study contradict Benjamin's (2004:64) view that all

subjects be taught in English and all discussions should take place in English, as code-switching has actually been found to enhance teaching and learning. Hence, perhaps teachers need to be encouraged to code-switch whenever necessary as this may reinforce learners' understanding of subject content.

Furthermore, the findings of this study indicate that teachers spend a great deal of time teaching learners how to answer questions correctly. This is of great importance because this knowledge would enable better academic performance from the learners. In this respect, these research findings are in line with Benjamin's (2004:68) idea that learners should be taught essential terms like "analyze", "evaluate", "define", "describe", etc. as early as grade eight so that by the time they reach grades ten through to twelve, they would already have mastered these concepts and be able to answer questions in the correct manners. These findings also show that the teachers believe that educating the learners as to how to go about answering different questions will boost their English vocabulary.

4.9 ELF as an LOLT and learners' academic performance

The teachers were asked whether using ELF as a LOLT influences the academic performance of the learners. Interestingly, all of the respondents suggested that ELF as a LOLT has a negative impact on the learners' academic performance. The teachers explained that the learners do not fail because they do not know the content; they fail because of the language which is used to convey that content. This means that, because the learners cannot fully understand the teachers' explanations and questions, which are conducted in English, their academic performance is negatively affected.

Yes, most of our learners do not fail because they do not know. They fail simply because they might not understand what the question require them to do and at the same time they would

not be able to write down their answer correctly. But if teaching and assessment was to be done in Oshiwambo, you would find that these learners would perform outstandingly.

(Mathematics teacher)

The biology teacher noted that the differences in learners' academic performances, and the negative impact English has thereon, can be observed by comparing the learners' performances in Oshiwambo as a subject and English as a subject.

If you compare the English subject and Oshindonga as a subject, most of the learners pass Oshindonga well. But when it comes to English as a subject, their performance is a bit low.

(Biology teacher)

One teacher noted that the lack of understanding, which results from the use of English as a LOLT, encourages rote-learning which makes it difficult for a teacher to measure a learner's understanding. Interestingly, one of the teachers talked about the negative impact English has on a learner's academic performance after matriculation as opposed to during school. He is of the opinion that learners will not progress in terms of further study if they do not excel in English as a subject in high school.

One can go up to 28 points in grade 12 but is having 'U' grade in English. Then this person has to be left behind. Then academically the person is challenged.

(Mathematics teacher)

Since the implementation of English as a LOLT in Namibia, government documents and other studies have revealed that learners are performing poorly and that the levels of teaching standards are falling (Benjamin 2004:25). The lack of good language skills in the LOLT leads to these learners' failure because of their inability to cope with the curriculum. The teachers

interviewed for this study are of the opinion that learners' poor proficiency in English contributes to their poor academic performance. The teachers report that the learners do not understand explanations given in English, have a problem answering questions and following instructions in English, and lack general understanding of English which reinforces rote-learning and later leads to a high failure rate. These findings therefore support Cooke's statement that "education is unlikely to be effective for the majority when schools employ an unfamiliar language such as English as LOLT without effective means for increasing learners' language proficiency" (2002:313). Furthermore, they support the findings of De Wet (2002) which indicate that, in South Africa, poor English proficiency almost always leads to poor school performance. Smit (1999, in De Wet 2002:19) explicates this point by using the situation in the South African province of the Free State: "Educators contended that in 1999, the lack of English was the most important reason for the province's high grade 12 failure rates". Thus, the findings of the current study suggest that there is a great need to improve and guide the English proficiency of learners if they are to perform better in school. This is necessary because, as Benjamin's (2004) study has shown, the positive influence of English as LOLT on learners' academic performance is only observed in the minority of learners who have a solid background in English language. Finally, this study has also shown that teachers believe that English as a LOLT not only negatively influences the academic performance of learners, but it has also an influence on the futures of learners in terms of furthering their education. Those who do not pass English as a subject at secondary school level, will not be easily accepted and enrolled at tertiary institutions in the country and abroad. Hence, the University of Namibia has implemented English improvement courses or require students to attend private institutions for extra English classes, depending on their final marks for English as a subject upon completion of their secondary school careers, before entering university (Harris 2011:11).

4.10 The use of Oshiwambo as an LOLT

The teachers were asked how the use of Oshiwambo as a LOLT could possibly foster and enhance learners' academic performance. Five of the six teachers interviewed agreed that using Oshiwambo as a LOLT would make a positive difference in terms of academic or learning performance for several reasons. Firstly, the teachers feel that explanations provided in one's mother tongue are less taxing for the learner as this then eliminates the learner's need to first translate the second/foreign language into the mother tongue in order to understand the concept being explained. Secondly, using Oshiwambo as a LOLT will then enable learners to answer questions in order to show their understanding.

Yes... because the whole idea here is for them to understand what is needed or what is expected of them. So, if it is done in Oshiwambo, in the language which they understand very well, I do not think these learners will fail.

(Mathematics teacher)

However, even though five of the six teachers interviewed suggested that using Oshiwambo as an LOLT will make a positive impact in terms of academic or learning performance, two of them were critical of the use of Oshiwambo as a LOLT because of two important points. Firstly, they think that using Oshiwambo as a LOLT will mean that teachers will need to be trained in how to teach in Oshiwambo and this will require a lot of effort and time. Secondly, because some learners might not be mother tongue speakers of Oshiwambo, they would push for the use of English as a LOLT in order to accommodate everyone.

The bad part of it is that some learners are from different tribes and so I do not advocate for the use of local language all the time.

(History teacher)

Lastly, one of the teachers interviewed differed from the rest in that she did not think that the use of Oshiwambo as a LOLT would make a positive difference to learners' academic or learning performance. She believes that any LOLT, no matter whether it is English or a local language can foster or reinforce good academic performance. Because to succeed, one simply needs to have an adequate level of proficiency in the LOLT.

So, it depends are you a linguist, because if you are a linguist you do not have any problem. Whether you are studying in Oshiwambo, whether you are studying in English. So it is just depends on yourself-where you are gifted.

(Geography teacher)

The findings of this study have shown that teachers believe that using Oshiwambo as an LOLT will make a difference to learners' academic or learning performance. This is due to the fact that learners would be able to understand their subject very well if they are being taught in Oshiwambo and would also use their own understanding to answer questions in tests and examinations. Using Oshiwambo as a LOLT would also mean that learners would be able to be helped with their homework by their parents or guardians as they too can speak the language. Haacke (1996:64) explains one of the benefits of using the mother tongue as the LOLT by noting that "all adults could be teachers and language learning could take place both in and out of the schools". In addition, the findings of the UNESCO study (2008), in which an analysis of primary school students' reports indicated that students from the provinces of Papua New Guinea in which vernacular education was first implemented performed better academically than those students in other provinces whose education was not conducted in the vernacular, provide support for my observation that the teachers feel that often it was language that was the barrier to academic success and not knowledge or understanding of subject content. In order to test the validity of the findings of this study, one

would have to compare the performance of schools which use mother tongues as LOLTs with the performance of those which use English as the LOLT. Williams 1996 (in Cooke & Williams 2002:307) found from a variety of qualitative reading tests and investigations that year 5 pupils in Malawian primary schools had largely achieved reading proficiency in their local language of Chichewa. However, in Kenya, the use of English as the LOLT in all primary schools has been found to make it difficult for children from non-elite backgrounds to perform well in schools. This is an indication that if learners are to be taught in their mother tongue, they are likely to perform well. Teaching them in English limits their learning in various ways as this learner, quoted by Harris (2011), explains: “I struggle in English, the teachers explain very fast. Teachers write a summary on chalkboard without explaining the topic”.

4.11 General comments on English as a LOLT

The respondents were asked to provide any other general ideas or suggestions concerning the use of English as a LOLT. Half of the respondents recommended that English as a LOLT should be used in school from as early as grade one, and supported their argument with the following three reasons: Firstly, they believe that children are more eager to learn when they are young, and therefore the use of English as a LOLT should start in grade one. Secondly, they feel that learning in English from grade one would make learners more fluent and able to understand the language better as they progress in their school careers. They argued further by saying that if English is to be used in schools as the LOLT from grade one, these learners would need to be exposed to the language and be engaged in activities so that they will become fluent in the language and no longer fear expressing themselves in English.

Right now we have learners in secondary schools who do not even know how to express themselves, the word cannot even come out of the mouth. Which means these people need be

trained while they are still young, then their tongue will become flexible in speaking the language

(Mathematics teacher)

On the other hand, two of the respondents suggested that Oshiwambo should be used as the LOLT in all grades instead of English, and then English should be taught as a separate subject.

I think when it comes to our education, is better to use English as a subject, not as a medium of instruction ... to improve the academic performance of our learners because I think they can perform well if they use their mother tongue.

(Biology teacher)

Finally, one of the respondents explained that for the learners and teachers to accommodate each other in schools, English should be used as the LOLT.

Let me say we have learners from different diversity ... let me say for example we have a learner who speaks Silozi, Shona, whatever. But with English we can all understand each other.

(Geography teacher)

This study has revealed that teachers would like to see English being implemented as a LOLT from as early as grade one. Evidence that an all-English approach is pedagogically justified comes from Cummins and Corson's findings in (1997, in Rollnick 2002:364) that students in the United States of America (USA) acquired native-like proficiency in English despite considerable amounts of use of the home language during instructional time. The teachers' recommendations revealed by this study are in line with Cummins and Corson's (1997)

findings. However, there is one major difference with regard to English between the USA and northern Namibia: English is used extensively in the USA, unlike in Northern Namibia, and hence the learners would not have too many problems starting with English as a LOLT in grade one. Furthermore, the teachers' recommendations revealed by this study provide support for Harris's (2011:7) idea that "the longer a child learns in his or her home language, the more successful she or he will be at school." Nkosi (1997, in De Wet 2002:119) believes that learning in one language and then switching over to a L2 as a LOLT is a traumatic experience. Therefore, if pupils are exposed to a foreign language as a LOLT from the time they start school and which stays constant throughout their school careers, they avoid the risk of a psychological shock from a change of LOLT at a later stage (Otaala 2005:127). Nevertheless, using English as a LOLT will not automatically guarantee academic success for these learners. For example, in 1965, the act of parliament was introduced in Zambia, which made English the LOLT in all grades. What Zambians learnt from this policy was that the students who were exposed to English early could not express well what they had learnt in school to their parents at home who could only communicate in the mother tongue. At the same time those pupils could not express the knowledge acquired at home to the teachers who were using English at school (Otaala 2005:104). Consequently, if English is to be used as a LOLT in all grades, comprehensive preparation and organizations needs to be carried out; well-trained teachers, well-written textual materials, and improved methods of teaching are more important than the length of time for which English is taught (Phillipson 1992:214).

4.12 Conclusion

This chapter gave a detailed account of the research findings and related these findings to the current literature in order to critique the results by supporting or contradicting the findings based on available literature. This was done based on the questions which appeared on the interview schedule for this study.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

Since the implementation of English as a LOLT in Namibia, government documents and other literature have revealed the poor performance of learners and falling of standards of teaching (Benjamin 2004:25). The aim of this study was to identify the challenges of using ELF as a LOLT and to establish how teachers overcome the challenges. The research question guiding this study was two-fold, namely

- (i) What are the challenges that teachers face using ELF as a LOLT? and
- (ii) What do teachers do to overcome these challenges?

To answer these questions, the researcher interviewed six teachers from one secondary school in the Omusati region in northern Namibia. This chapter contains a summary of the results of this study, a description of the shortcomings of the study and suggestions for further research.

5.2 Summary of the results

The findings of this study revealed that teachers prefer to use English to express themselves to learners in an academic setting. The implication of this is that learners' academic performance may be negatively affected depending on their levels of knowledge of the language. Harris (2011) suggests that if the teachers solely express themselves in English, as the policy stipulates, learners will not benefit as such because they face many problems because of language. Hence, it is essential that the teacher-training institutions equip teachers with the techniques which will enable them to handle the number of problems that these learners are experiencing because of language. In addition to this, the findings of this study reveal that teachers rate their learners' English proficiency as poor. This implies that one

cannot expect these learners to succeed in school because “if learners have insufficient understanding of the LOLT, education will be ineffective” (Cooke & Williams 2002:297).

Furthermore, the data from this study indicate that teachers feel there is no need for learners to be taught in Oshiwambo. Despite the problems that ELF as an LOLT poses to both teachers and learners, most of the teachers feel that English should be used as the LOLT due to the fact that it is an international language and learners will need it, especially if they further their studies abroad and come into contact with students from other countries who do not speak the same language. One can conclude from this shared viewpoint that the teachers are aware of the challenges that ELF as LOLT poses for them and their learners. However, there is nothing that they can do in this case because the language policy says only English should be used as LOLT and assessment should be also done in English.

The findings of this study also indicate that teachers encounter a number of challenges when using ELF as a LOLT. These include difficulty on the part of learners to follow lessons delivered in English, learners not being able to understand instructions in tests and examinations, as well as both teachers and learners being unable to express themselves well in English. One technique that teachers use to overcome all of these challenges is that of code-switching. Code-switching seems to be the only way to overcome the problems learners face when learning in English as a LOLT. Accordingly, teachers should be encouraged to code-switch as much as possible because this would mean that the learners will understand them better and perhaps this would improve the academic performance of the learners. Code-switching, however, must not be seen as an excuse for a lack of knowledge or fluency in English; it must be seen as a tool for successful learning and teaching.

The results of this study have also shown that some of the teachers feel that ELF as a LOLT has a negative influence on the academic performance of their learners. They believe that

using Oshiwambo as a LOLT would make a positive difference in terms of academic or learning performance because the learners would understand the subject material better than when the subject material is in English. On the other hand, the findings of this study indicate that some teachers call for the introduction of English as the LOLT in schools to start as early as grade one. For this to materialize, well-trained teachers, well-written textual materials and improved methods of teaching would need to be firmly in place, as these are more important than the length of time for which English has been used as the LOLT (Phillipson 1992:214). Also, Oshiwambo as learners' mother tongue must be taught effectively to ensure that it (Oshiwambo) is preserved.

5.3 Strengths and limitations of the study

One of the limitations of this study was that, due to its limited scope, it did not incorporate the voice of the learners regarding the use of ELF as a LOLT. It would be very helpful and interesting if learners were to give their views, especially about the challenges they meet when learning through English and how they overcome such challenges. Another limitation of the study is that the sample size of the respondents was quite small, so it is difficult to generalize the findings to seemingly similar situations in the rest of the country. Therefore, a suggestion for further research is to use a larger participant sample, and to investigate the use and challenges of using ELF as a LOLT in schools in other parts of the country.

Another difficulty experienced was that some of the teachers' utterances produced during the interviews were difficult to understand or interpret due to their poor English proficiencies. Sometimes teachers also produced utterances which were not in a coherent order and this also made it somewhat taxing to follow and interpret their ideas. Nevertheless, the researcher made sure that he completely understood these utterances by asking the respondents to elaborate on or clarify whatever was not clear to him. It would be helpful, and perhaps quite

interesting, if one were to conduct the interviews in the local language so that the respondents have no difficulty expressing themselves and the interviewer has no problems understanding or interpreting what it is they are trying to say.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

Firstly, it is suggested that research be conducted to compare the academic performances of learners who are taught in Oshiwambo (or any other local languages) with those who are taught in English. Carrying out this research would not be easy because learners' academic performance is not only attributed to the LOLT used in school, but to many other aspects.

Due to the results of this study showing that teachers believe that ELF as a LOLT has a negative influence on the academic performance of learners, it is suggested that comprehensive research should be carried out to determine whether there is a correlation between the performance of learners in English as a subject and their performance in other content subjects. If learners who do well in English as a subject also do well in content subjects and vice versa, then perhaps a conclusion can be drawn that using ELF as LOLT has a positive influence on the academic performance of learners.

As was previously mentioned, despite the problems that ELF as a LOLT poses to teachers and learners, teachers feel that English should be used as a LOLT due to the fact that it is an international language which learners will need, especially if they further their studies abroad. It is the researcher's final suggestion that research be carried out in order to establish the number of learners from northern Namibia who have the opportunity to study abroad after grade 12 in order to validate this belief.

5.5 Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, learners and teachers face a number of challenges in using ELF as LOLT. Teachers often revert to code-switching in order to overcome these challenges. This is an explicit indication that the mother tongue plays an important role in the education of learners. Perhaps the best way to solve a number of learning problems that learners face as a result of using ELF as a LOLT is to change to using Oshiwambo as a LOLT in this school setting, although language of assessment remains a crucial issue. An alternate solution might be to use ELF as a LOLT from grade one, rather than grade four as is presently the case, so that learners can get used to it and by the time they finish grade 12, they will have a better command of English and hence their academic performance will be expected to be much better than in the current situation.

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Appendix 1: Reference letter



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jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

14 June 2012

To whom it may concern

This is to confirm that **Mr. Kristof lipinge** (student no. **17324726**) is registered as a full-time MA student in the Department of General Linguistics, Stellenbosch University. The topic of his research is "English Lingua Franca as a language of learning in Northern Namibia: A report on Oshiwambo teachers' experience". The objective of his research is to identify advantages of using English lingua franca as language of learning and teaching (LoLT) and to point out challenges that teachers face using English lingua franca as a LoLT and establish how teachers overcome these challenges.

For the purposes of his research project Mr. lipinge will be making use of structured interviews with teachers at a secondary school in the North of Namibia, in Omusati Region.

To enable him to conduct his research, we request your assistance in allowing Mr. lipinge to conduct these interviews. In this regard we also request that you provide Mr. lipinge with a letter of permission to do so.

Please note that Mr. lipinge's research proposal has been subject to a Departmental Ethics Screening Committee (DESC) process and that no recording of data will proceed without due consent of all interested parties. Every possible measure will be taken to assure confidentiality, anonymity of participants and respect for the privacy and integrity of individual participants as well as the school.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Kate Huddleston, MA (Stellenbosch University), PhD (Utrecht University)
Supervisor
Department of General Linguistics
Stellenbosch University



Fakulteit Lettere en Sosiale Wetenskappe
Faculty Arts and Social Sciences

Departement Algemene Taalwetenskap • Department of General Linguistics

Privaat Sak/Private Bag XI • Matieland, 7602 • Suid-Afrika/South Africa
Tel: + 27 (0) 21 808 2052 • Faks/Fax: +27 (0) 21 808 2009 • linguis@sun.ac.za



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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

English Lingua Franca as a language of learning in Northern Namibia: A report on Oshiwambo teachers' experience.

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Mr. Kristof Iiping, doing a Master degree in second language studies (SLS), from the Department of General Linguistics at Stellenbosch University. The results of this research will contribute to the thesis which will be written in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the MA (SLS). You were selected as a possible participant in this study because as a teacher you are at the fore front of curriculum implementation and as grade 12 teacher you have a very huge responsibility in preparing learners for the school leaving examination and hence for their future ahead.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study is aimed at identifying the advantages of using English lingua franca as LOLT, at pointing out challenges that teachers are facing using English lingua franca as a LOLT as well as at establishing how teachers overcome these challenges.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

I would like to interview you for 30 to 45 minutes on the use of English lingua franca as a language of learning.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The participants will not experience or be exposed to any potential risks or discomfort by taking part in this study.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The participants will not benefit personally by taking part in the research.

The society will benefit from this research in such a way that the results or the findings of this research will inform and provide language policy makers, academics and researchers with more insight about the advantages and challenges of using English lingua franca as a language of LOLT, and hence will help them to find ways to strengthen and to fill gaps within the use of English lingua franca as LOLT.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants will not receive payment for participation in the study.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. No names of any participants will be mentioned; participants will be given a participant number that will be utilised in the thesis for ease of reference, and only the researcher will be able to identify the participant.

All the interviewed to be conducted will be recorded and participants have rights to review and edit the tapes. Also, the recordings will be used for thesis purposes only and only the researcher and his supervisors will have access to the recordings. After the thesis to be written by the researcher is assessed and graded by the university, the recordings will be erased.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact my supervisor, Dr. Kate Huddleston at +27(0) 21 808 2007 or e-mail her at: katevg@sun.ac.za or you can contact Ms Christine Smit (administrative officer-department of General Linguistics at +27 (0)21 8082052 or e-mail her at cs2@sun.ac.za..

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

The information above was described to me by Mr. Kristof Iiping in English/Oshiwambo and I am in command of these languages. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to the participant. He/she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English/Oshiwambo and no translator was used

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix 3: Biographical information form

English Lingua Franca as a language of learning and teaching in Northern Namibia

Participant no.

Biographical information

1. Gender *(Please mark the appropriate box)*

Male Female

2. Which subject(s) do you teach? *(Please list all)*

3. For how many years have you been teaching? *(Please mark the appropriate box)*

1 to 2 years 3 to 5 years 6 to 10 years 11 years or more

4. What is your position in the school?

Principal Head of department (HOD) Hostel superintendent Teacher

5. How old are you?

19-24 25-29 30-34 35-39

40-44 45-49 50-54 55+

6. What is your highest qualification?

Grade 12 Certificate in teaching Diploma in teaching

Degree in teaching Higher degree in teaching Other

7. In which language(s) were you trained to teach?

Appendix 4: Structured interview questions for teachers

Structured interview for teachers

1. In which language do you feel most comfortable to express yourself clearly to learners?
2. How do you describe or rate your learners' English proficiency?
3. Do you think is necessary for the learners to be taught in English rather than their mother tongue (Oshiwambo)?
4. What do you think are advantages or benefits of using English as a LOLT?
5. How are the learners coping with English as a LOLT?
6. What are the challenges that you meet in using English as a LOLT?
7. How do you overcome the challenges you mention in number 5?
8. Do you think using English as a LOLT has an influence on the academic performance of learners?
9. Assuming that "Oshiwambo" is used as a LOLT; do you think this will make a difference in terms of academic or learning performance?
10. Finally, what else do you have to say about English as LOLT?

Appendix 5: Transcripts of interviews

Participant One

Interviewer: Madam, as I told you in the introduction, I would like to ask you a few questions about English as a LOLT. So, my first question is; in which language do you feel most comfortable to express you self to learners

P1: Umh... thank you for the question. As a teacher and because of this English as LOLT, I prefer to express myself in English, simply because whenever I am talking about something which is serious, English is a bit easier.

Interviewer: Ok...thank you! How do you describe or rate your learners' English Proficiency?

P1: That one is a very big problem simply because the English of these learners or the grammar its self is very very poor, which even some times force even me the teacher or themselves to speak so to say in their mother languages.

Interviewer: Ok, you said the grammar is not good... the grammar is very poor. Maybe what is the cause of that?

P1: I think it's the background or the foundation of education to these learners. Cause just meeting them in grade 11 to 12 only, is not even easy to change them or I might say the level where they are, it's not... they are not at that level of learning. It is even difficult for them to learn a language its self.

Interviewer: Ok! Now as you said the learners are not at a good level of learning in terms of English, do you think is necessary for the learners to be taught in English rather than their mother tongue (Oshiwambo)?

P1: Now because English is the LOLT, nothing we can do. They just need to be taught in English... simply because even the examination will be in English.

Interviewer: Ok. What do you think are the advantages or benefits of using English as a LOLT?

P1: The benefit is only that, to some, they can at least improve and when it comes to the examination they might be better than... because if you are teaching them in their mother language, while the examination will be in English, then I think it is ...it is just better to teach them in English.

Interviewer: Ok. Now so far how are the learners coping with English as a LOLT?

P1: They are struggling, but because of this learner support or the remedial classes they are given, you can see it is a bit better and they are improving.

Interviewer: Ok. You said now the learners are struggling with English as a LOLT. Maybe you can talk about the challenges that you meet in using English as a LOLT.

P1: The most challenges only that sometimes you might feel what you are trying to explain learners understand. You can just find out when you ask questions that 'no' they did not get you. But sometimes if you give them...not sometimes but whenever you give them chance either to ask questions or to make comments, they are trying to do so in their mother language. Now it is only that that in my case, because we are having the same mother language I can understand. But if...what if they were doing that to someone who is not of their mother language? Therefore, the most challenge is only that, in most cases you give them... let's say you give them a chance to say something or to ask questions to make comments, they do so in their own languages.

Interviewer: Mhm! Ok now you said some times when you teach, you... you tend to think that they understand but they do not understand. Now, what do you do when you are trying to teach and they do not understand?

P1: Urm... Most of the time...because now... in the due course you can see that this one is at this level, the other one is on the other level... I divide them in groups whereby after the

lessons or classes whenever I have time, I have to call them, we sit and tell me exactly where they do not understand. Because sometimes they are even shy, to show... to show to the colleagues or to the fellow learners that they do not understand. And you see, our learners also have this attitude of laughing to one another. Whenever someone has mention something which is not right or which is not correct, they used to laugh. So, if I want them to understand or to get me correctly, I used to talk to them after the lessons or after schools... I mean after school or after the period, so that they can tell me exactly where they do not understand and I have to explain.

Interviewer: Ok. Now maybe also when they laugh at each other, what do you do?

P1: arrr... Normally, I like to tell them that the reason for coming to school is to learn. Because whenever one reminds them that, then at least, they stop.

Interviewer: Ok! You also mentioned that sometimes they try to speak in their mother language during the...the English lessons. I mean during the subjects that are taught in English. So how do you handle that one also?

P1: That one you can just...now in my case, I just ignore. Because whenever someone has answered in the mother language, I just ignore and repeat what I have said. If I was asking a question, I repeat that question in English and if still he or she answer me in the mother language, I tell that person specifically to answer me in English.

Interviewer: Ok, good! Do you think using English as a LOLT has an influence on the academic performance of learners?

P1: Very much! It has an influence. Because most of the learners, when they said 'no' they failed, is not because they do not know the content, it is because of the language itself.

Interviewer: Ok, and now suppose Oshiwambo is used as a LOLT, do you think this will make a difference in terms of academic or learning performance?

P1: I hope so! Arrr... I can say so because you can just see that whatever one is explaining in the mother language, a person can get it more clearly and the person can understand that one rather than struggling to get meanings from here and there in the other language.

Interviewer: And then maybe finally anything else do you have to say about English as a LOLT?

P1: Maybe what I can say is only, you see... I might say the problem comes from the junior face. Simply because you can see learners from grade one to three, they are taught in a mother language. And you see a learner from grade one, or maybe let's say... let me say, children at early ages for example from five to six somewhere there, they are eager to learn. Therefore, if they were to be taught in English at early stage, they can catch up things easily. Because now starting with English in grade four, to me is a bit late.

Interviewer: Ok thank you very much madam for your time. We have come to the end of our interview.

P1: It's my pleasure!

Participant 2

Interviewer: Sir as I have said in my introduction, I would like to ask you a few questions about English as a LOLT. My first question is; in language do you feel most comfortable to express yourself clearly to learners?

P2: Alright! Myself particularly, I am comfortable in expressing myself in English. Because is the language in which I was taught the same subject. But I think if I could be taught in my mother tongue how to teach that subject, I think it will be better to teach in our vernacular language.

Interviewer: alright! How do you describe or rate your learners' English proficiency?

P2: Er... In our school, I can say... we are disadvantaged because we are always being given those learners who are below average. Therefore I have no doubt to say their English is below average.

Interviewer: Ok, maybe what is the cause of this that almost all the learners their English proficiency is below average?

P2: Er... I can say maybe this one is from their previous and primary foundation of their lower grades. I think they were not taught well the language and how to go about it.

Interviewer: Ok now, do you think it is necessary for the learners to be taught in English rather than their mother tongue (Oshiwambo)?

P2: Er... that one would depend... but currently I can say yes is necessary to be taught in English, because if we say we can start to teach them in our mother language, I think this one will take some more years to adapt to that. Because teachers need also to be trained in how to deliver in their language.

Interviewer: Ok and then what do you think are the advantages or benefits of using English as a LOLT?

P2: The benefits is simply... wherever these learners are going, they will be meeting things that are just written in English and a lot of people that are in our surroundings they are English speaking people as now we are having a lot of foreigners therefore I think is necessary they need to know how to communicate in English, so that they will be able to communicate even if they can go abroad it will not become difficult for them to cope.

Interviewer: Alright, now earlier on you said the... the English proficiency of learners is not so good. How are the learners coping with English as a LOLT?

P2: These learners are facing a lot of difficulties. Er... that is why English is the only... let me say is the language that is causing a lot of higher rate failure in our school.

Interviewer: ok! Maybe can you tell me about the challenges that you meet in using English as a LOLT.

P2: Myself I have met several challenges. For example, you might not even know how to pronounce the word properly. And if you do not know how to pronounce the word properly it means it means that it becomes difficult for the learners to write it. And some other challenges is like you do not know the meaning of that word in your vernacular and then it become very difficult for you to refer the same explanation to what you know.

Interviewer: Ok! So you mentioned to challenges; pronouncing words and now sometimes you said you do not know the meanings of the words in the vernacular. Maybe let's start with this one about pronouncing words. How do you try to overcome that challenge?

P2: That one we are just making use of dictionaries, to look for the pronunciation and try to pronounce it the way it is suppose to be pronounced.

Interviewer: Ok, then what about when you meet a word and you do not know the meaning of the word in the vernacular?

P2: There is where now you have to go and make a further research. That... how do we call this word in our vernacular? Then you try to associate the meaning of the word and what you know in your language.

Interviewer: Ok now er... Do you think using English as a LOLT has an influence on the academic performance of learners?

P2: Yes! Because these learners, most of them they are just being left behind because they did not perform well, in English. For example, one can go up to 28 points in grade 12 but is having 'U' in English then this person have to be left behind. Then academically this person is challenged.

Interviewer: Ok I see. Suppose Oshiwambo is used as a LOLT; do you think this will make a difference in terms of academic or learning performance?

P2: Jar... I can say it will make a difference, however, it will need a lot of effort and a lot of time. Because we need a transitional state, maybe where by teachers will be required again to go back to the training institutions to be trained on how to deliver in their own language and I hope this one will take more time but I hope it will make the learners to be able to understand better than being taught in the foreign language.

Interviewer: Ok thank you. Finally, what else do you have to say about English as a LOLT?

P2: My recommendations... If the government will be able to... to start this English at the lower grades, at those primary schools, we need these kids to be exposed. To be engaged in a lot of activities. So that they will be fluent, they will no more going to be fear in expressing themselves in English, because right now we are having learners in secondary schools who do not even know how to express themselves, the word cannot even come out of the mouth. Which means that these people they need to be trained before they are still young then their tongue will become flexible in speaking the language.

Interviewer: Thank you very much sir we have come to the end of this interview, I thank you so much for your time.

P2: You are welcome sir!

Participant 3

Interviewer: Ok... madam as I have said in the introduction, I would like to ask you a few questions about English as a LOLT. Now the first question is; in which language do you feel most comfortable to express yourself clearly to learners?

P3: Ok thank you for the question, the language which I feel comfortable when it comes to expressing myself to my learners is my vernacular language which is Oshiwambo.

Interviewer: OK maybe why don't you think you are comfortable in expressing yourself in English?

P3: English is not my mother language, it is a foreign language, that is why most of the words are very difficult and when it comes to the learners they do not understand most of the words.

Interviewer: Ok, how do you describe or rate your learners' English proficiency?

P3: When it comes to performance of my learners in English, some are better but some are very poor. It depends to their background maybe. Some are taught English at early stage, while some are just started to be taught English from grade four.

Interviewer: Ok now er... Do you think is necessary for the learners to be taught in English rather than their mother tongue (Oshiwambo)?

P3: I hope it is better for them to be taught in their mother tongue. Because in their mother tongue they can understand everything, but when it comes to the English some of the terms are very difficult, they cannot understand.

Interviewer: Ok, now you just mentioned that some of the terms in English are very difficult and the learners cannot understand them. What do you think are the advantages or the benefits of using English as a LOLT?

P3: Can you please repeat?

Interviewer: what do you think are the advantages of using English as a LOLT?

P3: The advantage of using English...?

Interviewer: ja, now when you are teaching in English... through English, what are the advantages of that?

P3: The advantage is only maybe when it comes to the communication. If they meet people from other countries, those who are using English, they can communicate in English and most of the...for example the newspaper written in English, they can read the newspaper then they can understand the content. That is only the advantage I can see.

Interviewer: Ok now, how are the learners coping with English as a LOLT?

P3: Any way they are... trying! Because English we use it as official language. They are using English only because it is a 'must' to use English.

Interviewer: So but otherwise they are coping very well...

P3: Not really very well! They are just trying. They are struggling!

Interviewer: Now, what are the challenges that you meet in using English as a LOLT?

P3: The challenges is like... when it comes to explanation, when you explain something just in English some of learners they are just struggling. Let me say you introduce a new topic to them in English, it is very difficult for them to understand. When it comes to the... what? Key words! Unless you have maybe to mix for them to understand. You have to elaborate a bit in Oshiwambo.

Interviewer: So, is that the only challenge?

P3: When it comes to the examination they can... they fail. Due to the lack of understanding of key words.

Interviewer: Ok... now, you mentioned two challenges. The first one is 'explanations'! You said some times is difficult for them to understand explanations especially when it comes to new topics. So now, how do you overcome that challenge?

P3: Most of the time I tried to express the what... the key words in vernacular. If I happen to note that some of them are struggling, I used to elaborate a bit in Oshiwambo.

Interviewer: Ok... Do you think English as a LOLT has an influence on the academic performance of learners?

P3: Yes for sure! When it comes to the academic performance, if you compare English subject and Oshindonga most of the learners they used to pass well in Oshindonga but when it comes to the English subjects, their performance is a bit low. And I think this is because of the English.

Interviewer: Ok... now err... suppose Oshiwambo is used as a LOLT, do you think this will make a difference in terms of academic or learning performance?

P3: Yes!...

Interviewer: How will this make a difference?

P3: I think it will make a difference because they can understand... they can even try to answer questions based on the understanding.

Interviewer: Ok... Good! What else do you want to say about English as a LOLT?

P3: Ja... any way, I think when it comes to our education, is better to use just English as subject. Not as a medium of instruction. To improve the academic performance of our learners. Because I think they can perform well if they use their mother tongue.

Interviewer: OK... Ok madam thank you very much, we have come to the end of this interview, thank you so much for your time!

P3: Thank you too!

Participant 4

Interviewer: Sir, as I have said in the introduction, I would like to ask you a few questions about English as a LOLT. Now, the first question is; in which language do you feel most comfortable to express yourself clearly to learners?

P4: Ja... I think when it comes to mathematics English would be the best. Since there are a lot of terminologies that were not translated to Oshiwambo, in mathematics.

Interviewer: Ok now... how do you describe or rate your learners' English proficiency?

P4: Not that good! Because most of them their English background is not that... is not up to standard. So meaning a lot of them cannot be able to express themselves in English and they cannot catch up when you explain things in English.

Interviewer: OK! Now... do you think is necessary for the learners to be taught in English rather than their mother tongue (Oshiwambo)?

P4: Ja...this one now...if books were...if it was possible for the books to be translated in Oshiwambo... to Oshiwambo... I think that would be better for the learners to be taught in Oshiwambo because most of them really... are failing because they cannot interpret questions which are written in English.

Interviewer: Ok now you said...Oshiwambo would be a better choice for the learners to be taught through. Maybe what do you think are the advantages or the benefits of using English as a LOLT?

P4: Ja... for now the benefit...is... in case these learners are to go somewhere around the world, they would be able to communicate with others in English since English has become now the international language.

Interviewer: OK! err... how are the learners coping with English as a LOLT?

P4: They are experiencing a lot of difficulties. But they are trying... they are trying but they are experiencing a lot of problems. If you pose a question, you find out that these learners the way they are answering they are not really answering the question simply because they interpret most of the questions wrongly.

Interviewer: Ok, apart from interpreting questions wrongly, maybe what are the other challenges that you meet in using English as a LOLT?

P4: Ja... you find that out that there are some of the things that you also not be able to explain well in English. So you find that there are times when a teacher would be forced to use his language to explain most of the things... to make things easier for learners.

Interviewer: Is that the only challenge? The one of misinterpreting the questions?

P4: Ja... misinterpreting and responding. You find that the learner have an idea but, because the learner cannot express himself or herself well in English then the statement that the learner will make will end up being meaningless.

Interviewer: Ok now, how do you overcome these challenges? Like you say they misinterpret maybe questions, the way they respond is not so proper... How do you overcome these challenges?

P4: Ja... In most cases we are trying, I used to... I try to make things easy by explaining in Oshiwambo and also whereby you look at the question you explain to them in English what do really the question require them to do and then give them hints as to how they should answer a question in English.

Interviewer: Ok very good! Do you think using English as a LOLT has an influence on the academic performance of learners?

P4: Yes! That most of our learners are not failing because they do not know. They are failing simply because they might not understand what the question require them to do. And at the same time they would not be able to... write down their answers correctly. But if it was to be done in Oshiwambo you find that these learners would be... would perform outstandingly.

Interviewer: Ok, now assuming that Oshiwambo is used as a LOLT; do you think this will make a difference in terms of academic or learning performance?

P4: Yes! Because the whole idea here is for them to understand, what is needed or what is expected of them. But if they do not understand now... then is a problem. So, if it is done in Oshiwambo in a language where they understand very well, I do not think these learners will fail.

Interviewer: Ok! Finally, what else do you have to say about English as LOLT?

P4: I am of the idea that English in school should just be taught as a second language. But if it is possible for books to translated to Oshiwambo, other subjects should be taught in Oshiwambo. And then English will just be taught in a English lessons.

Interviewer: Ok! Ok thank you very sir for your time, we have come to the end of this interview.

P4: Thank you!

Participant 5

Interviewer: Sir, as I have said in the introduction, I would like to ask you a few questions about English as a LOLT. Now my first question is; in which language do you feel most comfortable to express yourself clearly to learners?

P5: English is the best language that I use to express myself and perhaps I also use my local... my vernacular language to make sure that what I mean is clear enough to learners to grasp the information.

Interviewer: Ok... so you express yourself in English but at the same time you use Oshiwambo to make sure that your learners get what you are saying. Ok now... how do you describe or rate your learners' English proficiency?

P5: Mhh... The level of English proficiency is moderate I can say... Because some learners did not get that foundation of English at the infant stage. So to them is very difficult to express themselves in English.

Interviewer: Ok... Do you think is necessary for the learners to be taught in English rather than their mother tongue (Oshiwambo)?

P5: Yes! Is very necessary in the sense that so... some of them they might study abroad and where there is no local language. So it is very useful for them to be taught in English so that they can... so that they can again and mature in the language.

Interviewer: Ok now, what do you think are advantages or benefits of using English as a LOLT?

P5: The benefits of ...?

Interviewer: Teaching through English!

P5: So... like I said that it is very necessary for them to be taught in English. Because some of them they might get that opportunity to study abroad and so... abroad they will be taught in English which is the medium of communication in many countries worldwide.

Interviewer: Ok! So earlier on you said the English proficiency of your learners is moderate. Now, how are the learners coping with English as a LOLT?

P5: So... They are coping very well, since that we are now using English in most cases, I think they are getting there.

Interviewer: Ok! Now... what are the challenges that you meet in using English as a LOLT?

P5: Mhh... so the challenges is that there is communication breakdown. So, in some cases, learners, do not really get what the teacher is trying to explain, because they are not fluent in English yet.

Interviewer: Ok! Is that the only challenge?

P5: only challenge that I experienced.

Interviewer: So now when this happen, how do you overcome this challenge?

P5: As like I said that... in case I realize that they are finding it difficult to grasp what the teacher is trying to say, so I can also elaborate using my vernacular language to make sure that so... they understood.

Interviewer: Ok... Do you think using English as a LOLT has an influence on the academic performance of learners?

P5: Come up with the question again!

Interviewer: Do you think using English as a LOLT has an influence on the academic performance of learners?

P5: Yes, it has the influence in the sense that if the learner did not get what the teacher was trying to explain so she will experience difficulties in learning and as a results the academic performance will be affected.

Interviewer: Ok now...assuming that Oshiwambo is used as a LOLT; do you think this will make a difference in terms of academic or learning performance?

P5: Come up again!

Interviewer: So now suppose if we now happen to use Oshiwambo as a LOLT. Do you think this will make a difference in terms of academic or learning performance?

P5: yes to a less extent it will improve the learners' performance, but the bad part is that some learners they are from different tribes, and so I do not advocate for the use of local language all the time.

Interviewer: Ok now, is there anything else that you want to say about English as a LOLT?

P5: Yes! I think language, the English itself, should start at the lower grades. From grade 1, so English should be used as the medium of instruction. So, in a sense that learners would be more fluent and would understand the language better as they go through the schooling process.

Interviewer: Ok sir, we have come to the end of this interview, I thank you so much for your time.

P5: Thank you very much... welcome!

Participant 6

Interviewer: Madam as I said, I would like to ask you a few questions about the use of English as a LOLT. My first question is; in what language do you feel most comfortable to express yourself clearly to learners?

P6: In English... I am comfortable to express myself in English as a medium of instruction also from grade 8-12.

Interviewer: Alright! How do you describe or rate your learners' English proficiency?

P6: According to the learners that I am teaching now, they are at average. The proficiency of English and the understanding is also average... of the English as a language.

Interviewer: Ok... maybe... why is the learners' English proficiency average?

P6: To be average...there can be a few factors that I can think of. Factor number one it can be... from the... exposure to the language. Majority of the learners they only use English to speak when they are in class, but once they are socializing with others, they use their mother tongue. And another problem... can be also the motivation and the self-confidence. Some learners they lack the confidence to speak the language as sometimes they... they fear to be laughed by the others or to make mistakes of the language. Those are the few that I can think of.

Interviewer: Ok...do you think is necessary for the learners to be taught in English rather than their mother tongue (Oshiwambo)?

P6: I think both are necessary. Let me start with the mother tongue. The mother tongue is necessary but it should not be introduced as medium of instruction. My idea it can... we can have a mother tongue as a subject, where a learner can have all the subjects as a medium of instruction which is English, then a mother tongue as a subject. The English because from the grade one to...in the daily activity that we do we need English as we are living now in a divert world where people we are now moving to people who are from multi-cultural society. And for us to express ourselves and to understand each other mostly we use English and English as you can see Namibia is also the official language which we use to express ourselves... is not like our neighboring country where we have all the language, mother tongue, English Afrikaans as official language. So, I think we should put more emphasis on English.

Interviewer: So now as you are saying we must put more emphasis on English, what do you think are the advantages or benefits of using English as a LOLT?

P6: The benefits when it comes to learning and teaching, it create a platform for understanding for both a teacher and a learner, and as a English, it also create a platform for

understanding between the two of us not to misunderstood, and to also to make the communication level easier between the teaching and the learning which we are refer to a learner and a teacher and... coming to English as you can see English is the most spoken language in the world, where even if you want study further to further university, mostly what you find is English. And now as you see with English if we only have it in the high level, it will be very difficult for a learner to capture the language.

Interviewer: OK! Now, earlier on you said the learners' English proficiency is average. How are the learners coping with English as a LOLT?

P6: Arr... they are coping depending on the teacher or let me say the personality of the person. How you break the language when you are teaching. Sometimes you see the learners... referring to myself, I see the level of the learners that is average. So, when I am talking to them, I bring them to their level. Where they will understand. Even though sometimes somewhere, some places you can use the mother tongue to explain what do you actually mean.

Interviewer: ja! Ok what are the challenges that that you meet in using English as a LOLT?

P6: Arr.. the challenges now in teaching, you come to hear that...most learners, with the English as a problem, it also create a problem of understanding the subject content of what is required to them. It also have a problem of understanding the instructions. Now we say instruction here in a form of questions. Is difficult for them to understand what the question is real requiring them to do or to answer. Because the English sometimes they have a low vocabulary and that one sometimes create now a problem. They understand what is... let me say they have the knowledge of the subject but they lack what is required because of English.

Interviewer: You said normally the learners have the problem of understanding the content and instructions. How do you overcome these two challenges?

P6: The two challenges as a teacher... one thing that you need to have is patience. You need to be patient with the learners. And another thing here you need to create a vocabulary where you define... the words and you also need to create a platform where you also make learners to go and search in dictionaries also to update their vocabulary in English. And also to put emphasis like when it comes to questions what is required and which one is for them... when this question ask like that what is required for them. When mostly one emphasis the bloom taxonomy; the how, the describe, the explain...what does it really mean?

Interviewer: Ok... do you think English as a LOLT has an influence on academic performance of learners?

P6: Yes, English have an influence on the academic performance of learners. Let me say if you have a...it depends on personality of a learner from one learner to another. There are those who are not good at speaking but really they are good at writing. Meaning now they cannot communicate but they know what they are doing. There are those who are good at communicating, but not good at writing. That is also an impact. You will also come to the thing of rote-learning, you would not measure the understanding because sometimes the person has memorized without an understanding what the person have memorized when it comes to answering questions or instructions.

Interviewer: Alright! Assuming that Oshiwambo is used as a LOLT; do you think this will make a difference in terms of academic or learning performance?

P6: Mhh... that I will also say it will depend on person's personality. Because let me say we are in different categories. There are those who are linguistics and there are those who are not linguistics. There are people who have a good academic performance doing in Oshiwambo, there are those who have a good academic performance in English. So it depends... are you a linguistic person, because if you are a linguistic you do not have any problem. Whether you

are studying in Oshiwambo, whether you are studying in English. So it is just depend on yourself...

Interviewer: Depends on a person...

P6: Where you are gifted!

Interviewer: And then finally what else do you have to say about English as a LOLT?

P6: Err... English as LOLT it has brought many people from different culture and many different beliefs as one, to understand each other and not to misinterpret or misunderstood ourselves , so English has brought us to be as one... where we understand each other and it have also made learning easier and also teaching easier.

Interviewer: Ok! So maybe when you say it makes learning easier and teaching easier...

P6: Because you find sometimes... let me say we have from different diversity. Let me say for example we have a learner speaks Silozi, Shona...whatever. But with English we can all understand each other, as one from different diversities.

Interviewer: Alright madam we have come to the end of this interview, I would like to thank you very much for your time.

P6: Thank you!

Interviewer: Welcome!

P6: For the opportunity.