

**ACADEMIC WRITING IN ENGLISH: CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY
BACHELOR OF EDUCATION PRIMARY LEVEL STUDENTS AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA, KATIMA MULILO CAMPUS**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS**

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**BY
MOLLY MUELEZI MUTIMANI**

STUDENT NUMBER: 9106014

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MAIN SUPERVISOR: PROF. M. L. MOSTERT

CO-SUPERVISOR: PROF. R. F. ZIMBA

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the academic writing challenges experienced by Bachelor of Education undergraduate students in using English at the University of Namibia, Katima Mulilo Campus. The study focused on the following research questions: what challenges did students face in academic writing at this campus? What were the students' and lecturers' perceptions of the possible causes of these academic writing challenges; were there any differences in writing challenges faced according to gender and the students' year of study and what were the possible intervention strategies that could be used to improve students' academic writing skills? The study used mixed methods, explanatory and sequential designs. The participants comprised 40 first year, 40 second year and 33 third year students, as well as 20 lecturers of the 2013 academic year. Questionnaires, semi-structured, individual interviews and previously marked student essays were employed as data collection instruments. The data analysis included statistical analysis of the two questionnaires, a thematic analysis of students and lecturers' interview data and an integrative analysis that involved continuously checking back and forth between quantitative and qualitative findings. Although students were taught academic writing in a university core module, the findings of this study showed that they still faced various academic writing challenges. The data revealed that the academic writing challenges of students in the study were consequences of their linguistic and general literacy backgrounds, their attitudes toward academic writing and the privileging of middle-class literacy practices in Namibian higher education. To mitigate these challenges, this study

recommends the following strategies: the integration of academic literacies in the curricula of all disciplines, the promotion of multimodal teaching strategies and assessment, as well as collaboration between language lecturers and core course specialists. It also recommends intensive academic reading and writing workshops, as well as increased formative feedback.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

APA	American Psychological Association
AWU	Academic Writing Unit
B. Ed.	Bachelor of Education
BETD	Basic Education Teacher Diploma
CCE	Caprivi College of Education
CIAS	Curriculum Instructions and Assessment Studies
DELSU	Delta State University
Dr.	Doctor of Philosophy
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
ECS	English Communication and Study Skills
EFL	English Foreign Language
EFM	Educational Foundations and Management
ELHC	Education in Languages Humanities and Commerce
ENG	English
EPIE	Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education
ESL	English Second Language
GZU	Great Zimbabwe University
IT	Information and Technology
KM	Katima Mulilo
KMC	Katima Mulilo Campus

L2	Second language
LP	Lower Primary
MKO	More Knowledgeable Others
MLA	Modern Language Association
n.d.	Not dated or no year of publication indicated
SMS	Short Message Services
UCCB	University Central Consultancy Bureau
UK	United Kingdom
UNAM	University of Namibia
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my loving, late father, Mr. Mathews Simunja Molefe, who passed away in 1991 before enjoying the fruits of his surviving children. Daddy, you were great and your legacy is continuing to prosper. The dedication also goes to my children, Phindile, Alfea, Jack and Jane, and the entire family.

DECLARATIONS

I, Molly Muelezi Mutimani, declare hereby that this study is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work or part thereof, has not been submitted for a degree in any other institution of higher education.

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Molly Muelezi Mutimani

Date.....

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The background of the study

This study focuses on academic writing challenges that University of Namibia Bachelor of Education, primary level students face in using English for Academic Purposes. Academic writing in English at university level is technically different from writing at lower levels of education as the vocabulary; grammar skills and the way of organising ideas are different at the two levels (Feak & Swales, 2004). The linguistic structures used at university level are more complex than those used at lower levels of education.

When students are accepted at university into a first year programme, they tend to assume that they know how to write as many wrote well enough for high school purposes. However, post-secondary writing is typically different from what they have been doing. Students at university are confronted with a new and unfamiliar context of teaching and learning, a currency which they must acquire to succeed (Badenhorst, 2011). This is where they find that even the way they have been writing at high schools is different from the way they are expected to write at university. Those who are able to write well find that their path through academia is less burdensome and more enjoyable. While those who do not, find themselves limited, struggling on the margins and losing confidence in their ability to complete their programme requirements. On the other hand,

it is recognised that from the first year, students struggle with writing across the disciplines. Thus, they find writing assignments daunting and they often do not understand the writing requirements they are asked to embark on. Since writing is the main form of academic communication at university level, it is critical to student success and retention (Boyd & Fukazawa, 2008).

Although, academic writing at a university is a difficult task, it plays a critical role in socialising students into the academic discourse of subjects and disciplines (Gasper & Shepherd, 2009). It is a skill that can be learned and developed with practise. Furthermore, it is one of the foundations of academic engagement. The learning of academic writing skills can be done by reading in one's subject areas and developing awareness of how various types of texts are structured. During classes, students need to write to learn, take notes, study, think and process their ideas to integrate new ones. Moreover, students need to do writing tasks because this is how they are assessed. In order for students to succeed in academic writing and to immerse themselves in a language learning environment, they have to be equally competent in academic reading and writing.

According to a variety of literature reviewed in Chapter 2, a large number of interventions could be introduced by different institutions for students to help them cope with challenges. For example, a number of English modules were introduced at the

University of Namibia (UNAM), but the Academic Writing Blog (2011) showed that lecturers were complaining that the writing of their students remained below the required standards.

Internationally, numerous studies have been carried out and papers written in the field of academic writing and the challenges it presents to students. For example, a number of Great Zimbabwe University lecturers have expressed concern that some students who participated quite eloquently in tutorials often performed disappointingly below expectations in written essays. This means that effective academic writing is crucial to every university student, since much of the assessment that goes on at university is based not only on what information students present, but also on how that information is presented in writing (Dudu, Gonye, Mareva, & Subanda, 2012).

In South Africa, too, there are growing concerns about the high levels of poor student writing in schools and higher education. Recent media reports have shown that students who are entering higher education struggle to write effectively as a result of being under-prepared for studies at institutions of higher learning (Motlanthe, 2010). Furthermore, research shows that student writing poses specific challenges in English Second Language (ESL) teaching and learning contexts across the globe, and in particular, in higher education institutions (Lea & Street 1998; Gambell, 1991 as cited in Chokwe, 2011; Ivanic & Lea, 2006; Lea, 2004; Lillis & Scott, 2007; Munro, 2003). Lea

and Street (as cited in Chokwe, 2011) report that academics often complain of students who cannot write properly because the literacy standards in schools and higher education institutions are very low. Confirmation of this complaint is made by Munro (2003) who argues that dealing effectively with students' literacy difficulties and poor academic writing skills, is a challenge that universities across the world have to contend with.

1.2 Statement of the problem

In order to become members of the university community, students must learn to master the academic discourse as “Academic writing in English at advanced levels is a challenge and difficult even for most native speakers” (Fadda, 2012, p.123) and more so with second language students. Renandya and Richards (2002) assert that the importance of academic writing is much more crucial in university settings because students are increasingly required to conduct their studies in the English language and must adequately produce specific writing genres in the form of assignments, essays, summaries, critical reviews and research papers.

When students come to university, they are confronted with a new and unfamiliar context of teaching and learning through writing different tasks. As soon as students join the new cultural experience of university life, they are expected to adapt to new ways of

knowing, understanding, interpreting, as well as organising knowledge. Therefore, students' academic success is clearly linked to their ability to express their ideas through writing. However, instead of becoming successful in their studies many students struggle with academic writing.

Apart from the students concerns, in 2011 The Ministry of Education in conjunction with the University of Namibia Central Consultancy Bureau (UCCB), conducted a survey on the English language proficiency of teachers in order to establish whether the teachers were proficient in the language. According to Shipanga (2012), the results of the survey were not satisfactory at all because the majority of employers in the teaching sector were not satisfied with the level of written English of the teachers, a number of whom were university graduates.

Notwithstanding all this, there is little information on challenges faced by students with regard to their writing skills because limited research has been done in Namibia on this topic. Based on the preceding background, this study investigated the academic writing challenges faced by Bachelor of Education primary level students in using English at the University of Namibia, Katima Mulilo Campus.

1.3 Research questions

The following research questions guided the study.

13.1 What challenges do primary level Bachelor of Education students face in academic writing at the Katima Mulilo Campus (KMC), University of Namibia?

13.2 What are the students' and lecturers' perceptions of the possible causes of these academic writing challenges?

13.3 Are there any differences in writing challenges faced according to gender and the students' year of study?

13.4 What are the possible intervention strategies that can be used to improve students' academic writing skills?

1.4 Significance of the study

The researcher is of the opinion that the outcome of this study may contribute to research on student writing and provide a deeper understanding of factors that impact students' writing at university level in Namibia. Furthermore, the findings from the participants could assist the university to develop viable solutions for supporting not only primary education students but students from different faculties who have similar

challenges in the process of mastering academic writing skills that are essential in performing academic tasks.

In addition, the findings of the study will be useful to teachers, lecturers and tutors in ESL contexts because the study will contribute to insights into those aspects of writing in which students require support. The study is also reflexive as its results may be used to harness or sharpen the practices of both ESL practitioners and other stakeholders with some guidelines on teaching academic writing. Lastly, the findings of the study will also encourage and motivate students from other faculties to improve their overall performance and their competence in academic writing.

1.5 Delimitation

This study focused on the challenges of Bachelor of Education, Upper Primary level students registered at Katima Mulilo Campus in 2013.

1.6 Limitations of study

Since the researcher was conducting this study concurrently with her employment, time was a limiting factor. In addition to this, it was very difficult to conduct interviews with

full time students, as there was much reluctance from them when they knew that it was not for assessment purposes. However, the researcher convinced students to become involved by explaining the importance of their involvement in the study. Furthermore, 120 questionnaires were handed to students, 40 for each year level and it turned out that about seven administered questionnaires which were given to the third year students were returned incomplete to the researcher. As a result, those questionnaires were discarded. Moreover, interviews were conducted with 12 students, but two interview recordings were damaged before they were transcribed. Furthermore, 4 lecturers were interviewed and recorded, but, one of the 4 interview recordings was damaged too. Some of the students could not fully identify the reasons and causes of their limited skills in academic writing. Caution was exercised in attempting to generalize to other students and academic settings in Namibia or elsewhere due to the limited sample size; the selection of students from only one institution; and that only students from one programme was involved in the study.

1.7 Clarifications of concepts and terms

1.7.1 Academic discourse

According to Hyland (2009), “Academic discourse refers to the ways of thinking and using language which exist in the academy (unpaged).” This means discourse is not just language itself but it refers to the language use that represents a person’s existence at

university through textbooks, conference presentations, dissertations, lectures and research articles. Academic discourse is not something that comes easily to most students; rather, it is something that needs to be taught, modelled and recognised by both teachers and students.

1.7.2 Academia

Academia is the community of students and scholars engaged in higher education and research. In the context of this study, Bachelor of Education students and their lecturers are referred to as the academia.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses social constructivism as the theoretical framework for academic writing. In addition, it examines the literature on academic writing: its definition, importance to university students, its characteristics, structure and stages. It also looks at literature reports on possible challenges students may face in academic writing, and tries to address intervention strategies for these challenges. In each instance, the chapter outlines the relevance of the issues to the research questions of this study.

2.2 Theoretical framework

This study adopted the social constructivism theory as described by Lev Vygotsky. Constructivism argues that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences (Giesen, 2008). The theory takes the individuals' past experiences into consideration and creates new ones on which to build other experiences (Meltem, 2007). It also regards learning as an active process of knowledge construction and personal or social interpretation of the

world, with an emphasis on problem solving and understanding through authentic tasks and experiences (Christie, 2005). In typical constructivist sessions, when students work on a problem, the instructor intervenes only when required to guide students in the appropriate direction (Cole & Wertsch, 2002; Moore, 2004; Ozer, 2004).

Most traditional theories of teaching and learning concentrated on the principle of transmission of information to learners. This transmission was referred to as the banking concept of knowledge where learners were passively filled with the knowledge like empty vessels or written on blank slates; their role was that of passive receivers of ideas. Through this process students were expected to accept unquestioningly the words of the teachers and the texts that were produced by them in writing. However, recently, teachers at all levels of instruction have become more interested in how they can support their students in learning to write academically. This puts the view of the banking concept of knowledge in sharp contrast to the constructivism theory of learning (Meltem, 2007). Therefore, using the social constructivist concepts would be best in explaining how students can overcome academic writing challenges. The construction of academic writing is to be discussed by using the following interrelated principles: Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), scaffolding, more knowledgeable others (MKO) and social interaction.

The ZPD is described by Vygotsky (as cited in Brynes, 2005; Schwieter, 2010) as the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). It is also described as the distance between what learners can achieve by themselves and when assisted by others through scaffolding of interactions (Raymond, 2000; Warschauer, 2005). Similarly, Perry (2002) describes the ZPD as the difference between the problem solving that the child is capable of performing independently and the problem solving he or she is capable of performing with guidance or collaboration. The first level which is the zone of actual development mentioned in the definition above is described as what learners can do on their own without anyone’s help, whereas the potential development level refers to how the learners can perform a given task with the guidance or assistance of others (Lee, 2007). In other words, the ZPD is the gap between what students at university have already mastered in academic writing, especially from secondary schools, as well as after being taught this subject (actual development) and what they can still achieve when they have challenges with provided educational support (potential development). According to the principles of the ZPD, the role of the lecturers should be to provide assistance or support to students with tasks that are just beyond the students’ current capability. When students gradually develop their mastery, lecturers should start the process of ‘fading’, or the gradual removal of their temporary support (Benson, 2004).

Scaffolding is directly related to the ZPD in that it is the support mechanism that helps a student to perform a task within his or her ZPD successfully. In an academic context, this process is performed by a lecturer or a more competent peer who can give assistance to the student in her or his ZPD as necessary. This assistance tapers off as it becomes unnecessary, much like when a scaffold is removed from a building during construction (Culatta, 2011). In a classroom setting the lecturer is responsible for structuring interactions and developing instruction in small steps, based on the tasks the learners are capable of performing independently (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Olson & Pratt, 2000). Similarly, in Vygotsky's perspective, the ideal role of the lecturer or the MKO is that of providing scaffolding (collaborative dialogue) to assist students in tasks within their zones of proximal development, as well as providing support structures to reach that next stage or level (Raymond, 2000). When an adult or lecturer provides such support to a student, he or she will adjust the amount of help and guidance given during teaching sessions to fit the student's potential level of performance. However, more support is offered when a student is experiencing difficulty with a particular writing task, and less support will be provided as the student increasingly understands and masters the task (McPherson, 2013). For example, Abrahams, Carrasquillo and Kucer (2004) suggest that when more support is needed, much scaffolding is required, such as that the lecturer records texts that students dictate, as well as do choral writing together with them while they take turns. In addition, the lecturer could use guided writing, where students write the text under the lecturer's guidance or by pairing two learners to write a text together. When each student is able to write independently, more support is

withdrawn and only the smallest amount of support is needed from lecturers. Therefore, activities provided in scaffolding instruction should go beyond the level of what the learner can do on his or her own. It should be noted that the lecturer should first build interest and engage the student in active participation. The given tasks should be simplified by breaking them into smaller subtasks during the process of scaffolding. In addition, the most integral step in scaffolding is that the lecturer needs to keep the student focused while concentrating on the most important ideas of the assignment. The other important feature of scaffolding involves the teacher modelling possible ways of completing tasks, which the learner can then imitate and eventually internalise (Schwieter, 2010).

An important, self-explanatory concept of social constructivism is the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO). According to McPherson (2013), MKO's can be parents, adults, teachers, coaches, experts, professionals, other students, friends and even technology. Technology includes computers, cell phones and other gadgets. In addition, an MKO is simply anyone who has a better understanding or a higher ability level than the student, with respect to a particular task, process or concept. In the context of the study the MKO's are those with high ability levels to assist students with how to write at university. However, it should be noted that although Information Technology (IT) software can be very useful as the MKO to advance students' academic writing skills, it cannot replace the lecturer as the MKO. Particularly at universities, the lecturer (MKO) should not simply stand by and watch students explore and discover academic writing on

their own, but should guide them as they approach problems. Furthermore, they must encourage the students to work in groups, to think about issues and through questions. When students become independent writers who can regulate their own learning and solve their problems, the scaffolding provided is gradually withdrawn (Hartman, 2002; Van Der Stuyf, 2002).

The fourth concept is social interaction. Social constructivism recognises that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and is a shared, rather than an individual experience. In addition, within the Vygotskian concept of ZPD, social interaction is the basis for cognitive growth (Clark, D'Angelo, & Touchman, 2009). In an educational setting, human beings create meaning from an educational experience by learning. Furthermore, the communication that transpires in a social setting with more knowledgeable or proficient people (parents, teachers, peers, others) assists students or children in building an understanding of what they are learning. According to Brophy and Good (as cited in Cooperstein & Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004), "the constructivist process works best in social settings ever since students have the opportunity to compare and share their ideas with others as well as in attempting to resolve conflicting ideas" (p. 142). It is also suggested by De Guerrero and Villamil (2000) that in order for intellectual growth to occur, a certain degree of social interaction and collaboration must occur between the novice writer and expert, and must take place within the novice student's ZPD. Thus, for students to develop their thinking abilities in academic writing

and overcome challenges, they should interact with the MKO (Kim, 2001; Raymond, 2000).

The best example of writing pedagogy in the constructivist approach is how Delta State University (DELSU) develops students' academic writing by using different courses to master the writing skills. The different communication skills courses offered at this university are: ENG 111, ENG 104, ENG 211 and ENG 212. These courses are arranged in such a way that they begin from the lower levels and continue up to the time when students can write independently. However, according to Meltem (2007), the university starts by considering previous knowledge or foundational skills in language use acquired by students from preparatory schools, such as secondary schools, before joining the university. This is typically the constructivist approach which considers the past experiences of students in learning. Each course at DELSU has different writing activities offered to students until they reach the stage of going to the next level, namely the independent writing stage.

The first entry course (ENG 111) shapes students' paragraph writing and grammar skills. However, those students with high proficiency levels in English vocabulary go straight into the academic essay level course (ENG 104). In this course students are introduced to the writing of academic essay components which ought to be taught one by one, but in a gradual way that builds up towards a full essay. When students have mastered paragraphs and essay writing, they move to the next course (ENG 211) which is centred

more specifically on critical reading and writing where they are given a chance to read and discuss texts from different perspectives. In addition, students are taught how to approach ideas critically through discussions and writing in journals to express their reactions to the texts and views of their friends. This course is crucial at DELSU since it is a bridge to more independent academic writing where students should be assisted to approach their departmental courses more consciously. Furthermore, the course teaches students to read from various sources while conducting research, as well as to formulate their findings accurately. Once students have mastered all the skills in the above courses, the last course (ENG 2012) introduces them to how they should write a research report. Although all other courses reflect the social constructivist approach, this particular course reflects it more emphatically (Meltem, 2007). The previous knowledge and skills that the students have gained from all the preceding courses are utilised in this course as they engage more into scaffolding activities. Students engage themselves with the assistance of supervisors by beginning with the proposal writing in their different fields of study before submitting. Since students already know how to write various academic texts, they follow the steps applied in the process of report writing. The steps start with choosing and narrowing down a topic, doing research and gathering relevant sources. All the steps are carried out with considerable patience and care as students need much guidance and assistance from the MKO. The guidance that students receive is what Giridharan and Robson (2011) mention: they would learn more fluently by writing often, while receiving frequent feedback from instructors and peers, and revising their work; this is referred to as a 'tutee apprenticeship' by Warschauer (2008).

Collaboration between students and their supervisors for master's and doctoral degree theses is similar to what is taking place in the report writing course at DELSU. Students and supervisors do always engage in intensive guidance, assessment and evaluation by gradually giving comments and feedback to whatever has been submitted for corrections. The gradual guidance, feedback and corrections given to students are what is called 'scaffolding', which is provided until they reach the actual development. Another good example of scaffolding is how a learner driver learns to drive a car. Although it is not in the context of writing, a person who is learning to drive does not just start driving the car without learning and undergoing many challenges before the driver's license is issued to that person. Learning to drive is hard, but meaningful learning takes sustained effort, and involves going outside one's comfort zone until one achieves the desired level of professional driving. To do this, one needs to take the initiative and become actively involved in one's learning, with the help of a parent or instructor. All the people that drive cars independently began their driving from the passenger seat by observing all kinds of assistance and skills needed (scaffolding) from the professional driver (MKO). The steps which professional drivers (MKO) take to teach learner drivers are similar to the steps lecturers should take to teach students academic writing. Once the learner drivers have mastered the skill of driving and obtained their drivers' licenses, they are left alone to drive independently. Lastly, just as builders put scaffolding around a building while it is being built, scaffolding can also be used to support academic students in their written language. However, once they have

mastered the skills of academic writing, they should be able to write academic texts independently (Oliver, 2005).

2.3 A critical assessment of literature on academic writing

Academic writing at university should be acquired by both new and senior students in order to succeed in their studies. Without this type of writing students would not be distinguished as academics (Kelley, 2008). Therefore, those students who are able to write well at university find that their path through academia is less burdensome and more enjoyable. While those students who do not manage to write academically find themselves limited, struggling on the margins and losing confidence in their ability to complete their programme requirements. Given the above background, this section will discuss academic writing, its importance; characteristics; structure and stages, as well as challenges students are facing in academic writing. It will also discuss possible causes and ways of overcoming these challenges.

2.3.1 What is academic writing?

Academic writing is any writing given to fulfill a requirement in an academic setting, such as a college or university. It is also used for publications that are read by teachers and researchers or presented at conferences. Additionally, it is a kind of writing which

has its own set of rules and practices. These rules and practices may be organised around a formal order or structure in which to present ideas, which should be supported by author citations in the literature. It is the style of writing the writer is expected to use for academic work which is likely to be different from other styles one uses every day. This type of writing could be seen as part of students' academic training as they should learn how to write in a more formal style (Altakhaineh, 2010; Moore & Murray, 2006; Nampala, 2010). Morley-Warner (2009) defines academic writing in more detail as a formal way to write a well-structured paper by using more formal vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure. In addition, references from academic literature to support the points made by writers are used. Ultimately, it is a serious and professional way to communicate with academic peers and university teaching staff.

2.3.2 The importance of academic writing

Academic writing plays a central role in the field of higher education because a major part of a student's academic life is spent on writing academic papers (Fujii & Fukao, 2001; Zhu, 2004). It is the primary form of communication at university and plays a role both in students' understanding of course content and consequently in the assessment of student knowledge that both contribute significantly to good grades and degrees. According to Bromley (2013), students practise developing academic arguments and become more articulate about their own knowledge of writing. Unlike other forms of

writing such as journalistic or creative writing, academic writing is an essential requirement where university students develop the proper tone, technique and style for their academic assignments. Its importance extends to teaching the student how to think critically and objectively while clearly conveying complex ideas in a well-structured, concise format (Altiwal, 2012). Therefore, it is very important to clearly state to students the requirements of how to write well academically and why they are writing academic texts at the university or college (Leibowitz, 2000; Mbirimi, 2012).

Furthermore, it is important in the development and enhancement of various qualities in university students, which enables the individual to lead a successful life after the completion of studies and also in their professional careers (John, 2010; Leibowitz, 2000). For example, as the teachers' low proficiency in English, and particularly in writing, was mentioned earlier in Chapter 1, when teacher-education students complete their studies, they would want to use the skills they have acquired to prepare the learners that they are going to teach to become successful writers. Moreover, when students write theses or any academic texts, they are not just writing for grades but they learn more and become more knowledgeable in the subject under study (Mbirimi, 2012).

2.3.3 Characteristics of academic writing

Academic English, like any writing, has its own conventions or style. It is the type of writing that gives factual information on a given subject and does not intend to entertain the reader (Altakhaineh, 2010). Similarly, the main purpose of writing academic texts is to inform, find out, influence, explore and describe (English for Academic Purposes Guide, 2013). Thus characteristics, such as objectivity, tentativeness, accuracy, referencing and formality, should be adhered to when writing texts.

Objectivity in academic writing means the writer should try not to let his or her personality intrude too much into the writing in order to allow the facts and evidence to speak for themselves. To avoid that, third person personal pronouns, such as *she*, *he*, *it*, *they* and the passive voice may be used as well. The first and second person personal pronouns, such as *I*, *me*, *my*, *we*, *us*, *our* and *you* should be avoided in academic writing. The writer should put the object, not the person, at the start of the sentence. Instead of writing ‘I used a questionnaire ...’ the writer may write ‘A questionnaire was used.... In grammatical terms, it means the writer uses the passive voice rather than the active voice (Mirza, n.d).

On the other hand, tentativeness as a characteristic of academic writing means that the academic writer should be cautious about making very definite or categorical statements or arriving at conclusions too hastily.

Accuracy is of paramount importance in academic writing because the writer must have high standards of correct grammar, sentence structure, word choice, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation to avoid mistakes that generally cause confusion (Altakhaineh, 2010). The writer should also give precise evidence for facts which are presented, and carefully distinguish them from opinions. Furthermore, academic writing should be written according to different referencing styles and formatting which the particular university adopts for use. There are several referencing systems that could be used by students at a university. The following are examples of referencing systems which are widely used at different institutions: American Psychological Association (APA), Chicago, Harvard, Modern Language Association (MLA) and Oxford. For instance, the University of Namibia adopted The APA referencing system (Prospectus for General regulations, 2014). All the mentioned referencing systems follow their own in-text and post-text referencing conventions that should be strictly followed by both students and lecturers of any particular university when quoting directly or by paraphrasing text. Although there are many different systems, students should maintain the same system throughout an individual piece of writing by not changing from one system to another in the same text. Once students have found ideas in the sources, they should always acknowledge them through citation and referencing. The acknowledgements of other writers' ideas that students cite or quote need to appear twice in the students' academic text. Firstly, students' sources should be cited or quoted in the text and secondly, a full reference list of those sources should be provided at the end of the text. A reference list should always be written on a separate page at the end of every piece of academic writing or after the

conclusion (Cornwell & Robertson, 2011; Publication Manual of American Psychological Association, 2001). The sources from where students can take ideas include books, journals, the internet, newspapers, interviews or class notes.

Formality is also one of the characteristics of academic writing. Academic writing is normally written in a formal style which makes it different from other types of writing, like ordinary essays, letters, emails or story writing. There is no place for slang or colloquial language (Davies, 2008). Furthermore, full forms of words are preferred to short forms. For example, the following contractions are not to be used: *can't* for *cannot*, *don't* for *do not*, and the like.

2.3.4 The structure of academic writing

Academic writing has its own distinct organisation which differs from that of non-academic texts. It is normally divided into three parts, namely an introduction, body and conclusion. The introduction is the opening paragraph where the writer should introduce the topic and indicate the particular focus in the essay (Awelu, 2011). In addition, this is where the writer has a chance to create the first impression and tell the readers what the paper is about. Furthermore, it is the key part in which the writer gives an outline of the essay and sets the scene for the main body, as well as defines important concepts and terms (English for Academic Purposes Guide, 2013; Greetham, 2001; Jones, 2015; Whitaker, 2009).

The second part is the body which is the heart of an essay. This part is normally divided into developmental paragraphs that should flow smoothly from one to the next. These paragraphs should support the essay topic introduced in the opening paragraph. Additionally, each body paragraph begins with a topic sentence which is an effective link to the preceding paragraph, with logical reasoning and evidence. The minor supporting ideas are linked within the paragraphs in a smooth manner. Furthermore, the writer should use evidence and examples to develop argument (Jones, 2015; Whitaker, 2009).

The conclusion is the last part which summarises the main parts of the text by being careful not to repeat exactly what has been written before. It presents the results of the investigation which are the essay findings, and provides a solution to the problem that has been set; it also suggests further areas of investigation (Anderson & Poole, 2001; Awelu, 2014).

2.3.5 Stages of academic writing

Writing can be seen as a process in which an essay develops and changes from first ideas to a finished product. The process approach is widely accepted and utilised because it allows students to understand the steps involved in writing, and it recognises that what learners bring to the writing classroom contributes to the development of their

writing skills (Badger & White, 2000). This means university students should not just start writing a final product and hand in, but they should follow process writing because good writing does not just happen like magic but takes hard work and much practise.

When using the process writing approach, teachers should adopt the role of assistant or guide and work closely with students to encourage them by offering helpful feedback and suggestions at all of the stages. Process writing consists of stages, such as pre-writing, planning, drafting, revising, editing and proofreading, which are going to be discussed below.

The pre-writing stage is everything the writer does before beginning to draft the paper. It involves brainstorming of ideas to include in the text. During the brainstorming the writer should mainly understand the essay topic by looking over an assignment handout, choose and narrow the topic, and assess the audience and the purpose of writing the text. This would be followed by planning, where the writer should search for sources that could add to own ideas and do a scratch outline. Most importantly the writer can discuss the topic with classmates for better understanding in the two stages before he or she starts to work individually on the drafts. The next stage is writing several drafts from the scratch outline (planning) and putting in additional thoughts and details that have not emerged during the preceding stages. Students or writers are required to show multiple drafts of a work for revision. During this stage writers do not yet worry about grammar,

punctuation or spelling in the drafts. Instead, they make it their goal to state the ideas clearly, and develop the content of their essays with many specific details. After having written several drafts, the revising stage follows where the main focus is on revising content, sentences and pre-editing. However, the correction of spelling and punctuation is not of central importance at the early stages of revising, but students may produce many drafts with much crossing out of sentences and moving around of paragraphs. Most importantly, during this stage writers can give their drafts to the MKO for revision and feedback. The researcher compares revising with the cleaning of a house where one gets rid of all the junk and puts things in the right order. It is advisable that during this stage of revising the writer should read the drafts aloud, since hearing how one's writing sounds helps to pick up problems with meaning, as well as with style (Awelu, 2014; Langan, 2014; Yan, 2005).

The editing stage follows after several drafts by checking the grammar, punctuation, capitalisation, sentence structure, word usage and spelling. This stage is done carefully because the writer is preparing to hand in the text. Therefore, editing should be done first by the writers themselves and later they should request the service of a professional editor to edit the work carefully before handing it in for assessment. After revising and editing the text, the preparation of the final draft has to be done by rewriting or retyping it. This is followed by fine tuning and making small adjustments for optimal performance or effectiveness. This is similar to a radio which is not on the

right band frequency and the user has to fine-tune it for clear reception, otherwise, there is nothing that makes sense.

Finally, after undergoing all the stages and the text is ready, students work on final checking which is proofreading by adding some finishing touches such as aesthetically polishing the text to perfection. This stage comprises that one extra step the writer needs after revising and editing in order to locate any small mistakes previously missed. Be it some urgent last minute content change or some spelling and punctuation that have escaped the writer's attention, this is the time to brush away those invisible blemishes before writing or printing out the final copy for submission (Anderson & Poole, 2001; Awelu, 2014; Davies, 2008; Greetham, 2001).

2.3.6 Academic writing challenges

Written work is described as one of the major causes of concern for students at university (Jordan, 2012), and considerable research has been done to investigate why students face academic writing challenges (Tardy, 2010). Academic writing is a difficult skill to be learnt or taught due to the fact that "it is not a simple cognitive activity; rather it is believed to be a complex mental production which requires careful thought, discipline and concentration" (Grami, 2010, p. 9).

Academic writing challenges for students begin as soon as they enter the university. Lebowitz (2000) mentions that one of the challenges faced by students is academic writing which is different from the non-academic discourse they used in secondary schooling. So, students tend to employ some of the elements of non-academic writing discourse when they write at university. As a result, these students receive comments from lecturers that such discourses are unacceptable in academia (Mbirimi, 2012). Students thus find it difficult to adapt to academic literacy conventions which involve ways of thinking, reading, speaking and writing that are dominant in the academic setting (Neeley, 2005). Students are taught in class about all the ways mentioned but they find it difficult to employ them. However, it should be noted that such primary discourse from secondary schooling is valuable to draw upon when supporting students' writing development at university.

When students are given essay assignments to write, they find it difficult to generate ideas about what they can write. According to Al Murshidi (2014), this hinders them from moving on in their writing; they thus wait until submission dates are near.

Students also face the challenge of a lack of resources and the blame is pointed at the libraries which do not have adequate literature to supplement what they are writing. In addition, there is limited access to internet connectivity for students to check sources from the internet (Academic Writing Blog, 2011).

Referencing, which was mentioned earlier as an important part of academic writing, is another big challenge for students. Both in-text citation and listing references are found to be quite challenging. With in-text citation, students are still using their secondary school experiences of drawing heavily from sources without acknowledging authors. Their quotes follow one another without the student's voice. Furthermore, they cannot cite or quote correctly from books, the internet, newspapers and journal articles (Atta-Obeng & Lamptey, 2013). On the other hand, writing a reference list of the cited sources appears to be rather difficult for students. Failure to reference in students' written work at university results in plagiarism which is a very serious form of academic dishonesty (Bowker, 2007). Apart from the in-text citation and reference list, students also face many problems when paraphrasing. For example, students are incapable of using their own words or re-formatting sentences based on their own critical thinking, as well as re-organising sentences to be more effective academically. It is important that students practise paraphrasing of sources and acknowledging them appropriately to avoid academic theft, either accidentally or on purpose (Abdulkareem, 2013; Al Badi, 2015; Alamin & Amin, 2012; Bowker, 2007; Cornwell & Robertson, 2011; Deakin University, 2015; Dudu et al., 2012; Keck, 2006; Pecorari, 2003).

The world of grammar is also quite challenging to students because it has a variety of rules. Students' academic papers are usually fraught with mechanical weaknesses, especially in areas like paragraphing, punctuations, word class and sentence construction. According to Pineteh (2012), students' sentences are often shortened and

complicated because they still grapple with grammatical aspects, such as subject-verb agreement, tenses, spelling and how to join sentences to make a coherent paragraph. These weaknesses recur because students misconstrue academic writing as a product and not a process, meaning they do not revise and edit their texts after writing (Al Fadda, 2012). Yagoda (2006, p. 13) lists the “seven deadly sins of student writers,” highlighting such offenses as dangling modifiers, omitted commas, gratuitous commas, improper use of semicolons, vagueness and other issues of style and grammar usage.

Another common challenge mentioned by Meltem (2007) is too much description and not enough analysis. This means students in general tend to outline rather than analyse in their writing. It is usually not enough for one to simply outline or list what has been read with no further explanation. Since they just list or give an outline in their written texts, it becomes difficult for students to evaluate the ideas, compare them with those of other writers and examine issues and perspectives critically.

Furthermore, universities have moved away from hand-written, academic assignments to typed ones. There have been many challenges when it comes to the typing of assignments, particularly of academic essays, because students lack computer skills and some do not have computers on which to type their work. Computers which are provided by the university are not adequate in number for all registered students (Academic Writing Blog, 2011).

Another academic writing challenge faced by students is the process writing which seems to be taught for the first time to students at university. Traditionally, writing has been conducted and viewed as a solitary activity, focusing primarily on the final product and emphasising sentence-level correctness (Crème, & Lea, 2008). For instance, a normal practice at secondary schools is that a teacher gives homework today and expects students to submit it the following day, which does not reflect the process approach at all because if practised, it would not be efficient to complete within such a limited time (Neville, as cited in Mbirimi, 2012). Since students fail to produce academically crafted work, they just produce one draft in the last minute and submit it for assessment with the aim of beating the submission deadlines. For example, the Great Zimbabwe University (GZU) students themselves revealed in one of the research studies that they did not take writing as a process, since the majority said that they did not plan their work, never wrote more than one draft and never edited their work. However, those students who attempted to use process writing found it difficult at the stages of planning and drafting (Barker, 2000; Dudu et al., 2012; Leibowitz, 2000; Moore & Murray, 2006; Mutwarasibo, 2011; Shulman, 2005). Nowadays, an effective and relevant writing instruction is one which enables students to see writing as “a complex process composed of many different kinds of activities that eventually result in that product” (Nightingale, 2000, p.135).

Another challenge is that some students find it difficult to adopt the structure of an academic essay. They cannot divide their written academic essay assignments into introduction, body and conclusion with clear paragraphs. Instead they just continue writing in a non-academic writing style where the main components are not demarcated by the writer and just traced by the reader or marker (Mutwarasibo, 2011). Lastly, apart from dividing the texts into the three major divisions of the typical academic essay, students find it challenging to shape the introduction to their essays, as well as the body and conclusion. For example, some students cannot distinguish what to write in the conclusion and they still bring in new ideas there.

2.3.7 Causes of academic writing challenges

Several studies have revealed many of the root causes in academic writing that challenge university students, many of which are going to be discussed underneath. The under-preparedness of English Second Language (ESL) students which emanates from secondary schooling is a major cause of academic writing challenges at university (Chokwe, 2011). Secondary schools play a critical role in developing students' reading and writing skills before they join university, yet the higher education sector is inundated with students who are academically under-prepared. The blame for students' under-preparedness in writing at university is levelled at the poor secondary schooling which did not address writing adequately (Chokwe, 2011). The under-preparedness of

students could also be caused by the low English language proficiency of teachers, particularly in writing, that does not satisfy the majority of employers in the teaching sector (Dudu et al., 2012; Shipanga, 2012).

The mentioned cause of under-preparedness affects students' transition from secondary school to tertiary institutions and it takes them too long to adapt to what is happening at university, particularly how to write academically (Fernsten & Reda, 2011). The way students interpret essay topics and express their thoughts in academic writing shows clearly that they are not yet university students. Students are also affected by insufficient emotional readiness and intellectual maturity that often enable university students to take control of their own learning processes. These deficiencies severely affect the way they approach the whole learning experience and the way they handle academic tasks, including academic writing (Pineteh, 2012). For this reason, instead of students demonstrating some higher-order thinking skills, the quality of their writing is in sharp contrast to what is expected of university students.

Cliff and Hanslo (2009) also observe that “students from poor schooling backgrounds are often characterized by weak academic performance which is likely to continue in higher education” (p. 267). Similarly, Angelil-Carter (2000) mentions that “Students are used to the secondary school system where chunks of language are learnt and reproduced word for word” (p. 162) without acknowledging the sources. University

students, particularly those in the first year, believe that reproducing the chunks of sentences and words from a text they have mastered when learning to write in academic context is sufficient. This, as Angelil-Carter (2000) explains, is due to the fact that they have been taught to reproduce material without using it to support their own ideas. Reproducing ideas could also come from not enough practising essay writing activities in secondary schools. For example, the results of one study have shown that “many students are no longer required to write essays at secondary schools and that could be why students have problems with academic writing” (Wingate, 2006, p. 458).

Another contributor to academic writing challenges could be the socio-economic status of some of the students that hinders them to excel in high school. Some of the university students come from poor educational backgrounds where they have had no access to libraries. On the other hand, some of the students’ parents were not fully involved in their children’s education in high schools due to their being illiterate. Since some parents are illiterate they do not understand the work that is brought by their children from schools and thus they cannot assist them (Chokwe, 2011). Furthermore, most of the parents are workers who leave home early in the morning and only return late, tired. As a result, they have no time to assist their own children with school work. Some of the uneducated parents appear not to see the importance of buying books and newspapers for their children to read. Consequently, because of this kind of upbringing, students persist in the same way, even at university (Bharuthram & McKenna, 2006; Dison &

Granville, 2009; Leibowitz, 2000; Mbirimi, 2012; Mpepo, 2009; Schwartz, 2004; Tshotsho, 2012).

Lecturers' qualifications and commitment at university also cause academic writing challenges. There are still instances where members of the teaching staff are not trained to teach the subjects they are teaching (Chokwe, 2011). Several researchers, furthermore, argue that the problem of student writing is also exacerbated by members of the teaching staff who are at times under-qualified, underprepared and inefficient (Moutlana, 2007; Niven, 2005). For instance, "lecturers or tutors may be highly qualified in a specific subject but may not have been trained to teach the course, or a lecturer or tutor may be required to teach a course such, as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) which teaches students about academic writing that was never part of their training" (Engstrom, 2008, p. 17). Such lecturers go to class not adequately prepared and leave students unclear of what they have been teaching. Therefore, if students do not perform well in academic texts, especially in the education field, "most of the blame is put on students" and none on the teachers (Luna, 2002, p. 602).

Furthermore, academic writing is a subject that needs the expertise of all university lecturers, regardless of which subjects they are teaching. However, this is not the case because a further difficulty, and cause of challenges, is that students have been turned down when requesting assistance from lecturers and tutors who are not teaching

academic writing. When they go for assistance, they are told they have already been taught the conventions of academic writing in their EAP courses. Using lecturers without the right qualifications as a strategy to cut the cost of investing in these courses has had visibly negative effects on the way the courses are taught and assessed (Angelil-Carter, 2000; Pineteh, 2012).

Another cause of academic writing challenges is the issue of too large classes in the English for Academic Purposes courses. According to Pineteh (2012), lecturers who are teaching this subject complain about large class sizes, while students blame the lack of lecturers' attention to students' academic writing. Large classes are very difficult, particularly for giving effective feedback to students' written assignments. If classes are too large, there is no possibility that lecturers can pay much attention to students in this area, because "regular feedback through one-on-one interaction between students and lecturers could be impossible and the focus would only be on pass rates" (Bailey, 2008, p. 2).

Low proficiency in the target language or English medium is also causing some academic writing challenges. Students have limited opportunities outside the classroom to practise the target language, which is not their mother tongue, and this appears to be one of the major reasons for their weak academic writing (Javid & Umer, 2014). Students struggle to cope with institutional literacy expectations because of their low proficiency in the language of instruction (Pineteh, 2012). Students are expected to think

and write through using middle class literacy practices which is challenging because of a weak foundation in learning English. Thus, when students do not use the medium of instruction effectively, they may not produce effective, academically written texts. Gentil (2005) who reports that carrying out complicated research in a second language exacerbated the issue of expertise since students felt uncertain about their Second Language (L2) research and writing skills. For example, one study's findings revealed that a lack of support from the society and family in terms of providing English Foreign Language (EFL) learners with sufficient opportunities to practise the target language caused a major handicap in learning, including learning writing skills. Therefore, students should ideally master the language of instruction before they join the university (Archer, 2010; Bacha, 2002; Khan, 2011; Leibowitz, 2000; Moyo cited in Mpepo, 2009; Tahaineh, 2010).

The lack of practising writing skills is also causing academic writing challenges for students. Lecturers should not just teach students the theoretical part of writing and not give them the opportunity to practise in class. Furthermore, students are not practising academic writing after classes because of a lack of academic writing units at some of the institutions of higher learning. This puts students in an awkward situation because there is nowhere that they can practise writing; they just depend on what is done during classes, which is not enough. On the contrary, lecturers claim they fail to do so because of the large classes which they are teaching (Chokwe, 2011; Pineteh, 2012).

Another key factor that is currently contributing to the writing challenges of students is the use of social media in higher education. The increasing access to the writing genre of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Short Messaging Services (SMS) and Blogging, has impacted the quality of student writing in this context. Several research studies reveal that students often struggle to switch from the informal, social media writing style that they now use often to the more restricted and conservative, formal, academic style when they write academic papers. This is a result of spending endless hours on Facebook and Twitter, from where they unconsciously transfer the instant messaging style to academic writing (Pineteh, 2012; Williams, 2008).

The duration of courses that teach academic writing to students at university also causes some problems. It is impossible to remedy the main weaknesses of twelve years of formal education by teaching EAP in one term or semester at university. This is considered not enough, especially for ESL students. It cannot be an exaggeration to state that the contact period between the lecturers and students in academic writing at university is too short to make a major impact on the students' language competence. It is also an unrealistic expectation to expect lecturers who are in most cases not trained language teachers, to remedy the problems the students bring to the university in a short period of time (Dudu et al., 2012).

Another factor that causes academic writing challenges could be inadequate reading input and comprehension skills. According to Yagoda (2006), reading extensively is the only way to get a deep-seated understanding of how to use punctuation, correct spelling, construct complex sentences and grasp the meanings of words that may be used in their own writing. Students face difficulties in writing because by not reading extensively at university, they cannot acquire the skills mentioned by Yagoda. However, those students, who read much, may become skilled writers because they benefit from what they have read more than those who do not read much.

Can (2009) claims that conflicting feedback provided by instructors from different departments in an institution also leads to a lack of students' confidence in their writing skills. Constructive feedback is not given to students, especially after lecturers have returned their essays from marking. Some lecturers find it a waste of valuable time to provide feedback, especially in large classes (Archer, 2007). If students are not shown their weaknesses and strengths in what they are writing, it causes a great deal of repetition of the same mistakes in other given tasks.

2.3.8 Intervention strategies to address the academic writing challenges of students

This section presents the intervention strategies to mitigate the academic writing challenges of university students. The main purpose of the intervention strategies is to ensure that students are provided with standards that can help educators to mitigate their writing challenges. The following strategies will be discussed.

Collaboration between universities and high schools on the issue of writing is highly significant to address the writing challenges. This is so because there is little synergy between what happens in high schools and tertiary education. According to Chokwe (2013), the high school curriculum contributes very little in preparing learners regarding the differences between writing in the two institutional phases. If students cannot gain background knowledge about academic writing from high school, the problem of students' writing difficulties will be perpetuated. The gap between the two important phases should be addressed so that ESL students from high schools can be better equipped for the writing demands in higher education. The high schools should not only focus more attention on grammar in teaching language, but also on students' writing skills. Therefore, more attention should be on writing longer texts where students are exposed to argumentation and other skills they will need in tertiary education (Chokwe, 2013).

Furthermore, all academic lecturers or tutors at university should see themselves as active participants in the process of academic writing by making sure that they are fully equipped and trained to help students with their writing difficulties. The important task of developing students' writing skills should not be left to lecturers of communication skills alone. All other lecturers should draw their students' attention to such writing challenges so that the students may improve and produce better pieces of writing (Dudu et al., 2012). In addition, instead of blaming students' academic writing weaknesses on lecturers responsible for academic writing, these core discipline lecturers should create avenues for those lecturers to embed literacy practices within disciplinary curricula (Jacobs, 2007). In a nutshell, those who are not teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) are expected to integrate academic writing increasingly into their courses as part of the general trend towards students' active teaching. Academic writing should not be seen as remedial, but rather as an integral, on-going part of all academic disciplines learnt by all students (Dysthe, 2001; Elton, 2010; Evison & Mitchell, 2006; Hawkins, 2005; Jacobs, 2005; Jackson et al., 2006). However, "the foundation of academic writing should be first laid by language specialists in teaching conventions of academic writing and be continued to be taught by discipline specialists so that students can be apprenticed and acculturated into the discourse communities they are entering" (Jurecic, 2006, p.6). The researcher concurs with this point because academic reading and writing in the context of any university can develop more easily if embedded in core subjects.

Research has shown that problems of students' writing cannot be discussed in isolation from reading because the two complement each other (Munro, 2003; Rose, 2004). This means for learners to acquire the necessary language proficiency and become better writers, they have to master reading from an early age. According to Chokwe (2013), in order to have students who are adequately prepared for higher education in terms of academic writing, the whole schooling system from early childhood development to high school should be infused with systematic reading and writing activities; students will thus have a smooth, synergistic transition to tertiary education. All university lecturers should attempt to re-ignite the culture of reading in students through exposure to different academic and non-academic texts. Reading, such as books, journals and website sources which are more accessible to learners, could be relied on to enrich their academic vocabulary with academic words and expressions (Gordon, 2008). Other scholars, like Olness (2005, p. 9), also argue that appropriate reading material could play an essential role in improving learner's writing. The writer assumes that when inexperienced writers are engaged in reading, they are highly likely to transfer the rich experiences obtained from reading to their own writing. In other words, when students read a great deal, they will be "familiar with the different writing styles, the structure, and other elements of various genres" (Al Murshidi, 2014, p. 59). Similarly, Krashen (as cited in Al Badi, 2015), believes that reading helps students acquire language skills unconsciously because they can become adequate readers, acquire a large vocabulary, develop the ability to understand and use complex grammatical constructions, develop a good writing style, as well as become good spellers. In addition, through reading,

students will be motivated to increase their writing dramatically, and they should be given the choice to read what interests them (Al Murshidi, 2014; Liao & Wong, 2008).

On a longer term basis, students should be oriented to take ownership of their own learning process by ensuring that they prepare adequately for academic tasks and understand the role of academic writing in their success. Taking ownership of the writing process can help students to understand that effective academic writing is a process which requires effort and commitment. However, in order for students to take this leadership role, they have to be mentored by lecturers, since their levels of cognitive development are still low (Pineteh, 2012).

Another strategy that can be implemented in the classroom by instructors to surmount students' academic writing difficulties is for students to work together in groups on their completed written tasks. Students can be requested to revise each other's essays and report to the class what they have found as persistent writing difficulties for their peers. Such reflective exercises are meant to help students make their ideas explicit, defend their standpoint, learn more about themselves, understand the work of writing better and gain greater confidence while negotiating the variety of literacies required in academia and beyond (Fernsten & Reda, 2011; Muswarabiso, 2011).

Similarly, Alamin and Amin (2012) suggest that instructors can distribute samples of excellent assignments written by other students and conduct guided discussion with the

students in order to assist them in developing critical thinking abilities, as well as how to transfer another's work into their own. In this setup, students come together at regular intervals, if possible, supported by an experienced writer or facilitator (MKO). When these student writers come together, they will support each other in a particular piece of work, such as the one mentioned earlier, and after reading each other's texts they may attempt to discuss issues that hinder them to write effectively. During this period such groups need to be informal so that they can pass pieces of writing to each other periodically for comments (Leibowitz, 2000).

Additionally, in most universities writing is developed through the communication skills courses offered at that particular institution and is normally offered in the first semester of the first year of study for each student entering the university. Consequently, academic writing challenges, especially for underprepared students, cannot be solved overnight or in one semester but only through conscious, consistent and persistent practise over time. Some researchers argue that it would be effective if these communication skills courses could be offered at least for two semesters, because one semester tends to leave the students without mastering academic writing skills. This is so because after being taught in the first semester of the students' first year, the majority of students in all the different year levels still find it challenging to reference their academic written texts, especially quoting, paraphrasing and summarising from different sources (Dudu et al., 2012; Holmes, 2004).

Another strategy which is effective in solving writing problems could be practising writing through scaffolding instruction under the guidance of instructors or lecturers (MKO). The MKO needs to design many and varied writing exercises which can then, closely follow the stages of the academic writing process. The MKO should provide students with assistance whenever needed, as well as assess their final drafts and provide feedback. The role of the lecturers or instructors in the writing process should be to facilitate, whereas the solution to students' academic writing problems should mainly come from themselves under the MKO's guidance (Mutwarasibo, 2011). Through this process, writers should ask themselves many questions that may lead them to success.

Some researchers support the use of teacher-led collaborative modelling in teaching writing. "Teacher-led collaborative modelling is a type of scaffold instruction in which the teacher and learners compose and edit an academic text in a process that involves negotiation and shared responsibility" (Wette, 2014, p. 1). This type of modelling would also be helpful, especially for ESL students who benefit from oral rehearsal of ideas and sentences before composing (Gibbons, 2002). There are many instructors that have used modelling in their instruction to assist students. For example, some instructors, such as, Alan, Bode, Henderson, Hirst and Kocatepe (2004) report that they used modelling as a teaching and learning strategy in writing, and that students responded well. In the same vein, Dison and Granville (2009) recommend that modelling is a teaching tool, as well as effective in giving feedback. In academic writing, students can use examples of past essays for revision in class by pointing out mistakes and explaining the required

standards. Modelling gives a prominent role to the teacher of writing beyond the transmission of practical skills, such as providing students with basic metalinguistic vocabulary and routines, so that they can talk about writing. In addition, the teacher needs to present many models and guided examples of how to look at writing, assess the strong and weak points, look for better alternatives and recognise the language structures and vocabulary that go with specific genres and tasks. All these insights and routines should be incorporated gradually into ongoing, student interactions while they are writing, and thus become part of their active writing over time (Grabe & Kaplan cited in Oliver, 2005; Kalikhoka, Strauss, & Smedley, 2009).

Although students are only concerned about the grades after receiving their assignments from marking, several researchers suggest the use of effective feedback in academic writing pedagogy to prevent challenges to occur. Students, especially the ESL, should be shown their strengths and weaknesses in order for them to improve in their future work (Chokwe, 2011). However, the same writer suggests that ESL teachers should not just list the weaknesses but they need to make explicit the purposes of their feedback so that students can know how to handle that feedback and use it to their benefit. Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) suggest that many English, writing teachers should use a one-on-one strategy in corrective feedback to provide and generate the opportunity for clarification and notification to reveal students' mistakes. While lecturers are giving feedback, Bailey

(2009) also suggests that the feedback given to students should be free of jargon for them to understand clearly.

Furthermore, Coffin et al. (2003) also state that providing feedback on learners' writing is a key pedagogical practice in higher education. The researcher concurs because using feedback as an intervention can also be the greatest communicator of all found weaknesses. When instructors give feedback to students, it may assist them in monitoring their own progress and identifying specific language areas that need to be improved (Hedge, 2000). Furthermore, Weaver (2006) also argues that tutors should provide appropriate guidance and motivation during feedback rather than diagnose problems and justify the marks given.

Since searching for useful references is a fundamental step in academic writing, guiding students to identify the relevant sources and how to find them should be considered of paramount importance to teachers. This should be one of the lecturers' priorities attained by specifying part of the course to train students how to find references and cooperate with the librarian who could help them to develop their skills to find sources electronically (Brosig & Kas, 2008). The same writers add that one factor of success is the ability of students to locate appropriate sources and evaluate them in terms of their quality and relevance. Referencing is used to avoid plagiarism in tertiary education. Pecorari (2008) explains that students should be assisted to avoid plagiarism by citing and referencing appropriately. The writer does not believe that it is enough to tell

learners about the seriousness of this topic; rather, lecturers should provide them with enough examples of those who were charged with plagiarism. Furthermore, strategies to prevent plagiarism in academic writing must be taught and stressed to students from their first year in university, regardless of whether or not it has been taught to them previously (De Sena, 2007; Wilkinson, 2008).

Due to the increasing demands of academic writing on students at universities, the long term solution which is effective and efficient to the academic writing challenges of students is the introduction of Academic Writing Units (AWU). English Language Centres that are dealing with communication skills courses should introduce the mentioned facilities to cater for all students from different faculties or departments. According to Crawford (2015), the purpose of such units is to introduce students to academic writing through the stages of the process writing. Furthermore, the AWU could be taking responsibility for the departmental, specialist courses and providing academic writing support and expertise to departments, as well as offer workshops on specific assignments and aspects of academic writing. The AWU could also offer assistance on all matters regarding referencing. They could also broaden the capability and availability of personal, peer and instructional support to aid in timely writing development support, as well as provide tutorial assistance for students from first year to final year (Brown & Gilchrist, 2011). Moreover, the AWU could also provide consultation sessions for individual students to help them improve their academic writing. More importantly, the Writing Centres could provide and facilitate remedial

writing workshops which lecturers with large classes cannot afford to provide. In addition, continuous development training for lecturers of all disciplines, pertaining to how they should guide students in academic writing, as well as give assistance to those lecturers who lack skills in the area of academic writing, may be organised and hosted by the AWU through the Language Centres. Likewise, the results of students' performance at the writing centres should not be hidden but may be used to provide feedback to departments concerning the ways in which their students are grappling with particular tasks (Archer, 2010; Mbirimi, 2012). Finally, the roles of the MKO or tutors at the AWU, as stated by Brown and Gilchrist (2011), should be to "encourage student independence through collaborative talk, particularly in group settings where students do not feel as pressured with tutors to perform well. Additionally, the MKO should also listen to students' writing frustrations, discuss academic concerns and help interpret the meaning of academic language to students so that they understand what a teacher expects"(pp. 23-25).

Through the literature review, the theoretical framework of the study, which is social constructivism, was discussed. The chapter outlined the characteristics of academic writing, as well as its importance, structure and the different stages in the academic writing process. Furthermore, the academic challenges faced by university students and the causes and intervention strategies to address these challenges were also discussed.

The next chapter discusses the methodology of the research thesis.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology employed in the study. It outlines the research design, describes the sampling process, the data collection and data analysis procedures adopted in the study, as well as the ethical procedures which were taken into consideration.

3.2 Research design

The case study followed a mixed methods research approach, using a sequential explanatory research design. Mixed methods is a procedure for collecting, analysing, and “mixing” or integrating both quantitative and qualitative data at some stage of the research process within a single study for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2005; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). The rationale for using both quantitative and qualitative data is that together they provide a better understanding of one’s research problem (Creswell, 2008). Therefore, the researcher mixed the two methodological approaches in this study so that a better understanding of the problem under investigation would be gained.

Creswell (2012) describes a sequential, explanatory research design as a design where the researcher starts by collecting and analysing quantitative data which are later followed by collecting and analysing qualitative data in a second phase, based on the quantitative results. The qualitative data and their analysis refine and explain those statistical results by exploring participants' views in more depth.

3.3 Population

The population in this study was the full-time students who were admitted to the programme of Bachelor of Education in Primary Education from 2011 to 2013 at the University of Namibia, Katima Mulilo campus. In addition, all lecturers from all departments, irrespective of which year levels they were teaching, also formed part of the population.

3.4 Sample and sampling procedures

Firstly, convenient sampling was used to select Katima Mulilo campus as the site for the study. The rationale behind selecting this campus was because that was where the researcher was working. Furthermore, since the study was conducted concurrently with the researcher's work, the researcher did not need to travel and leave her students unattended while collecting data. In addition, it was expected that students in Katima

Mulilo might have similar academic writing challenges to any of the other campuses and that they would be more open about their challenges since the researcher worked there.

For the quantitative phase of the research, stratified sampling was used to select both 120 students and 20 lecturers. In this study, strata were students from academic year levels 1, 2 and 3 and 20 lecturers from all the 7 departments. The 120 students were divided into 3 groups, consisting of forty students for each year level. However, as indicated in Chapter 1, the third year sample was narrowed down to 33 students which brought the 120 to 113 students. The main reason that brought the number down was because seven questionnaires from third year students were returned incomplete and were discarded. The researcher made sure to sample students from each year level and lecturers from all departments in order to gain a general overview of the problem of study. Purposive, criterion sampling was employed to select students. The following criteria were used:

- Being in the B. Ed. Primary Undergraduate programme on full-time study;
- Studying in the time period of 2011 to 2013;
- Being enrolled or having completed the English for Academic Purposes course.

Similarly, twenty full-time lecturers were selected, using the same sampling procedure. The criterion used to select the lecturers was that they should be teaching B. Ed. Primary Undergraduate courses on a full-time basis.

In the second phase of the study, purposive sampling was used to select twelve students for in-depth, semi-structured interviews. There were three groups, each consisting of four students per year level. Students were selected through the English for Academic Purposes lecturers, according to their ability for providing rich information. The twelve students consisted of six males and six females; groups were further divided into two per gender from each academic year level. Likewise, purposive sampling was used to select four of the 20 lecturers for in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews. They were from various departments: the Language Centre, Mathematics and Science (Maths), Education in Languages, Humanities and Commerce (ELHC), Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education (EPIE), Educational Foundations and Management (EFM), Curriculum Instruction and Assessment Studies (CIAS) and Pre- and Lower-Primary (LP). The researcher's intention was to work with two female and two male lecturers. Unfortunately, the Katima Mulilo campus had few female lecturers, and most of them were not present during Phase Two of the study. As a result, there were three males and one female lecturer available for the interviews.

Thirdly, since the problem concerned academic writing challenges, fifteen previously marked, written, assignments (essays) of participating students, which were given in the course of the English for Academic Purposes class, were selected as part of the qualitative phase. These essays were marked by the subject teacher and the researcher requested the subject teacher to purposively select five essays from each of the categories graded as good, satisfactory, poor and very poor. The rationale behind this

was to assess the content of essays, based on the set criteria for academic writing standards.

3.5 Research instruments

Three types of instruments were used to collect data for this study. These were questionnaires, interviews and students' essays that had already been marked. Two structured, self-administered questionnaires, one for students (Appendix 1) and one for lecturers (Appendix 2) were designed for collecting and recording quantitative data.

The questionnaire for students and lecturers each consisted of 15 items which included both open-ended and closed questions. Closed questions mainly employed a five-point Likert scale. The first section of each questionnaire constituted demographic questions to gather information regarding students' gender and level of study. Lecturers' demographic survey included questions on gender, level of teaching and their respective departments. The questionnaires had content validity because they consisted of questions that were relevant to the subject under study and they were guided by the research questions of the study and the literature review.

Secondly, in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews for both students and lecturers were employed. All the interviews incorporated open-ended questions that

enabled the researcher to probe for more information at various intervals and to seek clarification. However, the researcher had to be alert at all times not to deviate from the actual discussion. The questions were formulated according to various categories which provided answers to the research questions. Such questions were prepared in advance and studied before the actual interviews took place.

Lastly, since the study was concerned with academic writing challenges that students faced when writing academic texts, fifteen student essays, given in the course of the English for Academic Purposes class and already marked, were also used as instruments to collect data. The rationale behind using these documents was not to assess the content of the essays but mainly to see to what extent academic writing conventions and mechanics were employed. Therefore, five essays from each of the categories graded as good, satisfactory, poor and very poor were selected as data collection instruments.

3.6 Data collection

Both quantitative and qualitative data were considered of equal importance in the study. The data were collected in two distinct phases. Data collection started with the collection of quantitative data via the questionnaires, and then moved to the collection of qualitative data via the interviews and the essays. The purpose for carrying out the research sequentially was to use the results of the quantitative data in a timely fashion to

select the participants for the interviews and to be able to identify areas that needed further investigation.

For the first phase, initial contact was initiated by the researcher to meet with the students and lecturers in the two phases, taking into account some of the problems associated with data collection. For example, “the possibility of questionnaires being sent back incomplete, misunderstanding of items and non-return of questionnaires” were problems that were foreseen (De Vos, Delpont, Fouche, & Strydom, 2005, p. 212). To counteract these negative consequences, the questionnaires, together with a return envelope, were delivered personally by the researcher to the students. The researcher delivered the questionnaires personally to the lecturers as well. During these visits, the aim, importance of the study and questionnaire return dates were explained to all the participants. However, it was later discovered that seven of the 3rd year students did not complete any items, so they were eliminated from the quantitative sample which resulted in a final sample of 113 students (94.1% of the questionnaires distributed were filled in accurately).

For the second phase, the researcher explained to both students and lecturers that they were purposively selected for the interviews to continue with the collection of in-depth information on the problem of study. All those who were contacted for interviews responded positively. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the twelve students, as well as with the four lecturers. The interviews involved techniques, such as

open-ended questions and responses between the researcher and informants. The interviews were video-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Detailed field notes were taken (Creswell, 2005). The length of interviews varied depending on each student and lecturer's content of knowledge. In addition, each in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interview per participant was conducted separately.

Lastly, the researcher collected the fifteen, previously marked assignments (essays) from the English for Academic Purposes lecturer after obtaining permission from the respective students through the director of the campus (see Appendix 3 and 4). Thereafter, the researcher read each essay. The rationale behind using students' assignments was not to establish the content, but mainly the quality of academic writing, such as referencing (in-text and reference list), plagiarism, structure of the academic essay and language usage. The collected essays were from the first year students of 2013.

3.7 Data analysis

The data were analysed in three distinctive phases. The three phase analysis plan included, first, a statistical analysis of the data collected by means of the two questionnaires. Then a thematic analysis of the interview data for both students and lecturers followed, and, finally, an integrative analysis that involved a continuous

moving back and forth from quantitative and qualitative findings to create data integration was conducted. The analysis of data in all phases was guided by the research questions.

Priority was first given to the analysis of the quantitative data. Completed questionnaires were cleaned and coded. Each questionnaire was scrutinised by the researcher to examine the response pattern and identify abnormalities in the completion of questionnaires. Descriptive statistics that included frequencies and percentages were used for analysis of data in the first phase. For the open-ended questions in the questionnaires, data were organised under thematic categories (Beck & Polit, 2004; Burns & Grove, 2003).

Analysing qualitative data by means of interviews and documents is not an easy task and involves sustained concentration. The task of analysing is not regarded as a separate process but starts when one is collecting data (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009). All interview data were recorded by using a video camera and were furthermore, transcribed and analysed together with the essays, by means of a computer programme, called ATLAS.ti. Data were analysed by reading them, re-reading and coding them, according to various themes, patterns and interrelationships. All the transcripts were individually read several times in order to discover themes as they emerged from the data themselves (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009; Creswell, 2003; Gravett, Henning, & Van Rensberg, 2002).

The content analysis of the essays/assignments involved reading through all selected assignments in order to identify whether the characteristics of academic writing existed and to establish whether challenges existed among the Bachelor of Education, Primary Level students at the Katima Mulilo campus. Characteristics, such as the following were analysed: introduction, body, paragraphing and conclusion, cohesion, accuracy and fluency, amongst others.

Finally, the integrative analysis for this study triangulated findings between the statistical analysis and the thematic analysis. In other words, if a finding in the thematic analysis was supported by a finding in the statistical analysis, the finding was considered triangulated.

3.8 Ethical considerations

According to Beukes-Amis (2011), adhering to ethical issues is part and parcel of any research project. Assuring respondents of critical issues, such as confidentiality and anonymity and how this is adhered to, is imperative for the success of any study. According to De Vos et al. (2005, p. 69), “ethics in research are important in ensuring the humane treatment of participants.” All the participants for the study were assured confidentiality and anonymity before they completed the questionnaires or became involved with the interviews.

The researcher followed the following ethical considerations. Firstly, the researcher wrote a letter to gain permission from the UNAM Katima Mulilo campus director that enabled her to gain access to the respondents (see Appendix 3). All the interviews were conducted during working days but at times when respondents were free. However, the questionnaires were administered during class periods with the granted permission from the respective lecturers.

Before the students' questionnaire was administered, the researcher obtained permission from the campus director (Appendix 4). Thereafter the purpose of involving students and lecturers was explained to the participants before they completed the questionnaire. The questionnaires also contained information which indicated the purpose of the study to respondents and why they were requested to take part.

Once the quantitative data were analysed, the researcher again requested the permission of the four lecturers and twelve identified students for participation in the interviews. The researcher contacted the lecturers personally to gain their permission and explained to them why they were selected to continue with the interviews. The selected lecturers did not show any resistance and participated willingly. Similarly, the researcher contacted students per year level and informed them about the interviews, as well as how and why they should continue with the interviews. Each participant's interview transcript was coded by pseudonym.

All the participants who provided information were also assured of confidentiality and were also informed that the results of the study would only be used for the purpose of the research. None of the information that was provided would be linked to a specific individual or group of people. The participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences or explanation.

Data for this study will be stored securely for a period of five years after which it will be permanently discarded by shredding the questionnaires and the interview transcripts. Data in electronic form will be deleted permanently to ensure that no personal data could be leaked.

3.9 Summary

This chapter discussed the mixed methods research design, employed in the study, which was sequential and explanatory. The population of the study was Katima Mulilo UNAM campus with a sample of full-time students studying a Bachelor of Education in Primary Education from 2011 to 2013. Three types of instruments, namely questionnaires, interviews and previously marked essays of the participating students were used to collect data. Although both quantitative and qualitative data were considered of equal importance, the data were collected and analysed in two distinct phases by starting with the quantitative data via the questionnaires and then moving to

the collection of qualitative data via the interviews and essays. A statistical analysis of data collected by means of the two questionnaires was employed, followed by a thematic analysis of the interview data for both students and lecturers and, finally, an integrative analysis that involved the two methods to create data integration. Content analysis was employed when reading through all the selected essays in order to establish whether challenges existed among the Bachelor of Education students at the Katima Mulilo campus. Finally, ethical considerations were highly regarded.

In the next chapter, the researcher presents the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the data that were collected and analysed are presented according to the research questions that guided the study. Quantitative data are presented mostly through tables and graphs. In order to increase the reliability, validity, trustworthiness and credibility of the research, a mixed methods approach was followed. Data were collected from both students and lecturers through self-administered questionnaires which had both closed and open-ended questions. In addition, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with lecturers and students, and, lastly, fifteen previously marked essays written by participating students were scrutinised.

Firstly, in this chapter demographic information of students and lecturers is presented. This is followed by results from the closed and open-ended questions in the students' questionnaires, as well as from student interviews. After this, the information from the closed and open-ended questions in the lecturers' questionnaire and interviews is presented. Lastly, the results based on the document and Chi-square analyses are presented. The results which are to be presented attempt to answer the following research questions:

- a) What challenges do students face in academic writing at the University of Namibia?
- b) What are students' and lecturers' perceptions on the possible causes of these academic writing challenges?
- c) Are there any differences in writing challenges faced according to gender and the students' year of study?
- d) What are students' and lecturers' views on possible intervention strategies with regard to academic writing that can be used to improve their writing?

4.2 Demographic information of students and lecturers

In this section the researcher presents the results of the demographic information. Firstly, the first phase of the study consisted of a total number of 113 students from Year 1 to 3. From this total, 53% were female and 47% male students. From the educational background perspective, 35.3% of the students were first years, 35.3% second years, and 29.2% third years. Furthermore, there were 20 lecturers for the first phase which consisted of 80% male and 20% female lecturers. Secondly, the second phase consisted of 10 students and 4 lecturers who participated in the interviews. Although the University runs a four-year programme, there were no fourth year students at the campus at the time of the survey, due to the integration of the former colleges of education into the UNAM system and the abolishment of the BETD programme. Figure 2 provides a

graphical presentation of the students' field of study. It is evident that most of the participants were from the field of Languages and Social Sciences (46.0%) followed by Mathematics and Science (28.3%). Few students were from the fields of Languages only (22.1%), Pre- and Lower-Primary Education (1.8%) and other disciplines such as Language and Mathematics and Languages and Science (1.8%).

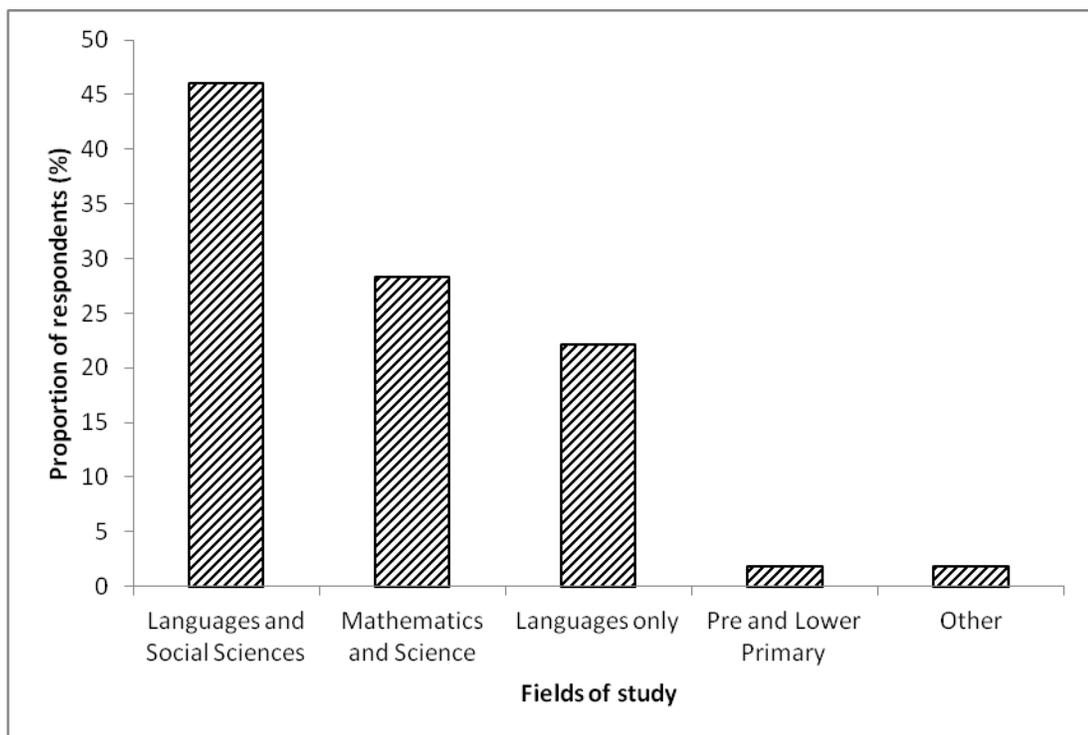


Figure 1: *Proportion of Participants per field of study*

Lecturers who completed the questionnaire belonged to a variety of departments, each representing a specific field of study. Eight were from Mathematics and Science (Maths), four from Education in Languages, Humanities and Commerce (ELHC), four from Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education (EPIE), two from Educational Foundations and Management (EFM), one from Curriculum Instruction and Assessment

Studies (CIAS) and one from Pre- and Lower-Primary (LP). Furthermore, the lecturers were teaching different subjects to students in the different year levels.

4.3 Results based on student responses

This part of the study presents the results based on the students' questionnaires and interviews. The presentation of results focuses on the importance of academic writing to students, the academic writing challenges they faced, their perceptions of the causes of their writing difficulties and the possible intervention strategies that could be used to address their writing difficulties.

4.3.1 The importance of academic writing

By using a four-point Likert scale, the researcher asked students to indicate how important they considered the teaching of academic writing to be. Of the 113 students, 96.5% found the teaching of academic writing to students to be very important and 3.5% found it to be important; none of the students found it not very important or not important at all.

By using a predetermined list, the researcher also asked the students which skills they considered important to be taught. Table 1 presents their responses to this question.

Table 1: Students' responses on the importance of developing the listed skills

Academic writing skills	Very important		Important		Not very important		Not important at all		Total %
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Language skills	100	88.5	12	10.6	1	0.9	0	0.0	100
Time management	76	67.3	35	31.0	2	1.8	0	0.0	100
Thinking skills	99	87.6	13	11.5	1	0.9	0	0.0	100
Subject knowledge	91	80.5	21	18.6	1	0.9	0	0.0	100
Rules of writing	81	71.7	27	23.9	4	3.5	1	0.9	100
Paraphrasing skills	91	80.5	22	18.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	100
Referencing skills	92	81.4	19	16.8	1	0.9	1	0.9	100

N = 113

The majority of students indicated that it was very important that they should develop all the listed skills when taught how to write academically. Very few of the students indicated that it was *not important* or *not important at all* to develop the named skills (see Table 1). Students were also asked to what extent they thought that certain communication skills subjects were giving them opportunities to develop academic writing skills. Table 2 shows the responses of students.

Table 2: Students' responses to the subjects that promote academic writing

Subjects promoting academic writing	High extent		Medium extent		Low extent		No extent	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
English for General Communication and Study skills	51	45.1	39	35.4	14	12.3	9	7.9
English Communication and Study skills	69	61.0	34	30.0	6	5.3	4	3.5
English for Academic Purposes	101	89.3	10	8.8	1	0.8	1	0.8
English Access	38	33.6	39	34.5	19	16.8	17	15.0

N: 113

The results obtained from the questionnaires show that 89.3% of students indicated English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and 61.1% English Communication and Study skills (ECS) as subjects that promoted and familiarised students to a large extent with academic writing at university. Very few (0.8% for EAP and 3.5% for ECS) felt that these subjects did not promote academic writing skills (see Table 2).

4.3.2 Challenges students experienced with academic writing

Students were asked to indicate the extent to which they faced the listed academic writing challenges. Table 3 presents their responses.

Table 3: Students' responses to the academic writing challenges which they faced

Student academic writing challenges	High extent		Medium extent		Low extent		No extent		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	%
Parts of speech	13	11.5	59	52.2	35	31.0	6	5.3	100
Tenses	16	14.2	32	28.3	47	41.6	18	15.9	100
Spelling	10	8.8	32	28.3	53	46.9	18	15.9	100
Prepositions	10	8.8	37	32.7	45	39.8	21	18.6	100
Logic sentences	10	8.8	38	33.6	41	36.3	24	21.2	100
Academic vocabulary	15	13.3	33	29.2	44	38.9	21	18.6	100
Punctuation	11	9.7	23	20.4	44	38.9	35	31.0	100
Cohesion	12	10.6	43	38.1	36	31.9	22	19.5	100
Discourse markers	12	10.6	29	25.7	48	42.5	24	21.2	100
Paragraphs	08	7.1	31	27.4	46	40.7	28	24.8	100
Clear and coherent essays	12	10.6	33	29.2	42	37.2	26	23.0	100
Paraphrasing	15	13.3	28	24.8	42	37.2	28	24.8	100
In-text referencing	17	15.0	39	34.5	31	27.4	26	23.0	100
APA reference list	23	20.4	29	25.7	33	29.2	28	24.8	100

N = 113

As shown in the Table above, in the quantitative data it was found that, when the researcher combined high and medium responses, students considered the following to be a challenge: 63.7% mentioned parts of speech, 48.7% cohesion in what they were writing, 42.5 the correct use of tenses and 42.4% writing sentences which follow logic. This was confirmed by both the open-ended questions and the interviews as a challenge. For example, several students mentioned the use of grammar as both a challenge and a cause of academic writing difficulties. In the open-ended question, some students mentioned that they had made many grammar mistakes in almost all the assignments that were given to them. Furthermore, they normally achieved low marks because of the grammar part. The qualitative data contradicted what is shown in the Table, namely that

66% of the students' achievements were minimally affected by incorrect paragraphing. In both the open-ended question and interviews students mentioned paragraphing as a challenge. The students mentioned particularly the difficulty of formulating ideas in one paragraph and connecting these with the next paragraph. During the interview, Ndomo expanded by saying, *"The challenges such as the parts of speech, singular and plural are problems. You find that if the doer or the subject is supposed to be singular, they don't agree with the verb and vice versa."* Yensu also pointed out that *"..... There are many grammatical errors in the (students') assignments and we don't have time to go to the lecturers and ask how it was supposed to be done."* Njombasi said *".....for me paragraph writing is another big challenge where we have to use coherence to ensure that the next paragraph is connected to the previous paragraph."*

Furthermore, as shown in Table 3, 49.5% of the students considered the use of in-text citation and 46.1% the APA referencing style to be a challenge. This was confirmed in both the open-ended questions and the interviews as being a challenge. For example, students mentioned that referencing was a challenge, as well as a cause of their writing difficulties that persisted from their first to final year of study. According to students, they were finding it difficult to avoid plagiarism, cutting and pasting of ideas from the internet without acknowledgement and how to compile an APA reference list. In the interviews most students stressed the fact that referencing was not making their university lives easy and that they found acknowledging sources used in their texts to be very difficult. In addition, students said that when they had found relevant sources on the

internet, they did not bother to alter anything and they would just cut and paste, and thereafter submit their work. Students said that they even wondered how lecturers knew or realised that they had plagiarised when marking the scripts. This can be verified by the students' responses during interviews. Cobra said, *"....The one that is always challenging me the most is the referencing."* Yensu also said, *"The other challenge that we students are facing is that, no matter how much you are taught in English for Academic Purposes modules on how to reference in text or at the end of the assignment, we still have problems with referencing."* Similarly Yepaswa said, *"Referencing is a very big problem even in second year. I still find it to be difficult."* Ndomo also said *"Cut and paste, is a challenge to us because of the relevance of sources from internet. It's obvious you should acknowledge the sources but in some other cases because you did not take time to write other assignments all you do is to rush in the last minute and just cut and paste without acknowledging."*

However the areas where relatively high numbers of students indicated that they were affected to a minimal extent, as indicated in Table 3, were the following: spelling (46.9%), the use of discourse markers (42.5%), and the use of tenses (41.6%). The academic writing areas where high percentages of students felt they were not experiencing difficulties were punctuation (31.0%) and APA referencing. Apart from the skills listed in Table 3, students were asked to express the degree of agreement and disagreement with respect to the listed statements on the university academic writing challenges experienced. Table 4 shows their responses to this question.

Table 4: Students' views on how academic writing contributed to their challenges

Academic writing experiences at university	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	%
Academic writing is more challenging at the university than at high school	67	59.3	37	32.7	7	6.2	2	1.8	100
Academic writing is the easier part at university	1	0.9	30	26.5	61	54.0	21	18.6	100
Getting low marks in assignments because of academic writing difficulties	17	15.0	56	49.6	30	26.6	10	8.8	100
Have problems of addressing a topic clearly	7	6.2	37	32.7	48	42.5	21	18.6	100

N = 113

When the researcher combined the sections, strongly agree and agree, in the quantitative data shown in Table 4, it was found that 92.0% of students were in agreement that academic writing was more challenging at university level than at high schools. This was confirmed by both the open-ended questions and the interviews as a challenge, when students revealed that writing academic assignments and essays at university was more challenging than what they used to do at secondary schools. In the open-ended question, most of them said they were not used to writing assignments where they needed to search for a variety of sources to refer to. Similarly, in the interviews one of the students, Njombasi said, *“Life at the university is a little bit challenging especially the writing of assignments, how one can get the information and how to cope with all the academic challenges.”* As shown in the Table, only 8% of students disagreed with this statement. Furthermore, 72.6% of students disagreed that academic writing was an easier

part of university. The Table also shows that 64.6% students were in agreement that they were achieving low marks in assignments because of academic writing difficulties. Students were asked if they had problems with addressing a topic clearly when writing academic texts. A high percentage of students (61.1%) indicated that they did not have a problem with addressing a topic clearly.

Additional challenges, not mentioned in the closed questions of the questionnaire, were mentioned in the open-ended questions and the interviews. The new themes that emerged were: medium of instruction, time management, the required word or page lengths, failing to follow the writing process and the role of the content subject lecturers.

Medium of instruction at university was mentioned as both a challenge and the cause of academic writing difficulties. In the open-ended question and the interviews students said they were challenged since English was not their mother tongue. Most students said that they did not have time to practise English because they were speaking their mother tongues most of the time. As a result, they were negatively affected when they wrote assignments and this issue also added to their academic writing challenges. In the interviews Njombasi said, “....*We lack skills on how to formulate our assignments, researches and presentations because English is not our first language.....*”

Furthermore, in the open-ended question most students blamed themselves as far as time management in writing their assignments was concerned. Students revealed that they

failed to submit their academic essays on time. In addition, when they were given assignments to write, they delayed and waited until there were only a few days left before submission. Only then they would write, but they still expected to achieve high marks. Some of the students went to the extent of saying that other students were not even honouring the submission dates and disturbed lecturers after due dates with a great many excuses. Thus, when assignments were done in a hurry, little learning of academic writing could take place. The same challenge of time management was confirmed in the interviews by students. Ndomo said, *“Sometimes we (students) always write our assignments in the last minute. We always start the assignments two days before submission and miss classes because of the due dates. This means, the effort you put in there is not the one you should have put if only you have prepared and; consequently you get low marks.”* Yensu also said, *“..... When we are given a piece of writing there is plenty of time for writing that assignment. However, we students have a tendency of relaxing just because we think there is much time and write in the last minutes. When we see that the submission date is near we start running around to find sources which are too tough to get easily. In the end we find ourselves in a difficult situation of not getting relevant materials to use.”* The same student continued to say, *“.....we are very reluctant and we think we can just finish the assignments in one day and actually don't start the assignments the same time that we are given them. Furthermore, we think the period given for writing the assignments is our free time to do our own business and don't take the writing of our assignments seriously. Because of the situation we are putting ourselves in, we don't have time to revise and edit our work, to*

see where we have made minor mistakes and major mistakes.”

Sticking to the required word or page lengths was also mentioned in the open-ended question and interviews as a challenge. Students said that they were challenged by the fact that on one question lecturers expected them to write many pages, sometimes five to eight pages. This seemed very challenging because they always ran out of ideas and eventually repeated the same ideas or just copied and pasted without acknowledging sources. In the interviews Yenala said, “... *The number of pages that we are told to write are too many. For one question you are told to write more than 5 pages or so which is very difficult. We always will end up repeating the same things.*”

Another challenge that was pointed out by students in the open-ended question was that they were failing to follow the writing process whenever they were given assignments. Instead of following the writing process stages of planning, drafting, revising and editing, students just wrote first drafts and submitted their assignments. This was confirmed by Yensu in the interview that “*We don’t follow the process writing stages of revising and editing after writing the first draft we hand in.*”

The following challenges were also listed by students in the open-ended questions only: quoting sources from the internet; lecturers giving many written assignments at the same time; academic writing being new to students, especially to first years; some lecturers were lacking academic writing knowledge and a lack of computers in the library to

access sources.

4.3.3 Students' perceptions on the causes of academic writing difficulties

In trying to find out why students were facing academic writing challenges at university, they were asked what might be the possible causes of their academic writing difficulties.

Table 5 presents the responses to that question as based on the quantitative analyses of data (questionnaires).

Table 5: Students' responses on the causes of academic writing challenges

Causes of academic writing challenges	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	%
Lack of practice at tertiary institutions	28	24.8	46	40.7	33	29.2	6	5.3	100
Underprepared from high school	22	19.5	68	60.2	17	15.0	6	5.3	100
Teachers do not prepare lessons which allow students to practice writing	15	13.3	38	33.6	45	39.8	15	13.3	100
Lack of reading resources	30	26.5	38	33.6	35	31.0	10	8.8	100
Reluctance of teachers to teach writing	20	17.7	24	21.2	54	47.8	15	13.3	100
Ineffective feedback to students writing	23	20.4	42	37.2	36	31.9	12	10.5	100
Socio-economic factors of students	29	25.7	47	41.6	23	20.2	14	12.4	100

N = 113

When the sections, strongly agree and agree, were combined, the results showed that 79.7% of students indicated their under-preparedness from high school as a cause for their academic writing difficulties. Although it was already established in the closed

questions, the issue of a lack of academic writing background knowledge from secondary schools (Grade 12) was the main issue revealed by the open-ended question as the root cause of students' academic writing challenges. Students claimed that they were not inducted at secondary schools on what to expect at university. As a result, they took it for granted that writing at university was similar to how they used to write at secondary schools. Subsequently, they came to discover that writing at university was completely different and they needed to adjust and adapt to such a kind of writing. Likewise, this was confirmed by students in interviews. For example, Mashabela said, "*.....the cause might be our English background from the high school.*" Whereas, Ndomo said "*It's just that at high schools all the teachers did not put so much effort even if you made a mistake with spelling they were just underlining it by not giving the correct spelling for that word.*" The same student continued to say, "*I think we do not have the background, or maybe that's how we were taught at high school and come with that mentality here at the university and where we think it is the best, while it's not.*" Another student Njombasi said, "*The cause could be lack of pre-existing knowledge on writing. This means we were not writing academically before we were enrolled at the tertiary institutions. Therefore, academic writing preferences were only introduced when we came here at university.*"

Additionally, 65.5% of students indicated that a lack of practising academic writing at tertiary institutions was causing their problems. This was confirmed by students during

interviews when they said that they did not remember what they had learnt in their previous year levels because they did not practise academic writing skills. For example, students said academic writing was only taught in semester one of each student's year one. As a result, when they proceeded to year two, they could not use the knowledge gained in year one because they had forgotten what they had learned. To confirm this, Mashabela said, *“When we progress to other year levels we find that we (students) have forgotten what we did in our first year. This is because we are not practicing academic writing skills as we progress to other levels and the problems continue.”*

Moreover, as shown in Table 5 above, 60.1% of students indicated a lack of resources as the cause of their academic writing difficulties, and this was also seen as a challenge. This was confirmed in the open-ended questions and interviews. Students complained that it was challenging to search for information that substantiated their ideas when they wrote academic texts because there was no bookshop at the campus where they could buy prescribed books. The only source of information was the library which had outdated sources and was not sufficiently stocked for the KMC community. In addition, the internet was also not available most of the time. Similarly, in the interviews Ndomo, one of the students, had this to say, *“Lack of resources is causing writing challenges because our library is not yet up to date. We still have old books, even the newspapers you cannot find the latest ones on time. So, for the sake of students, everything should be up to date.”* This was also verified by Yepaswa who said, *“We have a problem of*

finding correct sources because our library have many outdated books, even if you go there now, you won't get books for 2010 upwards Most them are old from what we are now doing and were just inherited from Caprivi College of Education (CCE).

Reluctance of teachers to teach writing was also seen as a cause. According to the quantitative data, 38.9% of the participants agreed that this was causing problems, while 61.1% disagreed. However, this was confirmed in the interviews and opened-ended questions by several students that the role of content subject lecturers (teachers) was also seen as a challenge. Students claimed that the content subject lecturers were reluctant to assist them, and that they considered the academic writing component as the responsibility of the languages and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) lecturers only. Whenever they requested assistance from content subject lecturers, for explanation of how they should write, they were normally referred back to the lecturers who taught them academic writing, instead of helping them. Some of the responses of students in the open-ended questions revealed that they doubted if other lecturers were aware of what academic writing was all about. Their understanding was that the EAP lecturers were just familiarising them with the subject and content lecturers should continue where they stopped. Furthermore, students revealed that some of the content subject lecturers were not giving much attention to academic writing conventions, yet they regularly gave academic written assignments to students. Similarly in the interviews several students elaborated this challenge by saying: “.....lecturers are not helping us in the subjects that they are teaching in academic writing and think we know, while we

really need help. Lecturers should not assume that we know, they must repeat teaching us on academic writing Yensu said. Njombasi also said, "From my experience, I would say lecturers in other subjects other than EAP are not helping us on academic writing topic. I think it should not just be seen as a responsibility of those who are teaching English for Academic Purposes. All lecturers must be involved to solve the problems of students as all are giving academic texts for writing." Pula said, ".....The only lecturers who are involved in teaching or helping in academic writing are the lecturers responsible for that module others only concentrate on content. They don't focus on academic writing even when they give you feedback." Yenala said, "Those lecturers who are not teaching languages don't take academic writing serious, they just consider their content and ignore the academic writing conventions which is very wrong."

Furthermore, as shown in the Table, 67.3% of students indicated that socio-economic factors were also causing them to experience challenges with academic writing. However, 32.6% students indicated that socio-economic factors were not causing challenges in academic writing.

On the other hand, when the responses of disagree and strongly disagree were combined, it became clear that 53.1% of the students disagreed that the fact that lecturers were unprepared for writing lessons was the cause of students' academic writing challenges,

and 61.1% disagreed that lecturers' reluctance to teach writing was the cause of students' academic writing challenges.

Apart from the themes that emerged from both the quantitative and qualitative data, the following themes only emerged from the qualitative data: students' absenteeism and SMS writing style.

Students' absenteeism was another cause of academic writing challenges, especially when academic writing was taught in class. This was also mentioned in the open-ended question that some students were not attending classes regularly and missed many sessions, particularly those on academic writing. In the interviews Yepaswa said, *"When teachers are teaching, we skip classes or don't pay attention. If when you were absent the teacher was teaching about referencing when you come back the topic is completed and lecturers don't repeat. Therefore, it becomes very hard for you to ask other students to explain how it was taught step by step. Therefore, because you skipped classes or decided not to pay attention, it will be a big problem for you to get things correct..."*

Another cause of academic writing difficulties which was revealed by students in both open-ended question and interviews was the use of the Short Messages Service (SMS) writing style associated with mobile phones. According to participants, it played a major

role in students' academic writing challenges as they cannot clearly distinguish between formal and informal writing styles. Similarly, in the interviews one of the students, Cobra said, *"The use of cell phones' short forms style of writing has caused a lot of difficulties in our writing for academic context."*

Another cause which most of the students complained about in both quantitative and qualitative data was the feedback given to students' writing by lecturers. According to what is showed in Table 5, 57.6% of students indicated that lecturers were giving ineffective feedback to students' writing and this caused a multitude of problems. As far as academic writing at university is concerned, students need to be given feedback on whatever they write so that they can improve on their weaknesses. As a consequence of participants' responses, students were asked further about how often and how effectively they received feedback from lecturers on their academic writing tasks. Table 6 below shows their responses to the question.

Table 6: Feedback received by students on academic writing

How feedback was given to students	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	%
Give general feedback in class after marking	46	40.7	45	39.8	17	15.0	5	4.4	100
Give individual feedback after marking	19	16.8	20	17.7	46	40.7	28	24.8	100
Given written comments and remarks on students scripts for improvements	49	43.4	43	38.1	16	14.2	5	4.4	100
Use questions as part of feedback to prompt students to develop awareness of their errors	34	30.1	48	42.5	26	23.0	5	4.4	100
Receive very little feedback	22	19.5	34	30.1	37	32.7	20	17.7	100

N = 113

The quantitative data results in Table 6 show that, when the two levels of agreement were combined, 81.5% of students agreed that feedback was given by lecturers via written comments and remarks for students to improve. Furthermore, 80.5% of students were in agreement that they received general feedback in class after their tasks had been marked, while 72.6% of students indicated that some lecturers were using questions as part of feedback to prompt students to develop awareness of their errors. However, even though it was clear that lecturers were giving feedback, 65.5% of the students said that lecturers were not giving feedback to individual students after marking their written work. Almost equal numbers of students agreed (49.6%) and disagreed (50.4%) that they received very little written feedback on their academic writing from lecturers. Although the majority of students reported in the questionnaire that they were given feedback, their comments as received via open-ended questions revealed that the way some lecturers gave feedback to them contributed to the causes of academic writing

difficulties. Students extended their views in the open-ended questions that some lecturers were not giving feedback to students after marking their written work, at all. Additionally, feedback was given at a very late stage without pointing out mistakes in the students' marked essays. Furthermore, students said that the content subject lecturers particularly just concentrated on the content during feedback or whether the student had answered the questions, instead of commenting on the conventions and mechanics of academic writing. It also became clear in the open-ended questions that students expected every lecturer to be skilled in academic writing so that when they gave academic assignments they should know what was expected from students in terms of academic writing. Similarly, in the interviews one of the students, Mashabela, said, *".....when lecturers bring back students' assignments, the way the student handed it in is the way it will be brought back. There are no comments; they do not even consider calling you at their offices and tell you where you went wrong, which becomes a problem. When students don't receive comments they think that they did the right thing."*

Finally, the following issues were mentioned both as causes and challenges, but were already presented under challenges: content lecturers who regarded academic writing as solely the ESL and EAP lecturers' responsibility; a lack of updated library resources; English as the medium of instruction for students; time management.

4.3.4 Students' perceptions on possible intervention strategies

Students were asked to rate the usefulness of certain intervention strategies that could be used to address academic writing challenges. Table 7 presents the responses to the question.

Table 7: The possible intervention strategies to address academic writing challenges

Intervention strategies	Very useful		Useful		Somewhat useful		Not useful at all		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	%
Train lecturers on ways to improve students' academic writing	97	85.8	15	13.3	0	0.0	1	0.9	100
Introduce a writing unit at campus where students can practice writing	73	64.6	32	28.3	5	4.4	3	2.7	100
Lecturers to use effective feedback to show strengths and weaknesses of students	96	85.0	13	11.5	3	2.7	1	0.9	100
All academic lecturers to be involved in teaching academic writing	74	65.5	32	28.3	4	3.5	3	2.7	100

N = 113

When the researcher combined the two levels of useful responses, the results showed that more than 90% of students agreed that all the intervention strategies mentioned in the Table were useful in addressing the academic writing challenges of students. To be precise, 99.1% of students indicated that it could be useful to train lecturers on ways that could improve students' academic writing. This was supported by students in the open-ended questions that there should be continuous academic writing, in-service training for

lecturers as a remedy to students' writing challenges. Students suggested this because they thought some lecturers were not assisting students with academic writing challenges. Similarly, in the interviews students also revealed the following: Mashabela said, *".....lecturers should also be engaged in in-service training programmes, especially those that train them about the academic writing skills of students, so that they may be introduced to how they can assist students."* The same point was strongly underscored by Ndomo, who said, *"I think there should be on-going training for lectures or teachers in high schools on academic writing."*

Furthermore, 93% of students supported the strategy of introducing a writing unit at campus. This was confirmed by the data in both the open-ended questions, as well as in the interviews, as a good strategy at university. Students thought that academic writing difficulties would continue unless a writing unit was established because every student who entered university would be experiencing the same challenges. During interviews some students shared their views as follows. Mashabela said, *"I think that the university should have a writing unit in all the campuses. The writing unit would provide and facilitate remedial writing workshops which lecturers with large classes cannot afford to provide."* Whereas, Musohe said, *"introducing a writing unit at this campus where students could normally go and practice the academic writing is very important."* Yensu also said, *"Myself I think the university should make an academic writing class, where students can go to learn how to write academic work. By doing so, it will be very simple*

and easy for students to understand when they write in any subject or in any other module. Because when we continue to be taught how to write academically at this class we would actually not going to forget. Furthermore, we will progress and add on to what we already know.”

The quantitative data also showed that, in order to address this problem, 93.8% of students indicated that all academic lecturers should be involved in teaching academic writing. This was confirmed by the qualitative data. Students’ open-ended questions and interviews revealed that collaboration amongst lecturers who were teaching content subjects and languages were a useful strategy to prevent academic writing challenges. For example, lecturers who were teaching academic writing needed to work together with the content subject lecturers. However, students expressed their views that collaboration should not only be for lecturers to work together on the issue of academic writing but students too should collaborate with one another. The researcher cites different views expanded by students on this strategy. Mashabela strongly iterated, *“Lecturers who for instance are teaching communication skills and English for Academic Purposes should collaborate with other subject specialists. Instead of blaming communication and English lecturers for the weak academic writing skills of students, core subject lecturers should create ways for these lecturers to plant literacy practices within their subject curricular.”* Musohe also said, *“I think each different lecturer has different expectations, so it will be useful if each lecturer could be involved in helping*

the student on how to write academically.” Similarly, Yenala said, “Academic writing is not only for those who taught us. Those ones were just introducing us to it and others should continue in all the subjects. Since we write academically in all the modules it must be considered to be part of every subject at the university.” Ndomo also said, “If all the lecturers who are teaching us in 3rd year as well as those teaching second year students are involved, by continuing to teach us what we were taught in EAP about academic writing, our challenges would be reduced. While on the same point, Cobra also said, “I personally think academic writing should be taught by all the lecturers for students to see significant and useful it is. If English lecturers only get involved students will think it is not important while it is a bridging course used in all subjects. I also think it should be integrated in all the modules for all lecturers to get involved.

Once more Table 7 clearly shows that 96.5% of students considered feedback as an important strategy to improve their writing skills. This was confirmed by the open-ended questions and interviews. According to students, when feedback was given, lecturers should not just attend to the students’ common academic writing errors in a holistic approach but, where possible, they should address students’ challenges individually. In addition, students also felt that individual students with academic writing problems should be identified by lecturers and be given feedback where necessary. The open-ended questions also revealed that most of the students said if it was possible, individual students should be assigned to certain lecturers who could be their mentors, especially in

academic writing. Besides, students were of the opinion that lecturers should be giving immediate, clear and concise feedback after academic tests, assignments or any assessment so that students could see where they went wrong in order to correct their mistakes. For example, during interviews Mashabela said that “*for every piece of writing given to students, lecturers must find time to give feedback and guide students how it was supposed to be done so that they improve on the quality of their writing.*” The same student continued to say, “*Feedback given should be in writing form or oral, whereby lecturers for instance can have individual consultation or group consultation with students where they discuss about their weaknesses in their academic writing skill.*” On the other hand, Pula said, “*Lecturers themselves should give feedback not only on the content they want from the given assignments but also on the way we should write the assignments.*”

Apart from what was mentioned in the Table regarding choices, other, new strategies that emerged from the open-ended question responses and the interviews included, mini-meetings, peer coaching, elevation of EAP to a year module or course which applies to all year levels, students taking ownership of their learning and preparation for academic writing at secondary schools before joining the university.

Students revealed in the open-ended question that if they could have mini-meetings where they shared their academic writing experiences and problems, their challenges would be lessened. During interviews, Mashabela shared that “*we should normally have*

some mini meetings amongst ourselves as students where we should always come and discuss some of the challenges that we are facing, especially when it comes to writing of assignments.” In addition, the same student said, *“What students identify as challenges during mini meeting they could develop a strategy of Peer tutoring which can help students improve their academic writing skill, because it is believed that some students understand better when they are being helped by their peers.”* Yenala also added the same point by saying, *“students as well must engage themselves more with those who are doing better so that they learn from their friends.”*

Students also suggested in the open-ended question that the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course/module needed to be elevated from a semester module to a year course/module. Alternatively, EAP should be a pre-requisite for all modules studied by students at university or be integrated in all year levels of students because of its importance when writing academic assignments. During interviews some of the students had this to say: Mashabela said, *“I was of the idea that a module for academic writing should run from students’ first year up to their final year to keep them updated with the academic writing skills.”* Besides, Cobra suggested that *“If it is possible, English for Academic Purposes should be integrated in each student’s major subjects so that students can take it seriously.”*

Students also revealed through the open-ended questions that lecturers should guide students to take ownership of their learning so that they could master the skills of academic writing. According to their responses, students depended mainly on what they were taught and wrote during class without practising further after classes. Instead of devoting their time mainly to academic writing where they faced challenges, they wanted to be told what to do and when to study. Therefore, taking charge of their learning was going to be very useful in solving their difficulties. Similarly, in the interviews the following student stressed the importance of this strategy, *“I would like to say that students should take ownership of their learning process by being guided by lecturers to prepare adequately for academic tasks and understand the role of academic writing in their success....”*, Mashabela said.

The lack of preparation in academic writing at secondary schools was revealed as a challenge and cause of students’ writing difficulties. In order to address that challenge, students revealed in the open-ended questions that, before joining university, students should be prepared at secondary schools concerning the differences between academic writing and non-academic writing. Similarly, this strategy was stressed as useful in the interview by students. Pula said, *“Learners in high schools are supposed to be prepared for academic writing before they come to the university so that they may handle the pressure that goes on here at university....”* Cobra shared the same view by saying, *“Secondary school learners should be prepared about what to get when they go to*

university especially to familiarize them on the difference between academic and non-academic writing.”

4.4 Results based on lecturers’ responses

This part of the study presents the results from the lecturers’ questionnaires, closed and open-ended questions and the results from the interviews. The lecturers’ responses are presented similarly to that of students.

4.4.1 The importance of academic writing

Lecturers were also asked to indicate, by using a four-point Likert scale, how important they considered the teaching of academic writing to be. All 20 (100%) of the lecturers who participated in the study indicated that it was very important to teach academic writing to students at university. Lecturers were asked to clarify, by using a predetermined list, which of the listed academic writing skills developed once they were taught. Table 8 presents their responses.

Table 8: The importance of developing the listed skills

Academic writing skills	Very important		Important		Not very important		Not important at all		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Language skills	16	80.0	4	20.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	100
Time management	14	70.0	5	25.0	1	5.0	0	0.0	100
Critical thinking skills	19	95.0	1	5.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	100
Subject knowledge	13	65.0	7	35.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	100
Rules of writing	18	90.0	2	10.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	100
Paraphrasing skills	18	90.0	2	10.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	100
Referencing skills	19	95.0	1	5.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	100

N = 20

The results show that almost all the lecturers considered the listed skills as important or very important for students' development in academic writing. Only 1 lecturer indicated that, time management was not very important in the development of academic writing skills.

Furthermore, lecturers were also asked which subjects similar to the ones mentioned for the students (see Table 3); they thought would develop the above listed skills and academic writing in particular. According to the results obtained from the questionnaires, 95% of the lecturers indicated English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and 89.4% English Communication and Study skills (ECS) as subjects that promoted and familiarised students to a large extent with academic writing at university. One lecturer (0.9%) felt that EAP and 3.5% that ECS were to no extent promoting academic writing skills.

4.4.2 Challenges experienced by lecturers with students' academic writing

Similar to the students, lecturers were also asked to indicate from a given list to what extent they faced each of the academic writing challenges when marking assignments and/or other pieces of academic writing of students at the Katima Mulilo campus. Table 9 presents their responses.

Table 9: Lecturers' responses regarding students experiencing challenges with academic writing

Academic writing challenges	High extent		Medium extent		Low extent		No extent		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	%
Parts of speech	7	35.0	12	60.0	1	5.0	0	0.0	100
Tenses	12	60.0	6	30.0	2	10.0	0	0.0	100
Spelling	8	40.0	9	45.0	3	15.0	0	0.0	100
Prepositions	8	40.0	8	40.0	3	15.0	1	5.0	100
Logic sentences	13	65.0	7	35.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	100
Academic vocabulary	14	70.0	3	15.0	3	15.0	0	0.0	100
Punctuation	9	45.0	9	45.0	2	20.0	0	0.0	100
Cohesion	12	60.0	8	40.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	100
Discourse markers	15	75.0	5	25.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	100
Paragraphs	12	60.0	8	40.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	100
Clear and coherent essays	10	50.0	9	45.0	1	5.0	0	0.0	100
Paraphrasing	16	80.0	3	15.0	1	5.0	0	0.0	100
In text referencing	16	80.0	4	20.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	100
APA reference list	12	60.0	6	30.0	2	20.0	0	0.0	100

N = 20

When the researcher combined the high and medium extent responses in Table 9, 85% or more of the lecturers agreed that they were faced with all the challenges listed in the table to that extent. The areas where all lecturers (100%) were specifically affected either highly or moderately were: a lack of cohesion, inability to use discourse markers

and no coherent paragraphs. As shown in the Table, there was only 1 lecturer who was not affected by the students' incorrect use of prepositions. This was confirmed and expanded by lecturers in the open-ended questions that indeed students had a big challenge with language usage (grammar). According to the lecturers, students had various challenges with grammar when writing academic essays. As a result, students were failing to adhere to numerous academic conventions and mechanics in producing the required academic writing texts. For example, students were writing long sentences without punctuation marks, particularly commas or semi-colons. They began sentences and proper nouns with small letters, among others. Similarly, in the interviews lecturers also stressed this as a big challenge for students. Lecturer Mbuku said, *“Students were writing essays randomly without even a pause. Sometimes a paragraph which has four lines for them it is one sentence because there is no punctuation used. Students don't know where a paragraph begins and where it ends before starting with the other. have a lot of grammatical errors such as mixing tenses, no subject verb agreement and no use of semantic relations. In addition, they have very poor vocabulary which is not suitable for academic students.”*

As shown in Table 9, all lecturers (100%) indicated the incorrect use of in-text referencing and 90% cited APA referencing of sources as challenges faced by students. In the open-ended questions lecturers also revealed the issue of poor referencing skills as an academic writing challenge that caused students to commit plagiarism. Lecturers expressed their views that since the inception of the internet, there seemed to be much

plagiarising from students. In addition, lecturers also said that students' written assignments were swamped with copying, cutting and pasting of ideas without acknowledging the sources. According to lecturers, students' citations or quotations were not supported by their own arguments and they pretended as if those ideas were their own. Furthermore, students were thus struggling to express their ideas in their own words (paraphrasing) or even when summarising. Plagiarism is not allowed at university and considered as academic theft.

Similarly, during interviews lecturers were concerned with referencing problems experienced by students. Lecturers said that even though students were taught and given a referencing guide for APA they did not have time to revise or refer to it when they wrote assignments. Lecturer Mbuku said, "*....students searches for related articles to what they are given to write from the internet. When they find ideas or information they don't bother to alter anything. They download and print the source while pretending as if the ideas are theirs. Thereafter, students forget the table of content; they just type a cover page and submit for marking.*" The same lecturer continued to say, "*Most of the students' writing is plagiarized. For example, they do not know how to acknowledge sources both in text and a required reference list at the end per referencing style which is followed at UNAM.*" Another Lecturer Baxson expressed similar views and said, "*Students were subjects of plagiarism.*"

Apart from the qualitative data that triangulated with the quantitative data in Table 9, other challenges that emerged from the open-ended questions and interviews included English as a second language, time management, structuring an academic essay, inability to identify the rubric words, building up knowledge from what students had already learnt, taking responsibility for their own learning and the SMS writing style.

English as a second language or even third language for many students at the KMC was another challenge which was also seen as a cause of challenges in academic writing. Lecturers revealed in the open-ended questions that students were not practising and using English, the medium of instruction at the university, both inside and outside classrooms. Since students were not practising the medium of instruction, most of the time they faced challenges when they wrote assignments. Furthermore, students usually had a very limited vocabulary and made many grammar mistakes.

The issue of time management was another challenge that was revealed in the interviews. Lecturers mentioned that students were not honouring the time allocated to writing their assignments. For example, Lecturer Mbuku strongly pointed out that, *“Students were not writing their academic texts in time, instead they wait until in the last minutes of the submission dates of assignments. When assignments were due, they come up with a lot of excuses such as, they were given many assignments by other lecturers, and were very busy which was not true.”*

The structure of an academic essay was also mentioned by lecturers as a challenge in the open-ended questions only. Some lecturers said that students were writing academic essays that were similar to non-academic ones. According to responses from the open-ended question, lecturers said that students were unable to follow the structure of an academic essay where they should write good introductions, a body that divided into several paragraphs, preceded by sub-headings and conclusions.

Another challenge which was pointed out by lecturers in the open-ended questions was that students were unable to identify the rubric words which directed them to answer questions. As a result, students always ended up writing out of context due to not understanding what was required.

In the interviews lecturers also revealed that the issue of building up knowledge from what students had already learnt in previous academic year levels was a challenge for students. Lecturer Mbuku mentioned that *“Students work like at secondary school where things differ per grade. As a result, students were not using their past experiences and thought what were taught in the current year of study were not to be used in the next level of study.”*

Lecturers also mentioned in the open-ended questions that students were not taking responsibility for their own learning. According to the lecturers, students wanted to be pushed to learn, reminded about written assignments given to them, their work revised and told to go to the library. Students were accustomed to high school life where they had been controlled by a bell ringing for everything they had to do, thinking that the university operated in the same way. Consequently, they found it difficult to take responsibility for when to do their work. Similarly, in the interviews Lecturer Mbuku said that *“students do not take responsibility of their learning; and they do not want to progress in their studies, what they only want is just to be given marks even if the work is not satisfactory.*

It was revealed by lecturers in the open-ended questions that students were also failing to distinguish between formal and informal writing. Students were influenced by the SMS writing style, even in writing academic texts. For example, students were using abbreviations, contractions and informal language in their texts.

4.4.3 Lecturers’ perceptions on the causes of students’ academic writing difficulties

Similar to the students, lecturers were also asked what might be the possible causes of the students’ academic writing difficulties. A predetermined list of causes of students’

academic writing difficulties was given in the questionnaire for lecturers to show their level of agreement and disagreement. Table 10 presents their responses.

Table 10: Lecturers' responses on the causes of academic writing challenges

Causes of academic writing challenges	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	%
Lack of practice at tertiary institutions	8	40.0	5	25.0	6	30.0	1	5.0	100
Underprepared at high school	14	70.0	6	30.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	100
Teachers unprepared writing lessons	4	20.0	8	40.0	7	35.0	1	5.0	100
Lack of reading resources	5	25.0	6	30.0	8	40.0	1	5.0	100
Reluctance of teachers to teach writing	6	30.0	8	40.0	4	20.0	2	10.0	100
Ineffective feedback on students writing	6	30.0	9	45.0	3	15.0	2	10.0	100
Socio-economic factors of students	7	35.0	5	25.0	4	20.0	4	20.0	100

N = 20

When the two levels of agreement were combined, all lecturers (100%) agreed that, under-preparedness of students at high schools was causing academic writing challenges at university level. This was confirmed in the lecturers' responses to the open-ended question when they regarded under-preparedness as both a cause, as well as a challenge. Lecturers felt that students were not initiated into academic writing at high schools before they enrolled at the university. Consequently, students entered the university with the perception that there was no difference between the writing done at secondary schools and at university. Since they could not adapt to the situation easily, they faced a plethora of problems. On the same issue, the open-ended questions also revealed that,

since students were experiencing academic writing for the first time at university, it was not easy to convince them that there was a difference between how they were writing at secondary school and how they should write at university. Therefore, students continued with the non-academic writing style even if they were penalised during marking. Lecturers expanded on this strategy in the interviews. For example, Lecturer Baxson said *“Academic writing should not start here (at university); teaching of all the basics and grammar ... should start right from secondary school. If students are not properly prepared at secondary school level, universities will always have a problem, because we don’t teach them to master the basic skills at university. Here we just consolidate what they already know in the language and start right from there.”* Lecturer Mbuku also said, *“..... Poor secondary school background in English might be the umbrella of most challenges.”*

Similar to not being initiated at high schools, lecturers expanded in the open-ended questions that students were not oriented at the beginning of their Year 1 to know what academic writing was. Lecturers claimed that there was no orientation programme that included the introduction of academic writing and its difference from non-academic writing. According to them, failure to introduce this important part of academic life at university before the students started formal classes caused many problems in the process.

Furthermore, Table 10 shows that 65% of lecturers agreed that a lack of academic writing practise at tertiary institutions might be the cause of writing challenges. It was also mentioned in the lecturers' open-ended questions that students were ignorant about the fact that they needed to work hard at their studies, as well as that they were not practising the writing skills on their own. One of the lecturers, Baxon, reflected that *“students only want to depend on just learning during lectures and are not practicing academic writing after classes. They do not revise the referencing guide handouts given to them together with their notes and in the end they think lecturers should do the work for them. “*

The quantitative data also showed that 70% of lecturers agreed that the reluctance of lecturers to teach writing was also responsible for that academic writing challenges students experienced. The qualitative data also confirmed this. In the open-ended questions lecturers revealed that lecturers also contributed to students' academic writing difficulties in terms of how they were handling the academic writing activities. Some of the lecturers, especially those who were teaching content subjects, were not involved in helping students with academic writing. In addition, when students approached such lecturers they were denied help and always referred back to the EAP lecturers for academic writing related matters. It also became clear that language lecturers expected every lecturer to be skilled in academic writing so that when they gave academic assignments they knew what was expected from students in terms of academic writing.

If students were not helped by all lecturers who were teaching them, it would cause many problems. Lecturer Mbuku said, *“Some other (content) lecturers think since there are lecturers who are teaching English for Academic Purposes, they are the only ones to teach students about academic writing. They forget that all lecturers should know what academic writing conventions and mechanics were, and they should all know the referencing style that is used.”* Another lecturer, Alfred, also said that *“Students are complaining every time that whenever lecturers give assignments to write, they do not explain how students should write, they assume students know everything since they learnt in their first year or they are busy learning. Lecturers forget that, those responsible for teaching English for Academic Purposes are just paving way for them and students. Where they have left, other lecturers should continue helping out.”*

Table 10 also showed that 45% of lecturers disagreed that the lack of reading materials, as well as socio-economic factors (40%), was causing academic writing challenges. These two causes, as listed in the Table, were not even mentioned in the lecturers’ open-ended question and interviews.

The other cause that was mentioned in the open-ended questions was that some lecturers were not penalising students when they did not follow academic writing conventions. Some lecturers just continued to give students marks even if they went wrong. When this happened, students thought that they were doing things right. For example, those lecturers would not consider the wrong use of punctuation marks and other grammatical

errors. Furthermore, content subject lecturers ignored academic writing conventions and mechanics when marking students' written texts, and just considered the content. Similarly, in the interviews Lecturer Baxson said that *“lecturers who were not specialized in teaching EAP or languages were reluctant in handling some other issue such as those they were not comfortable to teach.*

In addition, lecturers also revealed in the open-ended question and interviews that there was no reading culture among students at the campus. According to Lecturer Baxson, *“students were not visiting the library for studying, if students could have created a habit of reading they would have gained a lot of knowledge on what academic writing is.”*

Lecturers mentioned in the open-ended questions that students were failing to use dictionaries to check for spelling and the appropriate use of words, especially when they wrote academic texts. Furthermore, lecturers said that three quarters of the students at university did not own dictionaries.

Table 10 also showed that 75% of lecturers agreed that the academic writing challenges of students were caused by ineffective feedback from lecturers to students. Therefore, lecturers were further asked on the feedback given to students after marking their assignments. Table 11 presents their responses.

Table 11: Lecturers' responses to the methods of feedback given on academic writing

Method of feedback given to students	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total %
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
I normally give general feedback in class after the tasks are marked	11	55.0	6	30.0	3	15.0	0	0.0	100
Give feedback to individual students after marking the work	11	55.0	4	20.0	5	25.0	0	0.0	100
Feedback is given via written comments and remarks on students scripts for improvements	13	65.0	6	30.0	1	5.0	0	0.0	100
lecturers use questions as part of feedback to prompt students develop awareness of their errors	4	20.0	14	70.0	1	5.0	1	5.0	100
I give very little written feedback on my academic writing	1	5.0	6	30.0	13	65.0	0	0.0	100

N= 20

When combining the two levels of agreement, the results show that 85% or more of lecturers agreed that they were giving feedback in class after marking tasks. About 75% agreed that they gave feedback to students individually, while 95% indicated that they were giving feedback by writing comments and remarks on students' scripts. In addition, 90% of the lecturers agreed that they used questions as part of feedback to prompt students to understand their mistakes better. Furthermore, 65% of the lecturers disagreed with the fact that they were giving very little feedback to students.

Although most of the lecturers did not comment much on this and presented it differently, the responses contradicted the quantitative data in the above Table. Some lecturers revealed in the open-ended questions that other lecturers were not giving meaningful feedback to students on their marked assignments. Furthermore, lecturers

mentioned that students did not attend to the feedback given after their academic texts were marked. In the interviews Mbuku said, *“When lecturers give written feedback on the assignments after marking, students do not read the remarks or comments in order to attend to those errors. As a result they repeat the same mistakes every time.”*

The following issues, which lecturers considered as student’s academic writing challenges, were also considered as possible causes of academic writing difficulties: English as the medium of instruction; the use of SMS style of writing in formal settings; not giving meaningful feedback to students and students’ lack of background knowledge in academic writing from secondary schooling.

4.4.4 Lecturers’ perceptions regarding possible intervention strategies

Lecturers were also asked to share their perceptions of the possible intervention strategies that could be used to address the academic writing challenges of students.

Table 12 presents their responses.

Table 12: Lecturers' views on possible intervention strategies to address students' academic writing challenges

Intervention strategies	Very useful		Useful		Somewhat useful		Not useful at all		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	%
Train lecturers on ways to improve students' academic writing	14	70.0	4	20.0	1	5.0	1	5.0	100
Introduce a writing unit at campus where students can practice writing	14	70.0	5	25.0	1	5.0	0	0.0	100
Lecturers to use effective feedback to show strength and weaknesses of students	9	45.0	11	55.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	100
Lecturers to use constructive feedback after marking either per individual or in groups	10	50.0	10	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	100
All academic lecturers to be involved in teaching academic writing	13	65.0	6	30.0	1	5.0	0	0.0	100

N = 20

As shown in Table 12, when the researcher combined the two levels of usefulness, 90% of lecturers indicated that it was very useful to train lecturers on ways that could improve students' academic writing. It was confirmed in both open-ended questions and interviews that workshops and in-service training for lecturers could be very effective interventions that could address students' academic writing challenges. In the workshops all the lecturers, including content subject lecturers, should be taught academic writing skills and showed how to guide students to write academically. Furthermore, in the workshops lecturers would collaborate with one another and peer-coach themselves regarding students' lack of academic writing skills. During the interviews lecturers expanded on those strategies that they had already indicated in the questionnaire as being important or very important. Lecturer Baxson said, "*There should be workshops*

on academic writing which should be spearheaded by the English language departments. Through these workshops collaboration among lecturers and planning together could be a very important part.” In the same way, Lecturer Mathews said, *“All the lecturers, even those who are not teaching the languages, should be involved in the academic writing of students, by showing them and teaching them how to write and do assignments during workshops.”* Lecturer Mbuku also said, *“If lecturers are not well vested in academic writing, there should be organized workshops to teach both lecturers and students from time to time on how to handle academic writing for students.”* On the issue of peer tutoring and coaching, Lecturer Baxson said, *“Planning together could also be a very important. for example like in our case I am teaching English lower primary students, I can collaborate with the English language teacher (lecturer) at upper primary, and plan on how we can disseminate the information to our students in the classrooms regarding some of the same key points that are on our course outlines.”*

Furthermore, the Table also showed that 95% of lecturers saw the introduction of a writing unit at the campus as useful. In support of the quantitative data, as presented in Table 12, in both open-ended questions and interviews, lecturers also supported the introduction of a writing unit at campus. Since the writing difficulties were worsened by the fact that there was no writing unit where students themselves could go and practise the skills of writing, there was a need for such a unit. Additionally, lecturers said that, if this unit was operational, it would render services to both students and lecturers with

academic writing challenges. During the interviews Lecturer Mbuku expanded on this strategy by saying, *“The writing unit can help students through the use of other students and the lecturers who are trained to handle academic writing problem. Moreover students can practice writing during their spare time at the unit.”*

According to what is shown in Table 12, all the lecturers (100%) indicated that it would be useful to address students’ academic writing challenges by giving effective and constructive feedback when marking students’ texts, as well as by showing them their strengths and weaknesses individually or in groups. This was confirmed in both the open-ended questions and interviews as a useful strategy. Lecturers said that they should give constructive feedback to avoid students’ mistakes being repeated. During interviews Mbuku expanded on what was mentioned in the questionnaire by saying that *“after students’ academic scripts are marked, lecturers should list the most common errors, highlight and discuss them at length during feedback sessions with the whole classes so that they do not re occur. If possible, both general and individual feedback should be used to identify weak students and have tutorials with them. Furthermore, lecturers should encourage students during feedback sessions to read the lecturers’ comments and implement suggestions in their writing in order to improve.”*

Moreover, 95% of lecturers indicated that it would be useful if all lecturers would be involved in teaching academic writing to students. This was also confirmed in the open-

ended questions and interviews. Lecturers revealed in the open-ended questions that, if all academic lecturers were involved in teaching academic writing skills to students, the problem would be minimised. Similarly in the interviews, the involvement of all the lecturers in assisting students with academic writing related matters was expanded and emphasised. For example, Lecturer Mathews said, *“All the lecturers even those who are not teaching the language should be involved in, showing students how to write and do their assignments.”* In the same way, Lecturer Mbuku also said, *“I think all lecturers should stand up together towards helping students on how to write academically. Academic writing should not be seen as the responsibility of those who are teaching it as we all learnt about it during our tertiary education.”*

Lecturers were also prompted to give more information in the open-ended questions, as well as in the interviews, about the strategies they thought could address students' writing challenges. As shown and reflected above, lecturers expanded on the already mentioned strategies in the questionnaire, but also came up with some new strategies that are going to be presented below.

In contrast to training and workshops for lecturers, the open-ended questions also revealed that students should undergo the same training. Since the academic writing challenges of students were persisting, lecturers thought that there should be an increase in students' training with regard to academic writing too.

Although academic lecturers felt that they had no control over this, they indicated in the open-ended questions that students should acquire more background knowledge in academic writing at secondary schools. The acquired background knowledge in academic writing could give students an opportunity to differentiate between academic and non-academic writing. Similarly, in the interviews this strategy was also emphasised. For example, Lecturer Mbuku shared this: *“there should be a solid foundation in English at secondary school level before students join the university to make their way and university life easier when it comes to academic writing. I wish in Grade 12 there could be a component in English that prepares students for university writing so that when they join the university they already know the difference between academic and non-academic essays.”* An alternative strategy that was shared by the same lecturer in the interviews was that *“Another plan could be, since lecturers have community service, they can contact the English advisory teachers and synthesize (enlighten) them on the problems which students who are coming from Grade 12 were facing so that high school teachers could prepare them before they joining the university.”*

Another strategy mentioned both in the open-ended questions and interviews was the use of the APA referencing guide for both students and lecturers. Since referencing was mentioned by students as an academic writing challenge, lecturers mentioned that all lecturers, irrespective of whether they were teaching EAP or not, should make sure to have this guide. The guide could help both lecturers and students with information on

how to avoid plagiarism. During interviews Lecturer Mathews said, “... *I think all the lecturers should have the APA referencing guide that assists them when they give academic writing texts. This is so, because if English for academic purposes lecturers fail to prepare the students well in academic writing, all the lecturers should assist.*”

Similar to this, Lecturer Baxson said, “*Our students should be taught that plagiarism is academic theft and it is punishable by law and they should therefore do away with that. They should be guided in such a way that they know how to reference, know how to quote, and know how to put ideas in their own words.*”

Lecturers also suggested in the open-ended questions that the English for Academic Purposes module should be made compulsory at all year levels. Alternatively, a component of academic writing should be included in each academic subject so that content subject lecturers would consider it very important and start assisting students when they give written assignments.

Another strategy which was mentioned in both open-ended questions and interviews was to expose students to multi-media resources. The resources should be designed to give information on academic writing that could help students improve their writing skills. For example, lecturers mentioned the internet, journals and newspapers. In the interview Lecturer Mathews substantiated this idea by saying, “*students should be exposed to multimedia where sometimes recommended books on academic writing would help*

because they will look at a variety of writing activities and then different styles of writing.”

4.5 Results based on the analyses of documents

An analysis of the students' fifteen previously marked essays revealed that they experienced numerous difficulties and, due to this, their academic writing was weak. There are many academic writing conventions, but for the purpose of this study the major criteria that were used to analyse the students' essays were referencing, mainly to see if the in-text citations and the reference list were done according to the APA referencing style. Secondly, the researcher mainly wanted to see to what extent plagiarism (cut and paste) took place and to see if sources were acknowledged. Thirdly, language usage (grammar skills), such as punctuation, sentence construction, subject verb agreement, paragraphing, incorrect use of tenses and cohesion, was looked at. The last category was the structure of an academic essay; here the researcher looked at aspects, such as the table of contents, introduction, body, with subheadings and conclusion. This was mainly to see whether essays had sufficient and relevant ideas or whether the ideas in the introduction and conclusion were irrelevant.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher did not focus on the content of the essays but on the conventions mentioned above. It should also be noted that students' academic essays were not based on the same topic, but each student formulated his or her own academic title. In addition, the researcher would like to acknowledge that the essays which were used as instruments in this study were already marked by the lecturer who was teaching that subject. However, the researcher did not analyse the essays based on the lecturer's criteria, but according to what was being researched.

Students whose essays were used in this study were from different fields of study for the Bachelor of Education, Upper Primary. Given this background information, the researcher presents the results of the findings from the essays according to the criteria mentioned above. Table 13 presents the results of the 15 essays

Table 13: Frequency table indicating the academic writing challenges identified in the essays

Performance level	Referencing			Plagiarism		Language usage					Structure of academic essay	
	APA in-text referencing	APA reference list	Reference list and in-text correspond	Cut and paste of ideas from sources without acknowledgement	Sources acknowledged	Punctuations	Sentence construction	Subject verb agreement	Incorrect use of tenses	cohesion and paragraphs	Table of content	Introduction, Body with subheadings and conclusion
Very poor	8	7	7	0	10	7	8	2	2	5	3	2
Poor	2	3	0	7	2	4	4	7	4	5	5	3
Satisfactory	2	3	8	6	3	2	2	3	6	5	3	4
Good	3	2	0	2	0	2	1	3	3	0	4	6
Total	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15

N = 15

4.5.1 Referencing and plagiarism

According to the analysis of the fifteen essays, the results in Table 13 show that 5 students used the APA in-text referencing incorrectly, such as failing to cite sources and employing an arbitrary choice of attributive verbs. For example, one of the students cited poorly in the essay by saying “*According to Dr William De Jong if more alcohol is consumed than the body can efficiently metabolize.....*” In another essay the citation was “*According to Daniel O. & Rory, D’s (1999) research states that urban schools are allocated in major cities*” Besides this, the sources from the internet were not cited correctly. For example, one essay had the following, “*In rural areas around Africa, Raw materials from sausage tree are used to make a wide range of products that can broadly be classified as household utensils, tools, and equipment.* (Abstracted: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/x5327e/x5327e06.htm> (16/09/13).”

There were only 5 student essays that employed correct in-text citation and correct referencing of sources. This means that those students seemed to have used their ideas correctly by acknowledging sources appropriately. Ten essays had reference lists which were poorly done and lists which consisted of sources that were not paraphrased or quoted in the text. The essays also revealed that the ten poorest essays were full of patchwork plagiarism, which means students relied mostly on copying and cutting ideas and pasting without supporting those ideas with their own understanding.

4.5.2 Language usage

The essays showed that almost all the students had problems with punctuation, such as the correct use of the comma, semi-colon and full stop. For example, only 4 student essays were constructed well, with the correct punctuation. Eleven of the student essays were poorly punctuated. Furthermore, when very poor and poor levels were combined, constructions of sentences in the essays were poorly done by twelve students. For example, some of the very poor students constructed single sentences that consisted of five lines without using a comma or semi-colon. In some of these essays the subjects were not agreeing with the verbs. Only three students constructed sentences properly.

When the two levels of very poor and poor were combined, it was found that six student essays reflected incorrect use of tenses. Moreover, all the essays showed that students had difficulties in constructing paragraphs. The ideas were mixed up even in those cases where work was just cut and pasted from sources. One could not distinguish clearly between paragraphs and sentences because of the way essays were structured. Lastly, there was little cohesion in the expression of students' ideas. Students failed to synthesise ideas.

4.5.3 Structure of an academic essay

Academic essays should have a directive map which takes the reader through what to find in the text. According to what is presented in Table 13, when the sub-sections, satisfactory and good, were combined, seven of the essays had well-constructed Tables of Contents, which were informative and clear. When the sub-sections, very poor and poor, were combined, the Tables of Contents of eight of the essays were poorly done. From Of these eight essays, some of the Tables of Contents did not match with what was in the text, and one of those essays was written in a non-academic format without any headings or a Table of Contents.

When the researcher combined the levels of satisfactory and good, ten of the essays had an introduction, body with subheadings based on the topic, as well as a conclusion. In addition, those essays had well or fairly well constructed introductions and conclusions. As shown in the Table, only five of the essays had unclear subheadings in the form of either one word or a name which did not inform the reader what the focus was. Additionally, the essays did not have sufficient or relevant ideas in the introduction and conclusion.

4.6 Results based on the Chi-square analyses

The Chi- square analyses were done to assess the differences between students' academic writing challenges at different year levels of tertiary studies. Cross tabulations were used to do this. Table 14 presents the differences and the extent to which students of each year level faced the academic writing challenges.

Table 14: Crosstab matrices for year levels of students on the academic writing challenges

Academic writing challenges of students	Year of study	High extent	Medium extent	Low extent	No extent	Total	p-value
		%	F%	F%	%		P <0.05
Incorrect use of tenses	1	25.0	27.5	40.0	7.5	100	0.005
	2	15.0	34.4	37.5	20.0	100	
	3	0.0	30.3	48.5	21.2	100	
Incorrect use of prepositions	1	15.0	40.0	32.5	12.5	100	0.008
	2	7.5	35.0	37.5	20.0	100	
	3	3.0	21.2	51.5	24.2	100	
Displaying no cohesion in the texts that they write	1	12.5	47.5	30.0	10.0	100	0.028
	2	15.0	32.5	27.5	25.0	100	
	3	3.0	33.3	39.4	24.2	100	
Inability to use discourse markers in academic essays such as linking words	1	17.5	30.0	40.0	12.5	100	0.006
	2	12.5	17.5	52.5	17.5	100	
	3	0.0	30.3	33.3	36.4	100	
Incorrect use of punctuation marks	1	15.0	30.0	37.5	17.5	100	0.017
	2	7.5	15.0	37.5	40.0	100	
	3	6.1	15.2	42.4	36.4	100	
Inability to use in-text citation correctly	1	20.0	40.0	25.0	15.0	100	0.019
	2	17.5	35.0	22.5	25.0	100	
	3	6.1	27.3	36.4	30.3	100	
Inability to compile a correct APA reference list correctly	1	27.5	22.5	32.5	17.5	100	0.028
	2	22.5	30.0	27.5	20.0	100	
	3	9.1	24.2	27.3	39.4	100	
Making several spelling mistakes	1	15.0	25.0	55.0	5.0	100	0.053
	2	10.0	27.5	40.0	22.5	100	
	3	0.0	33.3	45.5	21.2	100	
Incorrect use of the parts of speech	1	20.0	55.0	20.0	5.0	100	0.004
	2	10.0	57.5	30.0	2.5	100	
	3	3.0	42.4	45.5	9.1	100	

N= 113

The last column of the Table shows the statistical significance of the differences found among the three groups. According to what is shown in the Table, all the variables indicate that there were significant differences ($P < 0.05$) between the year levels of

study. For all the challenges it seems that, when students progressed from first year to second and third year respectively, their academic writing challenges were decreasing. For example, more Year 1 students than Year 2 and 3 students were highly affected by almost all of the academic writing challenges. Thus, regarding almost all the academic writing challenges listed, as the year level increased, there was a decrease in the number of students who felt that they were highly challenged. When one looks at the category where students felt that they were not affected to any extent by the academic writing challenges listed, the following was revealed: The year 1 students had the lowest number of students who felt that they were not affected by the academic challenge. This shows that as students progressed over years at university, they felt less challenged by the academic writing activities.

4.7 Summary

In this chapter, the collected data were analysed and the results were presented in accordance with the research questions. The results presented responses from both students and lecturers on how they perceived students' academic writing challenges. The causes of students' academic writing challenges and the possible intervention strategies that could be used to address those challenges were also presented. Furthermore, the responses from the document analysis which were the 15 previously marked essays of students were presented. Finally, the results from the Chi square analysis which looked at the statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) between the students' year levels of

study and their academic writing challenges was also presented. In the next chapter the findings are discussed, conclusions are drawn and recommendations are made.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings regarding the academic writing challenges faced by Bachelor of Education Primary Level students in using English at UNAM, KMC. A total number of 133 participants, which included 20 lecturers and 113 students of the 2013 academic year, participated in the first phase of the study. The second phase consisted of 10 students and 4 lecturers. The discussion of the results incorporates and integrates the findings from the closed and open-ended questions in both questionnaires; the interviews and previously marked essays. Furthermore, the findings will be discussed in relation to the literature reviewed. However, it should be noted that only the discussion regarding the academic writing challenges will include a discussion of the students' previously marked essay.

The discussion of the findings from data collected from students and lecturers is divided into the following sections: the perceptions of students and lecturers on the importance of teaching and learning academic writing conventions; the academic writing challenges students experienced as mentioned by both students and lecturers; what the two groups

perceived as the causes of academic writing challenges of students; the possible intervention strategies to address the challenges; conclusion and recommendations.

5.2 Students and lecturers' perceptions regarding the importance of academic writing at university

The findings from both students and lecturers' quantitative data as displayed in Table 1 and Table 8 show that the teaching of academic writing to students at university is very important in order to familiarise them with academic discourse. Through writing academic texts, students acquire language skills that help them to become successful in writing. In addition, the findings show that students learn how to manage their time when writing academic texts. When completing their academic tasks, students read a variety of different types of literature by means of which they engage in critical thinking and acquire subject knowledge. This finding is similar to that of Mbirimi (2012) and Leibowitz (2000) who both argue that engaging in critical thinking and acquiring subject knowledge are important in the development and enhancement of various academic qualities. In addition, students are not just writing to obtain grades but they learn more and become more knowledgeable in the subject under study.

Furthermore, despite other communication skill modules, the quantitative data in Table 2 show that the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) module was found to develop the academic writing skills of students to a larger extent than other subjects did. Furthermore, the findings from the interviews show that EAP equips students with the academic literacy needed for other courses where they write essay assignments. The findings also show that through this module students are taught the conventions of academic writing, as well as the ability to cite sources. It also resonates with the academic literacies theory (Lea & Street, 2006) in that students view their reading and writing within disciplines as improving because of the contribution made by the EAP module.

5.3 Discussion of results on the academic writing challenges of students based on students and lecturers' responses

The data from both students and lecturers reveal that students faced several challenges in academic writing. The findings show a number of similarities and some differences between lecturers and students' responses regarding their perceptions of the challenges that students experienced with academic writing. These challenges will be highlighted briefly, based on the themes that emerged from the data.

Both students and lecturers in the closed, as well as in the open-ended, questions and interviews revealed that grammar usage was a problem. According to the results from Tables 3 and 9, aspects of grammar, such as parts of speech, tenses, logic and cohesion, were areas where students were challenged. Results from these Tables also clearly show that lecturers, more than students, felt that students were highly challenged in almost all aspects of grammar usage. In the open-ended question and interviews lecturers specifically revealed that students had difficulties to adhere to even simple language rules, such as beginning proper nouns and sentences with capital letters and that they were writing long sentences without punctuation marks. Findings from the scrutinising of the previously marked essays also confirmed that students experienced several grammatical challenges which included correct punctuation, sentence construction and subject-verb agreement. The results also showed a lack of cohesion in the presentation of students' ideas. These findings concur with the literature that students' sentences are often shortened and complicated because they still grapple with grammatical aspects, such as subject-verb agreement, tenses, spelling, improper use of semicolons and commas, as well as how to write coherent paragraphs (Pineteh, 2012; Yagoda, 2006).

Another challenge that was echoed by both students and lecturers was the incorrect use of referencing which led to plagiarism as the centre of the students' challenges in academic writing. Through referencing the writers or students should demonstrate that they have read the relevant background literature and can provide authority for

statements made (Atta-Obeng & Lamptey, 2013). The closed questions (Table 3 and 9), as well as the open-ended questions and interviews confirmed that even after being taught in EAP about academic writing skills and conventions, students still found it difficult to avoid plagiarism, or to refrain from cutting and pasting of ideas from the internet; they also did not know how to acknowledge sources. They were challenged with in-text citation, as well as with compiling a reference list according to APA conventions. During the interviews lecturers elaborated quite extensively on the fact that students practised all types of plagiarism. According to them, students copied and pasted information directly from sources and submitted assignments for assessment without changing anything and without referring to sources as required. Students felt that they were not well instructed about how to use sources without plagiarising but they also admitted that they often did not even attempt to rephrase information due to running into time constraints.

Data from the student essays confirmed that indeed students were facing the academic writing challenges as indicated by the other data. The majority of student essays were very weak in referencing, especially when acknowledging sources in-text but also in compiling a correct APA reference list. Plagiarism was practised, and the student essays clearly showed that students made use of cutting, copying and pasting of ideas from internet sources without any acknowledgement. According to the literature, referencing is very important in academic writing to support what is written and to avoid plagiarism. As a result, students should acknowledge the contribution that other writers have made

to their own writing. If students do not acknowledge sources used in their write up, it amounts to academic theft which is a criminal offence (Cornwell, & Robertson, 2011; Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 2001). This finding concurs with other research where it was found that even after two semesters of an English for Academic Purposes programme, the majority of students still found it difficult to use academic norms of quoting, paraphrasing and summarising from different sources (Dudu et al., 2013; Holmes, 2004).

Students also revealed in the closed questions that academic writing was more challenging at university than at secondary schools and that was the reason why they were achieving low marks (see Table 5). The findings from the students' responses also revealed that adapting to university life as far as writing academic essays were concerned, was difficult because of their non-academic writing background from secondary schools. Furthermore, lecturers also revealed in the interviews that students experienced writing difficulties because they were not familiarised and properly prepared at secondary school level about what to expect at university. As a result, students find life tough because they have to begin from scratch (English basics) which is supposed to have been done at secondary schools. This finding is similar to one study which revealed that some students' academic writing challenges were due to the fact that the ordinary essays which students used to write at secondary school level were quite different from formal academic writing at university (Tardy, 2010). Similarly, another author corroborates the findings that academic essays are complex and quite intimidating

to someone who has not done much writing previously, as he or she would be overwhelmed by the new formats and writing styles when writing. In addition, students find it difficult to differentiate between written and spoken words and phrases (Al Fadda, 2012). The finding is also supported by literature which reports that on entering university, students find themselves inundated with work that is not only greater in volume but also more difficult than they were used to at high school. At university there is a new disciplinary epistemology which requires students to discuss competing literary theories and harness evidence to support what is written (Dysthe, 2001).

The medium of instruction which is not the mother tongue of the students was revealed by both students and lecturers in the open-ended questions and interviews as a challenge. The response from most students revealed that they hardly ever practised English because they spoke their mother tongues most of the time. As a result, students struggled to cope with institutional literacy expectations because the language of instruction was not the mother tongue of many students. This finding concurs with Gentil (2005) who argues that carrying out complicated research in a second language exacerbates the issue of expertise since students feel uncertain about their research and writing skills in their L2. It is also supported by the views of one study that, when students do not use the medium of instruction effectively, they may not produce effective academic writing texts. Furthermore, the finding agrees with the observation regarding Black South African students, who face an additional difficulty in writing because of English, an unfamiliar language. Therefore, students should master the language of instruction

before they join the university (Archer, 2010; Bacha, 2002; Leibowitz, 2000 & Moyo, 1995, cited in Mpepo, 2009; Tshotsho, 2006).

The lack of time management was also a challenge which both students and lecturers revealed in the open-ended question and interviews. Both groups resonated that students did not honour the time allotted for writing assignments and relaxed until close to the due dates. As a result, students struggled to find relevant sources and often plagiarised. In addition, students missed classes just to write their assignments and missed what was taught in class during their absence. Lecturers revealed that students came up with numerous, invalid excuses for not adhering to submission dates. These findings are similar to what was reported in the literature that most students fail to produce academically crafted work because they just produce one draft in the last minute and submit for assessment with the aim of beating the submission deadlines (Dudu et al., 2012; Leibowitz, 2000).

Page limits or not sticking to the required number of words was revealed by students in the open-ended question and interviews as a challenge. According to students, they were expected to write several pages on a single question. This made their writing difficult since they ran out of ideas and eventually repeated the same ideas or just copied and pasted without acknowledging sources. This finding corroborates one study which reports that because students miscalculated the time allocated for writing essay

assignments, they consequently struggle to meet the required length of tasks and do not follow the required processes of writing (Dudu et al., 2012; Leibowitz, 2000).

According to Nightingale (2000), effective and relevant writing instruction enables students to see writing as “a complex process composed of many different kinds of activities that eventually result in that product” (p.135). In the open-ended question and interviews students indicated that they were finding it difficult to comply with these processes and stages of writing, and they typically would submit their first drafts for assessment. This finding resonates with some studies that reveal that students did not see writing as a process; the majority never planned their work or writes more than one draft and they also never edited their work. However, those students who attempted to use process writing found it difficult at the planning and drafting stages (Barker, 2000; Dudu et al., 2012; Leibowitz, 2000; Mutwarasibo, 2011; Shulman, 2005). The findings derived from the lecturers’ answers to the open-ended question also revealed that students were unable to follow the structure of an academic essay. Lecturers’ responses showed that students were writing in a non-academic essay style without providing a good introduction, a body, which was divided into several paragraphs preceded by subheadings, and conclusions. Data from the student essays confirmed that indeed some of the students’ essays were written in a non-academic format with no subheadings, such as an introduction, body and conclusion or a table of contents. This is confirmed by literature which reveals that many students’ academic papers are fragmented with no

structural connection between the introduction, body and conclusion, as well as paragraphs that are illogical and often not well developed (Pineteh, 2012).

5.3.1 How the academic writing challenges of students differ per academic year level

Finally, the findings from the Chi square results of how academic writing challenges differed per year level revealed that, as students moved to the next academic year levels, there was a decrease in how they had felt in their previous levels. In short, Year 1 students were affected more than the Year 2 and 3 students (see Table 14). This clearly shows that, although students faced various academic writing challenges, they were making progress from the foundation to subsequent years.

5.4 Students and lecturers' perceptions of the possible causes of students' academic writing challenges

The findings from both students and lecturers in the closed question (see Table 5 and 10) reveal that both participant groups strongly agreed that the under-preparedness of students from secondary schools was a root cause of academic writing challenges at university level. Similarly, the findings from the open-ended question and interviews also reveal that students were not inducted at secondary schools regarding what to

expect at university. So, they took it for granted that writing at university would be similar to writing at secondary schools. Furthermore, lecturers confirmed that students seemed to be used to how the essays were written or taught in secondary schools where chunks of language were reproduced word for word without acknowledging the source. This finding is similar to the literature which reveals that students were not prepared to write adequately at secondary schools and, consequently, the higher education sector is inundated with students who are academically under-prepared (Angelil-Carter, 2000). The finding is also similar to another study which reveals that students struggle with academic writing because they have not been socialised fully into the university space and, therefore, cannot access and interpret the highly specialised discourses of higher education (Cliff & Hanslo, 2009; Fernsten & Reda, 2011). This finding is also similar to Chokwe (2011) who says that students' poor schooling backgrounds often characterise their weak academic performance and that it is likely to continue in higher education.

Lack of practising academic writing at tertiary institutions was causing their problems. The findings from both open-ended and interviews with students and lecturers reveal that students depended on what was done in classes only. As a result, since they were not practising writing after class, they normally forgot what they had learnt in their previous years.

The lack of resources was revealed as a cause of academic writing challenges by students in the open-ended questions and interviews. The finding shows that it was difficult for students to find sources that substantiated their ideas because the campus library had limited resources, and there was no bookshop to buy prescribed books. In addition, the internet connectivity was unavailable most of the time or too slow. Furthermore, it was revealed in the interviews that students were denied the opportunity to obtain current information through newspapers which were received by the library one week after being published. This finding is similar to the students' views in the Academic Writing Blog (2011) which points out that there is a lack of resources on their campuses. In addition, there was limited access to internet connectivity where they could look for sources that were not available in the library.

The findings from the qualitative data also reveal that the reluctance of some lecturers to teach writing was causing challenges. This was particularly pointing to some of the content subject lecturers who were not giving students assistance on matters pertaining to academic writing conventions, yet they constantly gave them academic writing assignments. The responses showed that students only depended on EAP lecturers' assistance while they expected all lecturers to help. Based on the results, content subject lecturers were not giving support to students and thought that it was the responsibility of the EAP and other language lecturers. Clearly students' academic writing can only develop sufficiently if a more holistic approach is followed where all lecturers play a role. Based on social constructivism, the theoretical framework of the study, the More

Knowledgeable Other (MKO) should continue scaffolding students in their academic writing tasks. From the research results it seems that students were not receiving the necessary support from all the lecturers (MKOs), and this negatively influenced their academic writing skills development.

The findings in Table 5 and 10 also show that some of the students' academic writing difficulties were caused by their socio-economic status. This was not expanded in the qualitative data. However, this finding is similar to the literature which reveals that a lack of support from society and the family in terms of providing English Foreign Language (EFL) learners with sufficient opportunities to practise the target language causes a major handicap in effectively learning the target language, including academic writing skills (Khan, 2011; Tahaineh, 2010).

Feedback was also revealed by both students and lecturers in the quantitative and qualitative data as a cause of academic writing challenges. The findings from the closed questions in Table 6 and 11 show that both students and lecturers agreed that ineffective feedback could cause students' writing difficulties. In addition, findings from students' comments presented in Table 6 indicate that feedback was not given to individual students to improve on their weaknesses. The findings from students' interviews also reveal that some lecturers, particularly the content subject lecturers, were just giving feedback on content or whether students had answered the questions instead of

discussing the conventions and mechanics of academic writing. On the contrary, the findings from most students and lecturers in Table 6 and 11 show that general feedback was given to students after marking. Furthermore, they all showed that written comments and remarks were given on students scripts, geared towards improvement. In addition, the findings show that questions to probe students to develop awareness of their errors were also given. However, the findings from the lecturers' open-ended questions and interviews reveal that all sorts of feedback were given to students but that they did not attend to the comments. As a result, students constantly repeated the same mistakes. The findings from the students are similar to several studies that reveal that conflicting feedback provided by instructors from different departments in an institution also leads to students' lack of confidence in their writing skills. The writers also report that constructive feedback was not given to students, especially after the marking of essays. In addition, some lecturers find providing feedback especially in large classes a waste of valuable time (Archer, 2007; Can, 2009).

Students' absenteeism was also revealed as a cause. The findings from the interviews showed that students were not attending classes regularly. Some of the participating students revealed that they missed many sessions, particularly those covering academic writing because of their absence from classes. Students revealed that when they missed classes, lecturers were not repeating what had already been taught during their absence.

The current use of the Short Messages Service (SMS) writing style on mobile phones was revealed to be causing many problems in students' academic writing. The findings from students' open-ended questions and interviews reveal that students' academic texts were full of abbreviations, contractions and informal language. This finding is similar to that of several studies discussed in the literature reviewed which report that increasing access to the writing genre of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Short Messaging Services (SMS) and Blogging, has impacted the quality of student writing. Students often struggle to switch from the informal, social media, writing style to the more restricted and more conservative, formal, academic style when they write academic papers (Pineteh, 2012; Williams, 2008).

Previous knowledge was also revealed in the students' interviews as a cause. The findings show that instead of students building up knowledge from what they had learnt in their previous academic year, they forgot what was learnt and expected lecturers to repeat the same topics in their current year levels. Employing knowledge gained from a previous academic year is one of the fundamentals of the theoretical framework of this study which regards the individual's past experiences as important for creating new experiences (Meltem, 2007).

The lack of orientation sessions on academic writing was also revealed by the lecturers in the interview as a cause. The findings show that students were not inducted on the

importance of academic writing at the beginning of the year. As a result, students did not see its importance and this caused problem in the process of learning and writing. Lecturers also revealed that there was no orientation programme that included the introduction of academic writing and its characteristics to show that these are different from non-academic writing to new students every academic year.

It was also revealed by lecturers in the open-ended question and interviews that there was no reading culture among students at the campus. The findings show that students were not visiting the library for study purposes. This finding is similar to that found by Yagoda (2006) who reports that reading extensively is the only way to acquire a deep-seated understanding of the language. This means that if students do not develop a positive attitude towards reading, their inadequate experiences of extensive reading and under-developed comprehension skills will cause difficulties in writing.

It was also found in the interviews that some of the content subject lecturers were causing a large number of academic writing problems for students. Students revealed that such lecturers were unapproachable as far as academic writing matters were concerned because they were not teaching the subject, yet they also gave written assignments. In addition, it was also revealed that content subject lecturers were not penalising students who did not follow academic writing conventions and just concentrated on marking content.

It was also revealed in the open-ended questions and interviews by lecturers that students were failing to use dictionaries to ensure correct spelling and appropriate use of words. As a result, students made many grammatical errors. The findings also show that most of the students had no dictionaries. This is similar to the literature reviewed which reports that students face numerous problems with syntactical and inappropriate, lexical selections English when writing texts and this results in their inability to produce well-written academic texts (Archer, 2010; Bacha, 2002; Leibowitz, 2000; Moyo, 1995 as cited in Mpepo, 2009).

One of the fundamental goals of social constructivism is the process writing approach which follows different stages in producing a good essay. According to the findings students themselves revealed in the interviews that not practising the different stages of process writing and only producing one draft for submission caused many problems in what they wrote. Similar to this finding, one study reveals that the process writing where learners are supposed to pre-write, plan, draft, revise and edit their ideas is not done because students only produce products which have multiple errors. Furthermore, lecturers were not giving students opportunities to practise the process writing in class and only taught them the theory; lecturers claim that practising process writing in class was impossible because of the large class sizes (Chokwe, 2011; Pineteh, 2012).

The open-ended questions and interviews also revealed that students were not taking ownership of their own learning. Findings from some of the students and lecturers in

particular reveal that students were accustomed to high school life where they had been controlled by a bell being rung for everything they did; consequently, they thought that the university operated in the same way. The findings show that students wanted to be reminded about written assignments given to them, how to revise their work and when to go to the library. University is for mature people who have specific goals in life and who do not need to be reminded what to do because they have their own schedules. This finding resonates with one study which reveals that students were affected by a lack of emotional readiness and intellectual maturity that often enable university students to take control of their own learning processes. These deficiencies severely affect the way the students approached the whole learning experience and the way they handled academic tasks, such as academic writing (Pineteh, 2012).

5.5 Students and lecturers' perceptions of the intervention strategies for improved academic writing

Students and lecturers mentioned several intervention strategies that could be used to improve students' academic writing. The findings from both students and lecturers as displayed in Table 7 and 12 show many similarities. The results from these Tables clearly show that both students and lecturers felt that there should be continuous academic writing, in-service training for students and lecturers as a remedy to students' writing challenges. During interviews lecturers elaborated quite extensively on the fact

that all the lecturers, including content subject lecturers, should be taught academic writing skills at workshops. In addition, lecturers should be shown how to guide students to write academically well. Lecturers revealed in the interviews that collaboration and planning among lecturers could be very effective during the workshops. Furthermore, peer tutoring on academic writing skills will enable sharing of experiences and challenges faced in academic writing. However, the findings show that the workshops or the in-service training should be spearheaded by the English language departments.

Introduction of an Academic Writing Unit (AWU) at the campus was seen as a useful intervention strategy. This was shown even in the quantitative data in Table 7 and 12. In the open-ended questions and interviews both students and lecturers revealed that if this unit existed at campus, students could go and practise writing. Furthermore, the findings show that the Writing Unit could provide and facilitate remedial writing workshops which lecturers with large classes cannot afford to provide. Additionally, lecturers revealed extensively that if the unit was operational, it could render services to both students and lecturers and the departments catering for all students' writing needs. Furthermore, lecturers revealed in the interviews that students could practise writing by themselves at this unit with the help of the MKO. The MKO could be other students who are trained to do so, as well as the lecturers responsible. The MKO could continuously provide students with support. This finding is similar to several studies reviewed report that English Language Centres, which are dealing with communication skills courses,

should introduce academic writing unit facilities to cater for all students from different faculties or departments. Furthermore, according to the literature, the purpose of this unit is to introduce students to academic writing by taking them through a step-by-step process of writing academic essays in order to grow as writers (Brown & Gilchrist, 2011; Cooperstein & Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004; Crawford, 2015). The finding is also similar to several studies in the reviewed literature which report that continuous development training for lecturers of all disciplines may be organised and hosted by AWU through the Language Centres. Such training can guide students and those lecturers who lack skills in the area of academic discourse and academic writing. Furthermore, the findings show that students' performance at the centre may be used to provide feedback to departments on the ways in which their students are grappling with particular tasks (Archer, 2010; Mbirimi, 2012).

According to the literature, a major part of a student's academic life is spent on writing academic papers (Leibowitz, 2000; Mbirimi, 2012). Therefore, constructive feedback is needed on whatever students are writing so that they can work on their weaknesses. The findings from quantitative data collected from both students and lecturers, as displayed in Table 7 and 12, show that giving effective and constructive feedback during and after marking students' texts appears to be the best intervention strategy.

In addition, lecturers emphasised that students should read and work on the comments given. Students and lecturers revealed that lecturers should not just attend to the students' common writing errors in a holistic approach but, where possible, they should identify individual students with academic writing problems and address these individually. Furthermore, it was also suggested that immediate, clear and concise feedback should be given to students after marking academic tests, assignments or any assessment in order for them to see where they went wrong and to be able to correct their work themselves. Moreover, students' responses also showed that individual or group consultations to discuss students' academic writing weaknesses in their academic writing texts should be given. This finding supports the findings of several scholars who suggest the use of effective feedback in academic writing pedagogy for ESL students to show them their strengths and weaknesses pertaining to their writing so that they can improve in future (Dison & Granville, 2009; Ferris, 2008; Li, 2007; Spencer, 2007; Weaver, 2006; Zhu, 2004). The finding also supports Coffin et al. (2003), who also state that providing feedback on learners' writing is a key pedagogical practice in higher education. Hedge (2000) also says that when instructors give feedback to students, it might assist them in monitoring their own progress and identifying specific language areas that need to be improved. On the other hand, Weaver (2006) also found that tutors should provide appropriate guidance and motivation during feedback rather than just diagnose problems and justify marks.

Collaboration of lecturers towards assisting students with the challenges they faced in academic writing is also seen as a good strategy. According to the results from Tables 7 and 12, both students and lecturers showed that all lecturers should work together on eliminating students writing difficulties. The findings in the open-ended question and interviews revealed that, regardless of which subjects lecturers were teaching, both students and lecturers felt that the teaching and guiding of students in how to write academically was not only the responsibility of EAP lecturers but that of everybody; however, lecturers, specifically, revealed that the foundation of academic writing should be laid by language and EAP lecturers. This finding is similar to the literature which reports that all lecturers or tutors should see themselves as active participants in the process of academic writing by making sure that they are fully equipped and trained to help students with their writing difficulties (Dudu et al., 2012). The findings also support the views of other studies that, when all discipline lecturers are involved in remedying academic writing challenges, strategies to prevent plagiarism would be taught and stressed to students from their first year in university regardless of whether or not it has been taught to them previously (De Sena, 2007; Wilkinson, 2008). It is also similar to what Jurecic (2006) reports, namely that the foundation of academic writing should be first laid by language specialists by teaching the conventions of academic writing, and then continually being taught by discipline specialists so that students can be apprenticed and acculturated into the discourse communities.

In Table 2, the findings show that the English for Academic Purposes course/module was developing students' academic writing skills to a large extent. Dudu et al. (2012) also reveal that academic writing challenges, especially for underprepared students, cannot be solved overnight or in one semester, but only through conscious, consistent and persistent practise over time. Both students and lecturers revealed in the open-ended questions and interviews that the time frame allocated to teaching this subject to students was not enough and should be increased. The findings from the students' interviews revealed that the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course/module should be elevated from a semester module to a year course/module. Alternatively, students suggested that it should be integrated into all the subjects for them to see its importance. Similarly, lecturers specifically revealed in the open-ended questions that students' training with regard to academic writing should be increased. This finding corroborates the findings of other researchers who also argue that, for students to be successful in academic writing, communication skills courses should be offered at least for two semesters. When offered in one semester, students move to the next level before they have mastered all the skills of quoting, paraphrasing and summarising from different sources, as well as writing coherently (Dudu et al., 2012; Holmes, 2004).

Taking ownership of students' learning was revealed by students and lecturers through the open-ended questions and interviews as a very effective strategy. The findings from students' open-ended questions and interviews revealed that those lecturers should guide

them how to be responsible for their learning. Lecturers revealed that students should take charge of their learning and solve their difficulties independently. The finding corroborates with literature that taking ownership of the writing process can help students to understand that effective academic writing is a process which requires effort and commitment. However, in order for students to take this leadership role, they have to be mentored by lecturers, especially since their levels of cognitive development are still low (Pineteh, 2012).

Although academic lecturers have no control over this, another strategy that was revealed in the lecturers' open-ended questions and interviews was that students should acquire background knowledge on academic writing before they enrol at university. In addition, the finding also shows that lecturers felt that a component of academic writing should be integrated into English Grade 12 to prepare and familiarise learners with the differences between academic and non-academic essays. The finding is similar to Graham et al. (2010) who report that the teaching of writing should begin in early childhood, and continue throughout primary and high school for students to cope with writing at university level.

The findings from the lecturers in the interview revealed that since lecturers are doing community service, they can contact the English advisory teachers and enlighten them on the problems, particularly with writing, that students who come from Grade 12,

experience at university. The findings revealed that the high school teachers could prepare students before they joined the university. This finding resonates with the literature that collaboration between universities and colleges and high schools on the issue of writing would address the writing issue. Furthermore, the literature reports that academic writing interventions should begin at primary and secondary education to provide early, supplementary, writing instruction, which aims at preventing or, at least alleviating, later writing difficulties (Chokwe, 2011; Graham et al., 2010; Jurecic, 2006).

The findings from the lecturers' interviews also revealed that both students and lecturers, irrespective of which subjects they were teaching, should use the APA referencing guide. The guide could help both lecturers and students with information of how to avoid plagiarism. This finding corroborates with literature that, in order to assist students to avoid plagiarism, they should use the referencing guide appropriately. The referencing guide should provide information on how to acknowledge sources by citing/quoting, paraphrasing and accurately compiling the reference list (Pecorari, 2008).

Another strategy which was mentioned in both open-ended questions and interviews was that of exposing students to many valuable, multimedia resources. The finding shows that lecturers felt that students should be introduced and exposed to multimedia resources designed to give a variety of writing activities and the different styles of writing. The examples of multimedia resources that were mentioned include thes

internet, journals and newspapers. This finding is similar to that of other scholars, like Olness (2005, p. 9), who argues that appropriate reading material could play an essential role in improving learner's writing. Furthermore, when students read extensively, they will be "familiar with the different writing styles, the structure, and other elements of various genres" (Al Murshidi, 2014, p.59).

Finally, peer tutoring and coaching was revealed by lecturers and students in the interviews as very significant in addressing academic writing challenges. Through peer tutoring, lecturers who teach the same subjects can plan together. For example, English lower primary lecturers can come together with the English language lecturers from upper primary and share their experiences on students' writing. On the other hand, students can also work together and share their academic writing hardships and solutions.

5.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the integrative analysis of this study triangulated findings between the quantitative data (closed question results) and qualitative (open-ended questions, interviews and previously marked essay results). Despite some students claiming in the questionnaires, closed and open-ended questions and interviews that they were

adequately prepared in some areas for the demands of writing at university, the samples of student essays and lecturers' responses gave a different picture.

The implications are that more still needs to be done in preparing ESL students at this campus to cope with writing at university level. The findings clearly show that students at this campus face various academic writing challenges. The challenges that were identified in both students and lecturers' results were referencing, grammar structures, time management, lack of resources, English as a medium of instruction, the role of content subject lecturers and adapting to university writing styles.

Furthermore, both students and lecturers indicated the gaps that existed between secondary schools and university, background from Grade 12, a lack of resources, feedback, SMS writing style, a lack of reading culture and not practising the writing skills as the main causes of the students' writing difficulties. On the other hand, the campus was also causing writing challenges of students because it had not yet introduced an academic writing unit that could provide intensive writing skills to students. It was also found that since students were the centre of learning, they also caused their own academic writing challenges. It was revealed that students did not take ownership of their learning by adhering to time frames and attending classes regularly; they were also using the SMS, informal writing style in academic writing. Therefore, there is need for more intervention strategies in order to address the students' academic

writing challenges. Both lecturers and students agreed that feedback was an important part of teaching academic writing in ESL contexts. Lecturers should give students individual, as well as general, feedback to remedy their writing difficulties. Finally, the findings showed that all academic students should take ownership of their studies, especially in writing, and all lecturers need to become involved in assisting students with academic writing.

5.7 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher offers the following recommendations:

- More time should be spent on teaching writing at secondary school than is currently the case. Teachers who are teaching ESL students at high school level should approach writing as a critical and core aspect of students' education where they expose learners to intensive writing activities throughout their high school years in preparation for university.
- All lecturers at the University of Namibia should undergo rigorous and ongoing training in academic writing skills to equip them fully with the necessary skills for teaching and assessing students' academic writing assignments.

- An Academic Writing Unit (AWU) should be introduced at university campuses through the Language Centres to cater for students' academic writing needs in various ways.
- The English for Academic Purposes module should be elevated from a one semester module to a full year one. Alternatively, if it is impossible to turn it into a full year module, an academic writing component should be included as part of each subject offered at the university.
- Peer tutoring should be done by fellow students who are knowledgeable in academic writing techniques and can teach those techniques to peers. Likewise, this could also be done by lecturers themselves who collaborate to alleviate students' writing challenges by finding ways that can contribute to the successful teaching and learning of academic writing.
- Developing students writing skills should not be left to Communication Skills or language lecturers alone. Rather, all lecturers across the university curriculum should be determined to improve these skills. This should not only be done during the students' first year but until students have completed their courses.
- The researcher would also like to urge university students to conceptualise writing as a process which should go through stages of prewriting, drafting redrafting, revising and proof reading or editing.
- The university needs to provide relevant, up-to-date resources and materials in the library and increase the number of available computers. Furthermore, the internet services need to be upgraded.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Students' questionnaire

Appendix 2: Lecturers' questionnaire

Appendix 3: A letter of permission to the Director of KMC

Appendix 4: A letter of permission from the Director of KMC

Appendix 1: Students' questionnaire

Academic writing challenges faced by Bachelor of Education Primary level students in using English at the University of Namibia, Katima Mulilo Campus

Questionnaire for students

Instructions

This questionnaire aims to investigate the academic writing challenges that you face in using English at the University of Namibia. This is an anonymous questionnaire. Therefore, do not write your name on the questionnaire to ensure privacy and confidentiality. Furthermore, please answer all the questions as honestly as possible.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Please tick the appropriate box and/ or give your comments where required.

1. Are you male or female?

Male	1
Female	2

2. In what year of study are you?

Year 1	
Year 2	
Year 3	

3. What is your field of study?

Languages	1	
Languages and Social Sciences	2	
Mathematics and Sciences	3	

Pre and Lower Primary	4	
Other: Specify.....	5	

4. What is your home language?

English	1	
Silozi	2	
Subia	3	
Sifwe	4	
Oshikwanyama	5	
Other [specify]_____	6	

5. How important do you find the teaching of academic writing to students at the University of Namibia?

Very important	Important	Not very important	Not important at all
1	2	3	4

6. How important do you consider the development of the following skills normally associated with academic writing?

	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not important at all
6.1 Developing language skills				
6.2 Developing organization and time management skills				
6.3. Developing critical thinking skills.				
6.4 Acquiring subject knowledge				
6.5 Developing rules of writing in different genres.				
6.4 Developing paraphrasing skills in				

academic writing to avoid plagiarism.				
6.5 Developing referencing skills				

7. To what extent do you face each of the following possible academic writing challenges when writing assignments in your subjects?

	High extent	Medium extent	Low extent	No extent
7.1 using some of the parts of speech incorrectly.				
7.2 making use of tenses incorrectly.				
7.3 making several spelling mistakes.				
7.4 using some prepositions incorrectly.				
7.5 struggling to write sentences that follow a logic sequence.				
7.6 Inability to use appropriate academic vocabulary.				
7.7 using punctuation marks incorrectly.				
7.8 displaying no cohesion in the texts that I write				
7.9 unable to use discourse markers in academic essays such as linking words, sentence connectors etc.				
7.10 unable to write paragraphs with a clear focus and that are clearly distinguished from other paragraphs.				
7.11 Not able to construct clear and coherent academic essays.				
7.12 struggling with paraphrasing				
7.13 Not able to use in-text referencing well (citing and quoting of sources).				
7.14 Unable to compile a correct reference list based on the adopted referencing style of the university.				

8. In addition to the challenges mentioned in Question 7, what else do you perceive as challenges that you are facing in academic writing?

9. To what extent do you think each of the subjects listed below promote your academic writing?

	High extent	Medium extent	Low extent	No extent
9.1 English for General Communication and study Skills				
9.2 English Communication and Study Skills				
9.3 English for Academic Purposes				
9.4 English Access				

10. Express the degree of agreement or disagreement with respect to the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
10.1 For me academic writing is more challenging at the university than at secondary school level.				
10.2 I find academic writing the easiest part of university requirements.				
10.3 I get low marks in my assignments because of academic writing difficulties.				
10.4 I still have problems of addressing a topic or title clearly				

11. Show the extent to which you agree or disagree that the following are causes of academic writing challenges at university level.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11.1 Lack of writing practice in Tertiary institutions.				
11.2 Student under preparedness at high school to meet the demands of academic studies at tertiary level.				
11.3 Teachers do not prepare lessons that enable students to practice writing activities.				
11.4 Lack of resources or reading materials				

11.5 Teachers' reluctance to teach writing. For example, teachers not giving students essays to write.				
11.6 Ineffective feedback in academic writing of texts at the university and school.				
11.7 Socio- economic factors such as students coming from disadvantaged homes.				

12. In addition to what are covered in Question 11, what more do you perceive as causes of academic writing challenges?

13. To what extent do you perceive the following intervention strategies as useful in order to reduce the academic writing challenges that you are facing?

	Very useful	Useful	Somewhat useful	Not useful at all
13.1 Equip and train lecturers on ways to help us (students) improve the academic writing skills.				
13.2 Introduce a writing unit at the campus where we (students) can practice writing regularly.				
13.3 Lecturers should use effective feedback in academic writing by showing us (students) our strength and weaknesses so that we improve on our future work.				
13.4 Lecturers should use constructive feedback by talking to us individually with regard to our writing tasks after marking.				
13.5 All academic lecturers including language specialists and specific disciplined related lecturers should get themselves involved in teaching and transferring of academic writing skills to us (students).				

14. To what extent do you agree or disagree with how you normally receive feedback from lecturers on your academic writing tasks?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
14.1 I normally receive general feedback and responses in the classroom after the tasks are marked.				
14.2 Lecturers give feedback to individual students after marking their work				
14.3 Feedback is given via written comments and remarks on student scripts for the students to read and improve on their weaknesses.				
14.4 Some lecturers use questions as part of feedback to prompt students to reflect upon what they have written so that they develop awareness of their errors.				
14.5 I receive very little written feedback on my academic writing tasks				

15. In addition to those mentioned in Question 14, what else do you perceive as useful strategies for lecturers to give feedback to the students on their academic writing tasks?

Appendix 2: Lecturer's questionnaire

Academic writing challenges faced by Bachelor of Education primary level students in using English at the University of Namibia, Katima Mulilo Campus

Questionnaire for Lecturers

Instructions

This questionnaire aims to investigate the academic writing challenges that Bachelor of Education undergraduate Upper Primary students face in using English at the University of Namibia, specifically your campus. This is an anonymous questionnaire. Therefore, do not write your name on the questionnaire to ensure privacy and confidentiality. Furthermore, please answer all the questions as honestly as possible.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Please tick the appropriate box and/ or give your comments where required.

1. Are you male or female?

Male	1	
Female	2	

2. Which year level of students are you teaching?

Year 1 only	1	
Year 2 only	2	
Year 3 only	3	
Year 1 and 2	4	
Year 2 and 3	5	
All year levels	6	
Other [specify]	7	

3. Please indicate the department in which you are.

Education in Languages, Humanities and Commerce	1	
Mathematics, Science and Sports Education	3	
Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education	4	
Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Studies	5	
Educational Foundations and Management	6	
Other [specify]		

4. What subjects do you teach?

5. How important do you find the teaching of academic writing to students at university level?

Very important	Important	Not very important	Not important at all
1	2	3	4

6. How important do you consider the development of the following skills normally associated with academic writing?

	Very important	important	Not very important	Not important at all
6.1 Developing language skills.				
6.2 Developing Organization and time management skills.				
6.3. Developing critical thinking skills.				
6.4 Acquiring the knowledge of a subject				
6.5 Developing rules of writing in different genres.				
6.4 Developing paraphrasing skills in academic writing to avoid plagiarism.				
6.5 Developing referencing				

skills				
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7. To what extent do you face each of the following possible academic writing challenges when marking assignments and other pieces of writing in your subjects?

	High extent	Medium extent	Low extent	No extent
7.1 Students using some of the parts of speech incorrectly.				
7.2 Students making use of tenses incorrectly.				
7.3 Students making several spelling mistakes				
7.4 Students using some prepositions incorrectly.				
7.5 Students struggling to write sentences that follow a logic sequence.				
7.6 Students using inappropriate academic vocabulary				
7.7 Students using punctuation marks incorrectly.				
7.8 Students displaying no cohesion in the texts they write.				
7.9 Students are unable to use discourse markers in their writing (e.g. the use of 'linking words' and 'linking phrases', or 'sentence connectors' such as: moreover; in addition; additionally; further; further to this; also; besides; what is more).				
7.10 Students are unable to write paragraphs with a clear focus and that are clearly distinguished from other paragraphs.				
7.11 Students are not able to construct clear and coherent academic essays.				
7.12 Students struggle with paraphrasing.				

7.13 Students are not able to use in-text referencing well (citing and quoting of sources)				
7.14 Students are unable to compile a correct reference list based on the adopted referencing style of the university.				

8. In addition to the challenges mentioned in Question 7, what else do you perceive as challenges for students in academic writing?

9. To what extent do you think each of the subjects listed below promote students' academic writing?

	High extent	Medium extent	Low extent	No extent
9.1 English for General Communication and study Skills				
9.2 English Communication and Study Skills				
9.3 English for Academic Purposes				
9.4 English Access				

10. Show the extent to which you agree or disagree that the following are possible causes of academic writing challenges at university level.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
10.1 Lack of writing practice in Tertiary institutions.				
10.2 Student under preparedness at high school to meet the demands of academic studies at tertiary level.				
10.3 Teachers do not prepare lessons that enable students to practice writing activities.				

10.4 Lack of reading materials				
10.5 Teachers' reluctance to teach writing. For example, teachers not giving students essays to write.				
10.6 Ineffective feedback in academic writing of texts at the university and school.				
10.7 Socio-economic factors such as students coming from disadvantaged homes.				

11. In addition to what are covered in Question 10, what more do you perceive as causes of academic writing challenges?

12. To what extent do you perceive the following intervention strategies as useful in order to reduce the academic writing challenges that your students are facing?

	Very useful	Useful	Somewhat useful	Not useful at all
12.1 Equip and train lecturers on ways to help students improve their academic writing skills.				
12.2 Introduce a writing unit at the campus where students can practice writing regularly.				
12.3 Use effective feedback in academic writing by showing students their strengths and weaknesses so that they improve on their future work.				
12.4 Use constructive feedback by talking to individual students with regard to their writing difficulties after marking.				
12.5 Encourage all lecturers and not only language specialists to get involved in the teaching and transference of academic writing skills to students.				

13. Apart from the strategies mentioned in Question 12, what else do you perceive as useful intervention strategies to reduce academic writing challenges of students?

14. To what extent do you agree or disagree with how you normally give feedback to students on their academic writing tasks?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
14.1 I give general feedback and responses in the classroom to all students after the tasks are marked.				
14.2 I give feedback to individual students after marking their work.				
14.3 I give feedback by writing comments and remarks on scripts for the students to read and improve on their weaknesses.				
14.4 I use questions as part of feedback to prompt students to reflect upon what they have written so that they develop awareness of their errors.				
14.5 I give very little written feedback to students on their academic writing tasks				

15. In addition to those mentioned in Question 14, what else do you perceive as useful strategies to give feedback to the students on their academic writing tasks?

Appendix 3: A letter of permission to the Director of KMC



15 March 2013

To: The Director
 University of Namibia
 Katima Mulilo Campus

Dear Sir

Re: Request for permission to conduct a research at Katima Mulilo Campus

I am writing a thesis for the Master of Education degree in Literacy and Learning with the University of Namibia. My research investigates the nature of challenges that students who are studying towards a Bachelor of Education degree face in using English as well as academic writing at the university.

In the context that the Katima Mulilo Campus has students who are studying towards the aforesaid degree, it is anticipated that the campus will benefit from the findings of this study. To this effect, may you please grant me permission to collect data from both students and lecturers at this campus?

If permission is granted, I will request for students and lecturers' consent to voluntarily participate in this study. I promise to ensure privacy and confidentiality on the data that will be collected.

Thank you in advance

Yours Sincerely
 Ms. Molly Mutimani
 Contact number: 00264 81 4086019

Student signature _____

HOD Signature _____

Appendix 4: A letter of permission from the Director of KMC

<p>☎ (+264 66) 262 6001 Fax: (+264 66) 253 934 Website: www.unam.na</p>		<p>Private Bag 1096 Wineia Road, Katima Mulilo NAMIBIA</p>
<p style="margin: 0;">Inspiring minds & shaping the future</p> <p style="margin: 0;">OFFICE OF THE CAMPUS DIRECTOR: KATIMA MULILO UNAM CAMPUS BK Kangumu, PhD</p>		
<p>22 May 2013</p>		
<p>Ms Molly Mutimani, Lecturer Department of Education in Languages, Humanities and Commerce</p>		
<p>Dear Ms Mutimani</p>		
<p>Re: Request for permission to conduct research at Katima Mulilo Campus</p>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Your letter dated 15th March 2013 bearing the above subject matter has reference, and refers; 2. Permission is hereby granted for you to collect data from both lecturers and students of Katima Mulilo Campus as part of your Master of Education degree in Literacy and Learning with focus on challenges faced by students in using English as well as academic writing at this campus; 3. We trust that you will observe all ethical issues related to research of this nature and that you share your research results with the campus community in the form of a seminar and depositing a copy of your thesis in our library; 		
<p>All the best</p>		
		
<p>Kangumu, B.K., PhD (UCT)</p>		
<p>Campus Director</p>		