



**NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY  
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**FACULTY OF HUMAN SCIENCES**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION**

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF ENGLISH PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES IN THE ESSAYS OF SELECTED  
FIRST YEAR STUDENTS AT THE NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**BY**

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**THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
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AND TECHNOLOGY (NUST)**

**SUPERVISOR: DR NIKLAAS FREDERICKS**

**19 March 2021**

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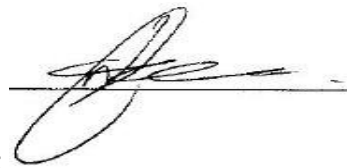
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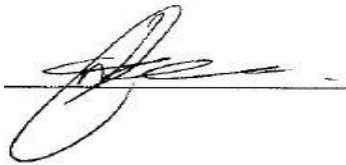
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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my son, Paulus Kondjeni 'Inkelomwene' yaAludhilu, and my father, who always recognised my hard work. May the soul of my father continue to rest in peace.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this study was to analyse the use of English prepositional phrases (PPs) in the essays of selected first year Bachelor of Human Resources Management students at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). The use of PPs are a key constituent of sentence structure. The study used the qualitative method for data collection and analysis. A total of 50 handwritten essays were collected from first year students who were studying towards their Bachelor of Human Resources at NUST. It is important to stress that handwritten essays, as compared to computer assisted typed essays, present realistic feedback on how the study group use PPs. Computers are likely to correct all grammatical aspects of the essays, thereby providing unrealistic data. The transformational generative grammar theory was applied as a framework for the study. The study adopted a descriptive study method because it was the most suitable approach, considering that the study looked at how words are combined to form phrases, with the main emphasis on the study of PPs. The convenience sampling method was used for data collection as it allows the researcher to collect data from a conveniently available pool of respondents. The study findings revealed that there are two types of PPs that were used in the students' handwritten essays, namely the adjectival and the adverbial. The study further established six functions of PPs, applicable to the analysis of essays. Lastly, the study revealed that the analysis of syntactic ambiguities in PPs can help to clarify the punctual meaning of a PP. The study concluded by recommending that a functional syntactic study of students' essays can be conducted to analyse other parts of speech such as the noun phrases, verb phrases or even the function of pronouns. In addition, a morpho-syntactic analysis of prepositional phrases and their ambiguities in the essays can be studied. The study further recommends that a contrastive analysis of the use of English prepositional phrases in comparison with prepositional phrases in indigenous languages can also be studied.

**Key words:** Prepositional phrases, transformational generative grammar, syntax, handwritten essays.



## List of abbreviations / acronyms

AdjP	: Adjectival phrase
AdvP	: Adverbial phrase
NIED	: National Institute for Educational Development
NP	: Noun phrase
NPL	: Natural Language Processing
NSSCO	: Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate
NUST	: Namibia University of Science and Technology
PPs	: Prepositional phrases
PS	: Phrase structure
S	: Sentence
TGG	: Transformational Generative Grammar
VP	: Verb phrase

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

Grammar is the most essential aspect of the English language. Parts of speech, as part of the grammatical system, play a pivotal role in both spoken and written English. Among the parts of speech, prepositions seem to be the most frequently used. However, learning to use prepositions correctly is not so easy as they have several different functions and there are not many preposition rules (Swan, 1988 as quoted by Kök, (2019)). In English grammar, a preposition expresses a relation between two entities. A preposition and its object form a prepositional phrase. Prepositional phrases express meaning closely related to the meaning expressed by adverbs and adjectives: where, when, how, and what kind (Kök, 2019). They can also express a sense of why or who, for example “He’s *in the shop* now.” (where). The word *in* is a preposition. The word *shop* is a noun. The noun is called the object of the preposition.

Prepositional phrases are very powerful, but if not properly used, they can create confusion and ambiguity, either in a spoken or written text. The intended message and the comprehension of the text is thus lost in the process. Using the theory of Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG), Chomsky (1966) assumes that human beings possess linguistic competencies that allow one to generate an infinite variety of sentences from the ones that already exist. This study examines the use of prepositional phrases in the written essays of selected students at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) through the practical application of the Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) theory. Using the theoretical perspectives of the TGG, the researcher was able to show how the same prepositions form different prepositional phrases (adjectivals and adverbials) perform different functions in different sentences. In other words, the researcher, in this study, has indicated that a certain preposition may have more than one meaning, depending on the context in which it is used. The TGG theory was first developed by Noam Chomsky in the 1960s (Lyons, 2001).

When combined with other aspects of the English language, the use of English prepositional phrases in written essays provides for the correct bonding and coherence of a text. This chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study, delimitations and limitations as well as definition of terms and ends by introducing chapter two.

## **1.2 Background of the study**

It is estimated that over one billion people speak the English Language worldwide (McKay, 2012). Approximately 400 million are native speakers of English. Out of all the languages spoken in the world, English is ranked as the most studied and spoken outside its native Britain (Ammon, 2010). However, for the language to be understood universally, the structure of the English language requires the correct usage of, among other things, prepositions. On the other hand, the African continent has about 15 countries that use English as their official language. In the Southern African community, all former British colonies use English as their official language. Examples are Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana. In Botswana, (Alimi, 2011) acknowledges the essentiality of English prepositions in the developing variety of the English language used in Botswana. The English language is the language of instruction in Botswana from Standard 2 onwards; it is the language of government, business and international diplomacy. This statement unequivocally agrees that for the English language to have meaning when communicated, prepositions must form part of the English language. Contrary to a study on the English language in Botswana, a study in Malawi agrees with the importance of the English language, but voiced dissatisfaction with government preferring the use of English while denigrating local indigenous languages (Kamwendo, 2010). Namibia is one of those countries that has used English as an official language since independence in 1990. Bearing in mind that English was to be the language of international business, the role of the English language does not provide for cultural transmission. However, younger Namibians prefer to communicate in the English language as

opposed to local indigenous languages. In an inaugural ceremony to honour one of the most successful businessmen, Frans Aupa Indongo, with a Doctorate degree, Indongo gave his reception speech in the local Oshikwambi language. Students in attendance rejected the speech as 'strange', as they preferred a speech in English (The Case of English in Namibia, 2018). The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture in Namibia has prescribed English and the correct usage of different types of prepositions in its Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate (NSSCO) English Second Language Syllabus for grades 10 and 11. This was implemented from the beginning of the 2019 academic year (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2019). Prepositions typically appear together with a complement as part of a prepositional phrase (PP) (Dahlmeier, 2009). The present study attempts to examine the use of English prepositional phrases in academic essays at the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

The wrong usage of prepositions leads to ambiguity and incoherence of a written text. Ambiguity can also be due to structural inaccuracies. A text that is broken apart by the incorrect use of prepositions fails to adequately convey the correct meaning of the text. Therefore, conversation between the reader and the text is hampered. Writers write "in order to be understood" (Kincaid, 1977). Incoherent texts are meaningless; therefore, they fail to achieve their purpose of conveying meaning adequately. Also, according to K ok (2019), English Second Language (ESL) learners are still struggling with prepositions long after they have achieved a high level of proficiency in English language. They experience difficulties with regard to which prepositions can be used for a particular function and meaning. This study, therefore, would like to analyse the use of English prepositional phrases in the essays of selected Bachelor of Human Resources first year students at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). The the aim is to investigate the types of prepositional phrases used in the essays, to analyse the grammatical functions of prepositional phrases and evaluate the prepositional phrase ambiguities in the essays.

## **1.4 Research objectives**

The main objective of this study is to analyse the use of English prepositional phrases in the essays of selected Bachelor of Human Resources Management first year students at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST).

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- Investigate the types of prepositional phrases used in the essays
- Analyse the grammatical functions of prepositional phrases in the essays
- Evaluate the syntactic application of prepositional phrases and their ambiguities in the essays

## **1.5 The significance of the research**

This study will inform the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) of Namibia in their syllabi considerations of the use of prepositions. All Ministry of Education stakeholders and schools which teach in English, can also benefit from this study. Through the use of Transformational Generative Grammar, the study will help English teachers to understand and explain various points such as the basic parts that make up a complete sentence, using for example, Phrase Structure Rules. On the other hand, the English language is not only studied by university students, but also primary and secondary learners from the majority of the schools. Teachers also need this study for them to better understand the extent of their contribution when they send learners to universities. This study will contribute to the development of language research in Namibia, especially for novice researchers. It has a fundamental purpose; to increase the knowledge and understanding of research, namely the pure analysis of language

in use. Interestingly, the study will contribute to the field of theoretical linguistics, particularly the TGG theory and phrase structure, with a view to promoting their effective use.

### **1.6 Delimitation of the research**

In the Namibian context, the language of government is English; as a result, it subsequently becomes the language of learning. As such, knowledge of the usage of English prepositions is a must for every student that is enrolled at every level of their studies. It is for this reason that the Namibia University of Science and Technology was the setting and geographical location for conducting the present study. The data were collected from essays written in English by undergraduate students studying towards the Human Resources Management degree. Only essays from selected first year students who are studying in the year 2020, were studied through the application of the Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG). Descriptive research philosophy was used in the study as it is the most suitable for a qualitative study that involves the use of prepositional phrases in essay writing. A descriptive study aims to provide a more comprehensive characterisation of grammatical aspects of an individual language like English (Benelhadj, 2015). The present study is a close fit to this description.

### **1.7 Limitations of the research**

This study was limited to certain circumstances. One of these limitations rest in the data collection. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible for the researcher to collect students' essays in the classroom setting. This scenario created the opportunity for every student to write their essays at their own pace at home. According to Heigham and Croker (2009), qualitative research is often lengthy and normally requires a researcher to spend a long period of time in the research setting in order to develop a deep, comprehensive understanding of the problem. Spending a lengthy time in the research setting would have been best and more

appropriate for this study, but due to limited time, it was impossible. A deep understanding of the use of prepositional phrases requires a variety of methodologies of collecting data and at least examining various works done by students; however, time constraint was a limiting factor.

### 1.8 Definition of technical terms

- **Prepositional phrase:** is a group of words consisting of a preposition, its object, and any words that modify the object. Most of the time, a prepositional phrase modifies a verb or a noun (Vestergard, 2019).
- **Transformational:** is an adjectival derivation from the noun transformation. Transformation in this sense refers to a device or a process of changing the form of one linguistic structure to another (Adetuyi & Fidelis, 2016).
- **Transformational generative grammar:** is a set of grammar rules that are used when basic clauses are combined to form more complex sentences. An example of transformational generative grammar is the idea that sentences have surface structure and deep structure levels (Chomsky, 2013).
- **Phrase structure rules:** utterances are analysed in terms of their syntactic constituents (Adetuyi & Fidelis, 2016).
- **Competency test:** valid and reliable tests that measure knowledge and skills required for a study or a job (Vestergard, 2019).
- **Preposition of time:** they discuss a specific time period such as a date on the calendar, one of the days of the week, or the actual time something takes place. Prepositions of time are the same words as prepositions of place; however, they are used in a different way (Vestergard, 2019).
- **Preposition of place:** is a preposition which is used to refer to a place where something or someone is located (Vestergard, 2019).
- **Preposition of direction:** tells us where to go or where to put something (Vestergard, 2019).

- **Adpositional phrase:** is a phrase consisting of a head adposition and its complement (generally a noun phrase) (Broekhuis, 2013).
- **Adjectival phrase:** It is a prepositional phrase (PP) that gives more information about a noun (Nilsen, 2017).
- **Adverbial phrase:** An adverbial prepositional phrase is a group of words that functions as an adverb (Nilsen, 2017).

### 1.9 Summary of the chapter

Chapter one delved into the introduction of the study. It presented the key features that were discussed and analysed in the study; from the introduction to the background, delivering the objectives of the study in clear and simple terms. The study assumes that the incorrect usage of prepositions leads to ambiguity and incoherence of a written text. The following chapter reviews literature that is related to the present study.



## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Prepositional phrases are a key component in the study of the English language. Most scholars agree that their function and correct use contribute to a coherent and meaningful text. In recent times, the Namibian government announced its plans to hold a national conference on English to discuss ways to address several factors contributing to the persistent poor performance in English as a subject in a few months (Iikela & Oliveira, 2020). This chapter reviews the literature related to the present study in alignment with the objectives and theoretical understanding. Related literature includes reviewing the theoretical framework, key concepts, methodology and mainly to show a greater understanding of the subject matter that previous scholars have written to avoid duplicating previous work (Ridley, 2012). However, the topic of the use of English prepositional phrases in academic essays remains valid since the study of prepositions can greatly contribute to increased performance in all levels of education in Namibia.

### **2.2 Defining prepositional phrases**

In agreement with Chomsky (1959), a study that was conducted by Benelhadj (2015) defines a preposition as an item that typically precedes a noun phrase to form a single constituent or structure using the syntactic approach. Prepositions are words that link other nouns or pronouns to those phrases ending with a noun or pronoun (Conroy & Antón-Méndez, 2015). The same definition is also asserted by the Penguin Dictionary of Language (Crystal, 1999). Prepositions are links which introduce prepositional phrases. A prepositional phrase comprises of a noun phrase; it can be regarded as a device which connects noun phrases with other structures. A prepositional phrase consists of two main parts: the preposition and the object of the preposition. In the

simplest terms, a prepositional phrase is a group of words which is made up from a preposition, the object of the preposition and words which modify that object (Lindstromberg, 2010). In most instances, the prepositional phrase is used to modify either a noun or a verb. The use of the prepositional phrase to modify a noun or a verb is known as either an adjectival phrase or an adverbial phrase, respectively. The following example demonstrates the two main parts of a prepositional phrase:

**Example 1**

The brain of a linguist is thoughtful.

<b>Preposition</b>	<b>Object of preposition</b>	<b>Example and function of prepositional phrase</b>
Of	a linguist	The brain <i>of a linguist is thoughtful</i> .

A prepositional phrase begins with a preposition and ends with a noun, pronoun, gerund, or clause, the "object" of the preposition.

**2.3 Types of prepositional phrases used in the English language**

A study that was conducted by Arif (2020) states that there are two types of prepositional phrases that are used in the English language namely; the adjectival (with a preposition that modifies a noun) and the adverbial, (a preposition that modifies a verb, adjective or other adverbs).

Namibia is fertile ground for the use of the English language in general; as such, a local study at two anonymous universities was conducted in order to investigate the barriers that prevent students from writing and speaking English well (Frans, 2016). The study found out that the lack of specific teaching objectives in oral communication and written skills in the syllabi lead to students’ lack of language performance. When a sentence presents two separate PPs in two different places of the sentence, students may have been challenged to generate and appropriately know the types, depending on their purpose. Murshidi (2014) asserts that the

different parts of speech in sentences may lead to learner confusion, and may result in prepositional errors like omission, addition or selection of an inappropriate preposition. This is because the learner may not understand the type of PP and its appropriate use. The present study assumes that the problem in the misuse of prepositions affects the entire written or spoken text. However, the study cited other problems around the inability of students to write correct sentences, and the limited time allocated to English courses. A conceptual theory was used in the study. This study concentrated on technical aspects between the student and methods used by the teaching staff as contributing to the production of incorrect sentences. In a separate study, a book chapter discussed the distribution of noun phrases within the clause, and the differences between the types of noun phrases (Broekhuis & Keizer, 2012). The syntactic functions of Dutch noun phrases were discussed. When compared with other African countries, studies conducted in Namibia reflect the importance of using prepositional phrases correctly. In a similar study that was conducted in Egypt, students usually encountered problems with cohesion and coherence in essay writing. The study discussed the problem of organisation faced by student teachers when they are writing English language essays (Ahmed, 2010). The study aimed at investigating students' cohesion and coherence problems in English Foreign Language (EFL) essay writing. However, the study did not address the lack of specific teaching objectives when prepositions are taught. A mixed method design was used in the study. The study concluded that cohesion and coherence problems were present in the students' essays. According to (Tunaz, 2016), elementary English learners make more prepositional errors than intermediate English learners. The errors studied were addition, omission, and substitution. The results of a t-test reflected that elementary learners made more omission errors while intermediate learners made substitution errors. An English proficiency test was used to study the errors.

While written prepositional errors can be studied using a multiple-choice test (Alotaibi et al., 2018), spoken errors can also be studied by analysing audio data (Suzanne, 2017). A study that was conducted to identify spoken errors in the use of the prepositions; in, on and at, found that error in the use of prepositions is influenced by the speakers' first or second language. The study concluded that the errors were caused by L1 negative transfer and intralingual reasons. Similarly,

in the Namibian context, English language learners are also affected by the use of L1. The incorrect use of prepositional phrases may be caused by a literal translation. For example, the English language structure is different from the Namibian Oshiwambo language. When a Namibian English language learner attempts to translate the native Oshiwambo into the English language word for word, the usage of prepositional phrases completely changes the arrangement of the text, from meaning to syntax. The effects of a mother tongue on translation can be studied in related contexts. Similar to the effects of the Namibian Oshiwambo language as L1 on English users of prepositional phrases, a study titled 'Identifying preposition errors of Turkish EFL students' (Özışık, 2014) was conducted. The aim was to find out the extent to which Turkish English Foreign Language (EFL) speakers are successful in their use of prepositions and the impact their mother tongue has on errors. Thirty students in the upper-intermediate level of a university prep school were given a 60-sentence gap-fill test. The results of the test showed that the students had great difficulty in finding the correct preposition among the given answers. English language learners in Namibia are likely to face a similar problem as that encountered by the Turkish L1 speakers who use English in the same context as that of Namibians.

Contrastive analysis can be used to study prepositions (Macková, 2013). In a study titled; 'A Contrastive Analysis of the Prepositions "to" and "into"', the study states that prepositions are, together with articles, one of the most frequently used words in the English language. In conclusion, the study observed that the prepositions *to* and *into* differ in many respects. Since most of these differences are not stated in dictionaries, further studies can be conducted.

In a separate study, computational methods of Natural Language Processing (NLP) were used to study preposition errors (Chodorow et al., 2007). The study aimed at developing an NLP application that can reliably detect these types of errors, thus providing an invaluable learning resource to ESL students. The aim was to develop a software program that can detect common grammar errors during English usage of non-native English speakers. The study concluded that repeated prepositions were more commonly made errors.

## **2.4 A review of previous related studies conducted in Namibia.**

Many previous studies related to language use have been conducted in Namibia. The experiences and perceptions of first year English for Academic Purposes (EAP) students at the University of Namibia were studied to investigate meaningful writing (Mukoroli, 2016). The study identified multiple issues in the academic writing of students. Among them was the use of prepositions. Students find the use of prepositions difficult when writing the EAP academic essays; they make errors of addition and omission, and misuse prepositions. The study findings concluded that EAP students find the use of APA referencing skills and the use of discourse markers the most difficult when they engage in academic essay writing. The study of language usually fits with linguistic theories; however, this study used the post-colonial theory to address issues of EAP.

A Namibian scholar, Nghikembua (2014), studied essays collected from grade 12 Oshiwambo speaking learners of English in northern Namibia. In her study, a group of 100 learners from five different schools in the Oshana region were asked to write an essay of 150 to 200 words in English. The essays were analysed using Corder's (1967) conceptual framework which outlines the steps that a researcher uses when undertaking an error analysis study. The errors were categorised according to Keshavarz's (2006) linguistic error taxonomy. Based on this taxonomy, the results revealed that learners largely made errors in the following categories: phonology/orthography, morpho-syntax, lexico-semantics, discourse and technique-punctuation. The study concluded that these errors were most likely due to: first language interference, overgeneralisation, ignorance of rule restriction and carelessness. Other proposed probable causes were context of learning and lack of knowledge of English grammar. The present study attempts to analyse the use of English prepositional phrases in the English essays, which is closely related to Nghikembua's study. However, the two studies slightly differ in that Nghikembua analysed errors while the present study looks at the use of prepositional phrases in students' essays.

In another separate study conducted in Namibia that examined the nativisation of the English language in Namibia with a specific study conducted at the Namibia University of Science and Technology during the 2018 academic year (Kamati, 2019). The 13 official indigenous languages in Namibia have an impact in the nativisation process. The English language in Namibia has been nativised and made local to such an extent that it is used in official settings. The study concluded that some linguistic differences constantly influence the local languages on English as a second language. These differences are observed in local language patterns such as; phonological, grammatical and lexical aspects which are mostly transferred into the new English variant. These differences have been observed at NUST where students altered the English language and established their new variants in order to reflect their own situation and experiences, and due to the mother tongue influence this is unavoidable.

## **2.5 Grammatical functions of prepositional phrases in the English language**

A related study that aimed at identifying and analysing the function of prepositions in selected newspaper editorials in Nigeria (Ishaya, 2017). The study applied the content model theory (Halliday and Hassan, 1989) as a framework for analysis. The procedure used in the study was the classification of prepositions by their grammatical functions, indicating possession or a close connection between entities, the purpose for which an action takes place, relating events or situation to a location and by indicating the circumstances behind actions. The study concluded by revealing that editorial writers use a considerable number of prepositions in writing their editorials. The study went on to recommend the need for newspaper columnists to use both simple and complex prepositions to achieve clarity and precision for the benefit of the readers.

Similarly, Barnell (1991), asserts that the learning of vocabulary and the rules of standard written English should naturally start at the beginning, to make sure that the students know all the parts of a sentence and their functions. He further emphasised that grammar is a tool for writing strong and varied sentences.

Mustafa, Kirana and Bahri (2017) postulate that prepositional errors can be regarded as lexical errors, since they affect meaning and therefore users/recipients will correct those errors by the time they have adopted an adequate vocabulary. Confusion mainly emanates when recipients or learners are not certain about which prepositions to apply in a particular context (Arjan, Abdullah and Roslim, 2013). Murshidi (2014) further elaborates that English prepositions have several different functions (which were highlighted in the study). He then contends that the different parts of speech in sentences may lead to learner confusion, and may result in prepositional errors such as omission, addition, or selection of an inappropriate preposition.

As discussed in this review section, the current study of students' essays can be examined in a similar manner as that of newspaper editorials as conducted by Ishaya (2017). On the other hand, students who were studied by Barnell (1991) and Mustafa, Kirana and Bahri (2017) can be tested for essay writing competencies after they have been taught a lesson on the grammatical function of prepositional phrases.

## **2.6 Syntactic application of prepositional phrases and their ambiguities**

Syntax is the study of how words combine to form grammatical sentences (Nur Amalia, 2013). In a study that discusses prepositions, it is stated that a prepositional phrase is a phrase that begins with a preposition and ends with a noun or pronoun. The aim of the study was to investigate the details of a prepositional phrase. On the other hand, another related study just as similarly to the study of prepositional phrases using computers, the primary challenge in natural language processing (NLP) is to enable machines to disambiguate the meaning of human language (Dahlmeier, 2008).

Ambiguity can be defined as a characteristic of natural language whereby a word, sentence or text can be interpreted in more than one way (Hamdan & Khan, 2018). They conducted a study which analysed prepositional-phrase attachment disambiguation. In their study, they compared the standard methods that attempt to resolve prepositional phrases attachment ambiguities in

natural language processing. They went further by providing a taxonomy of different ambiguities, which may occur at different levels during the language processing task.

Dankin (2015), in a related scientific study titled; “Prepositional-Phrase Attachment Disambiguation Using Derived Semantic Information and Large External Corpora”, gave a scholarly understanding that explains the problem of attachment ambiguity. It occurs when the syntactic rules allow more than one possible attachment for a single PP. The study made it very clear that there is a link between language use and its application to computers. In a separate study, Dror (2013), analysed preposition use in the Qur’an. The Qur’an is a secret religious text of the Islamic faith or Islam. Since the text was written in Arabic, prepositions related to the Arabic language in the Qur’an, were discussed.

Syntactic structures can be studied through a variety of linguistic material. It is so on the study; “A Syntactic Analysis of Sentence Patterns in the Rock Songs" Estranged" And ‘Street of Dreams" By Guns N'roses” (Aida, 2016). Rock songs were analysed. Similarly, “Syntactic and Lexical Features of an Indian English Oral Narrative: A Pear Story Study” (Seale, 2007), is a study that analysed Indian oral narratives. The study addressed the distribution of nonstandard syntactic and lexical features in Indian English. The study established that nonstandard syntactic features in Indian English show unequal distribution, nonstandard lexical features of semantic reassignment, and mass treated as count nouns display a more uniform intragroup distribution.

Hafiz & Omar (2018), also carried out a study on the most common syntactic errors made by Arabic speaking students in a Preparatory Year at the Jazan University in Saudi Arabia when learning English as a foreign language. This study revealed that the most common syntactic errors made by the students were detected in the sentence structure, for example, subject-verb agreement, auxiliary verbs, tenses, the use of conjunctions, prepositions, and articles.

A study by Adetuyi & Fidelis (2016) recommended that simplified textbooks on grammatical theories be made available in schools. The study of syntax can best be explained by the concepts



of transformational generative grammar (TGG). The key concepts in the theory are phrase structure rules, transformational structure rules, morphophonemic rules: context-free rules, context sensitive rules, sub categorisation rules, complex symbols and category symbols. The study concluded that the knowledge of grammatical theories provides a scientific base for the modern language classroom. A separate study by Benelhadj (2015), claims that in the study of prepositions, there is a relationship between text and context. While trying to defend the claim, he failed to address the problem by only focusing on the technical aspects of how prepositions can be used in a text.

The study titled; “Preposition omission in English ellipsis” discusses the concept of preposition stranding (Nykiel, 2012). The concept refers to a syntactic construction in which a preposition with an object occurs somewhere other than immediately adjacent to its object, for example, at the end of a sentence. The preposition is then described as stranded, hanging, or dangling. The study concluded that English is assigned a special status due to having prepositional verbs.

In another study, a guided close test was used to examine the writing skill of students at undergraduate level, with a special focus on the English use of prepositions of place, time, and direction. (Saravanan, 2014). The study found that the students find it more difficult to use prepositions of place and direction than prepositions of time because of their mother tongue interference. While the English language is the focus of the present study, a study was conducted to analyse the prepositional phrases of Maliseet-Passamaquoddy, an Eastern Algonquian language of New Brunswick and Maine (Le Sourd, 2014). The study established that these phrases may function as constituents, even though they are frequently and discontinuously expressed. This demonstrates that they are headed by the particles that characterise them, and explores their internal structure. The views of the study suggest that the function of prepositional phrases can change, depending on the language in which they are used. On the same note, Fakuade (2000), posits that prepositional phrases express meaning which is closely related to the meaning expressed by adjectives and adverbs: where, when, how and what kind. He further elaborates that prepositional phrases can also express a sense of why and who. Raising awareness of typical difficulties in the use of prepositions in English and studying possible methodological solutions,

is important in the development of language. (Đorđević, 2013). A study was conducted in Serbia on first-year students from the Faculty of Pharmacy at the European University. The study concluded by recommending that the teaching of prepositions can be done through visuals since listening to native speakers' audio poses a challenge. This is because of; the manner in which they speak, that native speakers pronounce prepositions quickly and that vowels often disappear in pronunciation. It is recommended to use computer-based activities when using video displays.

The literature discussed under the syntactic application of prepositional phrases and their ambiguities is relevant to the present study in the understanding of the syntactic methodology, TGG theory application and the strength of the syntactic theory techniques application to the study of essays.

## **2.7 Research gap**

Although prepositions have been studied in Namibia, not many studies have been extended to prepositional phrases. The application of TGG as a theory in the study of prepositional phrases has also been less studied. Studying prepositional phrases in essays written by university students will generate additional sources for future researchers so as to reference their studies.

## **2.8 Theoretical framework**

### **2.8.1 Developments and proponents of the theories of grammar**

Traditional grammar forms the foundation in the development of grammar theories. The actual author is not known. The main areas of focus of traditional grammar are the correctness of spellings, parts of speech, a sentence must have a subject and a predicate, proper punctuation and finally diction that insists on the proper use of words in different contexts. Word formation did not feature in traditional grammar (Derewianka & Jones, 2010). De Saussure brought modernity into the study of language. He was titled the father of modern linguistics because of

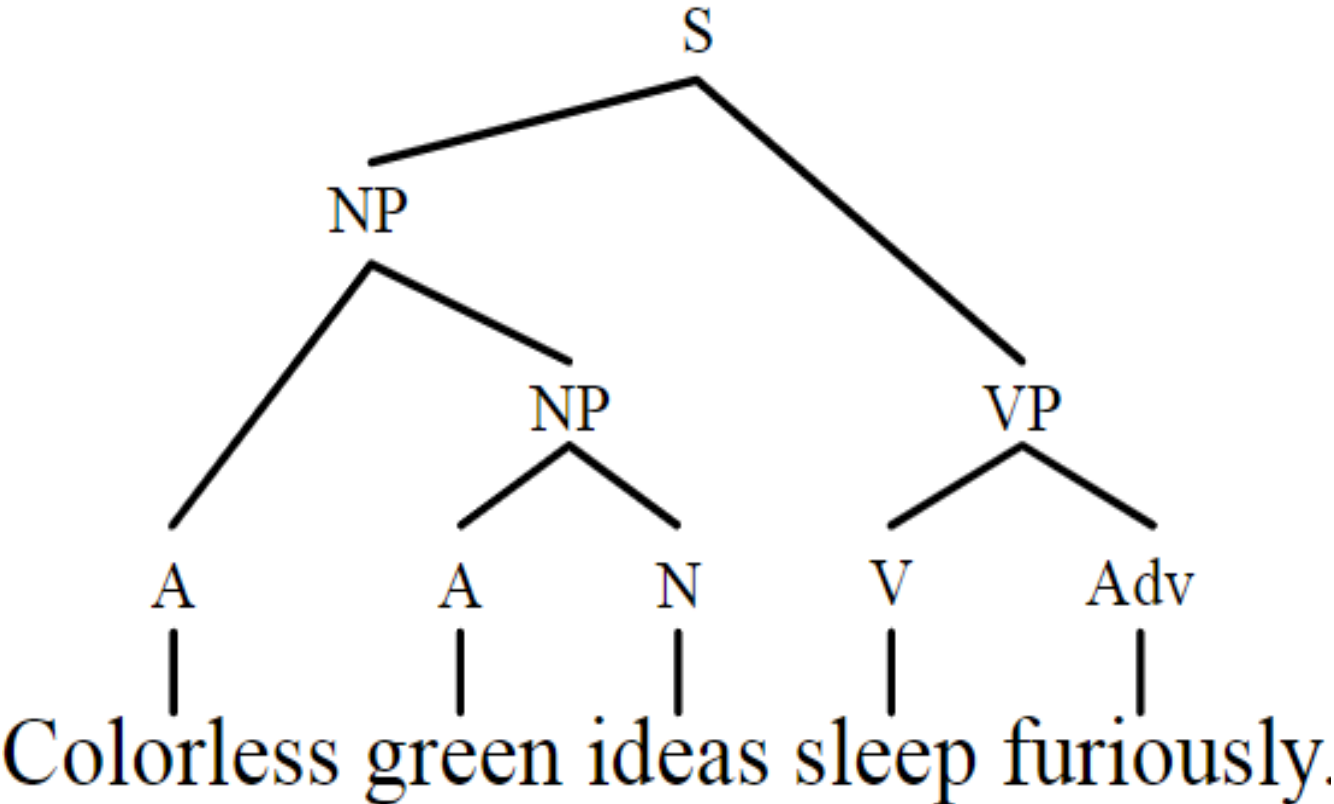
his contribution of the theory of structuralism. De Saussure assumed that language can be analysed according to elements of corpus at their different linguistic levels; that is phonemes, morphemes, lexical categories, and sentence types (Lyons, 1968). In addition, he specified that language can be studied by changes over a period of time (diachronic) and at a given time and moment (synchronic). The process of derivation and affixation are part of De Saussure's morphological contributions. The area that was contributed by De Saussure had not previously been studied in traditional grammar. Although the two previous developments in the study of language are still relevant, Noam Chomsky contributed with the Generative theory (Chomsky, 1957), which was used in the present study. The concepts of Chomsky meant breaking some of the rules in traditional grammar. Chomsky insisted that human beings have the ability to generate new sentences from the ones that are already uttered (Hauser, Chomsky & Fitch, 2002). He differentiated between the correctness of a sentence and its meaning by giving an example of the sentence "Colourless green ideas sleep furiously". In terms of syntax, the sentence is totally correct, however when it is assigned meaning, it is meaningless.

### **2.8.2 Transformational generative grammar theory**

Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) is a theory developed by Noam Chomsky in 1960s; it analyses the structure of sentences and how language is generated (Lyons, 2001). The concept of transformational generative grammar arises from the belief that sentences as a unit of grammatical analysis possess transformational capabilities; these capabilities are made possible by a dominant feature of grammar, 'recursiveness'. In other words, the theory considers grammar as a system of rules that gives human beings the ability to generate new sentences from existing ones (Hauser, Chomsky & Fitch, 2002). The defined operation of generating new sentences is known as transformations (Chomsky, 1960). TGG focuses on "linguistic transformations and phrase structures; that is the deep structure and the surface structure". The deep structure represents the core semantic relations of a sentence which are generated by phrase structure rules. The surface structure (which follows the phonological form of the sentence very closely) via transformations, is the structure of a well-formed phrase or sentence in a language, as opposed to its underlying abstract representation.

According to Chomsky (2013), TGG is a descriptive theory that describes how speakers actually use language. He further stressed that language is descriptive rather than prescriptive, as opposed to traditional grammar. TGG is the theory that is going to be used in this study in order to give a clear description of prepositional phrases used in the students' essays. It helps the researcher to view the use of prepositional phrases and their ambiguities in the essays since the theory is entitled to the generation and interpretation of numerous sentences.

Figure 2.1



(Chomsky, 1957)

The above diagram illustrates an example written by Chomsky of a grammatically correct sentence that has no observable meaning.

### **2.8.3 Phrase Structure Rules**

With these rules, utterances are analysed in terms of their syntactic constituents. The phrase structure rules are rewrite rules used to describe the syntax of a given language. For example, the sentence, “someone ate the food”, can be analysed as subject + verb + objective. The instruction formulas to perform basic operations in TG are referred to as re-writing rules. The following are the phrase structure rules of the English language.

$S \rightarrow NP VP$

$NP \rightarrow (Det) (AP) N (PP)$

$VP \rightarrow V (NP) (PP) (Adv)$

$PP \rightarrow P (NP)$

$AP \rightarrow A (PP)$

### **2.9 Criticism of transformational generative grammar**

The original plan of Chomsky was to address four main areas; Deep Structure (underlying syntactic relations), Surface Structure (the syntax relations after transformations), Logical Form (the semantic conveyed meaning) and Phonetic Form (what you hear). Later on, however, he abandoned the theoretical need for Deep Structure and Surface Structure, leaving only the Logical Form (the semantic conveyed meaning) and Phonetic Form (what you hear) (Chomsky (1965). Chomsky converted De Saussure’s terms ‘Langue’ and ‘Parole’ to claim them as his own. The terms were changed to become ‘Competence’ and ‘Performance’.

## **2.10 Chapter summary**

This chapter presented the literature review where the research gap and transformational generative grammar were explicitly examined. The theory of generative grammar espoused by Chomsky claimed that human beings have the innate ability to generate new forms of sentences from the ones that already exist (Hauser, Chomsky & Fitch, 2002). Language is infinitive. The following chapter addresses the research methods and procedures that were used in the present study.

## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed literature related to the study as informed by the three objectives of the study. The chapter ended by establishing the strength of Transformational Generative Grammar as a roadmap for the study. The purpose was to address the main objective, namely to study the use of English prepositional phrases in university academic essays. The present chapter discusses the research methods and procedures, research design, population and sampling, research instruments, data collection procedures, data presentation and analysis procedures that were applied to this study. Research methodology is the specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process, and analyse information about a topic.

### 3.2 Research design

Research design is an arrangement of the conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance with the research purpose (Kothari, 2004). In other words, it is a type of inquiry within quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approaches that provides specific direction in a research (Creswell, 2014). They encompass critical decisions relating to the study topic, population, methods of data collection, analysis and processes relating to the purpose of the research (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2016). The function of research design is to guide the procedural and logistical aspects of the research and to ensure that the outcomes of the study are relevant and reliable (Kumar, 2011). Indeed, research design is the operating model which shows how the research was approached.

Bertram & Christiansen (2014), outlined research designs that collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Such designs are Case studies, Ethnographic research, Life histories, Action research, Participatory research, Surveys, Experimental research and Correlational research. In

the same vein, Leedy and Omrod (2010) pointed out Case study, Phenomenological study, Ethnographic study, Grounded theory and Content Analysis as the dominant research designs in the qualitative research paradigm. The present study used Content Analysis design since it falls within the qualitative paradigm. Content analysis is defined by Flick (1998, p. 192) and Mayring (2004, p. 266); quoted in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), as a strict and systematic set of procedures for the rigorous analysis, examination and verification of the contents of written data. In addition to this, the data (learners' essays) are in a permanent written form (texts), so the researcher was able to do the verification through re-analysis and replication. This design is, therefore, the right match for this study as it involved a detailed and systematic analysis of students' essays for the use of prepositional phrases. It has already been mentioned in the beginning that the research design gives an outline of the method of data collection, instruments/tools and how they were used, and how the data were analysed; all these will be shown in the subsections below.

### **3.3 Research paradigm**

This study stands on the descriptive philosophical stance. It focuses on a specific grammatical aspect of language, namely prepositional phrases (PPs). Grammatical studies can be theoretical or descriptive (Biber et al., 2007). The difference between theoretical and descriptive studies is that a theoretical study focuses on "abstract underlying principles in relation to a model of linguistic competence, while the descriptive study attempts to provide a more comprehensive characterisation of grammatical phenomena in an individual language like English" (Benelhadj, 2015, p.14). Since the present study focuses only on the use of PPs in the English language, and has looked at how words are combined to form phrases, it is suitable for using a descriptive framework. The other reason why this study suits a descriptive study is because it analyses 'texts' which are students' essays. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), a text is a kind of data used for linguistic analysis and all grammar descriptions are based on text. Texts are original sets of information that can have an accurate description of language. It is for this reason that the current study follows a descriptive framework in order to analyse PPs in relation to the context of students' handwritten essays.



### **3.4 Research approach**

A qualitative research approach was used in this research. A qualitative approach uses non-numerical, textual or visual data. As such, qualitative methods were used in this study to describe the language use of prepositional phrases.

### **3.5 Research setting**

This study was conducted at the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Namibia University of Science and Technology, Windhoek in Namibia. The study population was drawn from selected first year students studying for a Bachelor of Human Resources Management in the Department of Management.

### **3.6 Study population**

A target population is that part of the population on which the study is based. A population is a group of persons or objects from which samples are taken for measurement (Martin et al., 1996). The study population for this research was the first-year students doing a Bachelor of Human Resources Management at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) in 2020. This population is a mixture of male and female students of different ages, educational and ethnic backgrounds.

### **3.7 Sampling Procedures and sample Size**

This study used the convenience sampling method. It is a type of nonprobability sampling in which people are sampled simply because they are "convenient" sources of data for researchers (Bhardwaj, 2019). Sampling is defined by Bertram and Christiansen (2014, p. 59) as "deciding about which people, setting or behaviours to include in the study." Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) suggest that qualitative research often uses non-probability sampling. They further note

that the suitability of the sampling procedure that has been adopted, contributes to the quality of a piece of research.

The current theoretical population of students studying for a Bachelor of Human Resources Management at NUST is 445. Out of these, 142 are in their first year studying through full-time, part-time and distance mode. The full-time students were selected, representing the convenience sample. The convenience sampling method was chosen on the basis that this particular group was the only group accessible to the researcher at the time, due to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The group consisted of 71 students (males and females) of different ages, educational background, and ethnic groups. The first-year students were specifically chosen as opposed to second- and third-year students because they still have another two years before they complete their degree program. This would easily afford the lecturers offering English courses like the Principles of English Language Use, English in Practice, English for Academic Purposes and Professional Writing, the opportunity to review their way of offering these courses and to focus on the features that are indicated to be problematic, in the following year. The result of such implementation, however, will not be part of this study.

### **3.8 Research instruments**

A competency essay was used to collect data. The students were asked to handwrite essays of about one and a half pages on a chosen topic. The task was administered to selected first year students studying for a Bachelor of Human Resources Management through full-time mode at NUST in 2020. Essays on the following topics were administered to the students through this link: <https://forms.gle/QgiAwpFz1SkGgLcn8>

Students were asked to send the scanned handwritten essays in the form of a PDF to the email: [tkadhimbwa@gmail.com](mailto:tkadhimbwa@gmail.com)

#### **Essay instructions**

**Write an essay based on ONE of the following topics. You should write between 300 and 350**

**words (about one and a half pages):**

**Topic 1**

In recent court cases, photos and information gathered from social media sources, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, have become acceptable evidence in a courtroom. Some people argue that this practice is unreliable and invalid as information on social media can be easily manipulated and tampered with. Give your arguments as to whether information found on social media websites should be used as evidence in legal cases.

**Topic 2**

Discuss the three most important factors that could lead to the development of a country.

**Topic 3**

If you could change or invent a law to be implemented worldwide, what would it be and why?

**Topic 4**

Unruly learner behaviour has become a serious problem in many schools in Namibia. Discuss, giving your own opinion, as to what you think could be the causes. Also, suggest the possible solutions to this problem.

**Topic 5**

Many languages in Namibia remain less used or even unknown, while English is becoming used more and more as a global language. Some people feel this is a positive trend in a modern world and that a world with fewer languages promotes harmony and understanding between people. Analyse both sides of this argument and give your opinion.

**Topic 6**

The life expectancy of people is becoming longer than before, and many old people are unable to look after themselves. Many people believe that the family is responsible for looking after the

elderly, while others say the government should provide old-age homes for them where they can be taken care of properly. Discuss.

The collected data were analysed using the following categories:

**Table 3.1 Data analysis checklist**

<b>Analysis of types of prepositional phrases</b>	
● The prepositional phrase which modifies a noun (adjectival)	✓
● The prepositional phrase which modifies a verb (adverbial)	✓
<b>Grammatical functions of prepositional phrases</b>	
● prepositional phrase heads	✓
● noun phrase modifiers	✓
● adjective phrase complements	✓
● verb phrase complements	✓
● adjunct adverbials	✓
● disjunct adverbials	✓
<b>Syntactic analysis</b>	
● Sentence structure PP= P NP	✓

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Syntactic/Structural Ambiguities</li></ul> | ✓ |
|--|---|



### 3.9 Data analysis

As was indicated earlier, this study adopted a qualitative approach. This is based on descriptive data where there is no use of statistic procedural (Gass & Mackey, 2005). The study primarily aimed at providing “careful and detailed descriptions as opposed to the quantification of data through measurements, frequencies, scores, and ratings” (p. 162). As such, this study employed document analysis as a means of analysing data.

### 3.10 Document Analysis

Document analysis refers to a form that involves reading documents, categorising and interpreting them (Cresswell, 2009). Mbelani (2018, p. 42) also believes that document analysis involves “studying documentary evidence such as policies, minutes of meetings, teachers’ planning records and students’ works.” Many studies have adopted document analysis as a complement to other research methods, but it has also been used as a stand-alone method (Bowen, 2009). Similarly, in this study, students’ essays served as documents that were used as data sources and a detailed description and analysis of the use of prepositional phrases in their essays were carried out. This is to say that this study relies solely on the analysis of documents, specifically students’ essays.

In analysing the collected data, excerpts were taken from the students’ essays, the prepositional phrases identified were pointed out and presented as examples, and analysed according to their types and their grammatical functions, syntax and ambiguities with the appropriate application of the TGG theory, following the objectives of the study. The stages of the data analysis were followed according to the checklist (See Annexure A) that was generated to answer to the three objectives of the study.

### **3.11 Ethical considerations**

The current study strictly followed the Namibia University of Science and Technology ethical code guidelines. There was no dubious collection or deliberate fabrication of data to influence the outcomes of the study. All ethical considerations were strictly followed. Research ethics refers to behaviour that is acceptable amongst the research community when conducting empirical research (Ridley, 2012). Bertram and Christiansen (2014, p.65) define ethics as something that has to do with “behaviour that is considered right or wrong.” Considering ethical issues in research is very important, particularly where humans and animals are involved. Although the researcher is also a student at the same institution where the study was conducted, permission to conduct the study at the institution was sought from the office of the registrar (see Annexure C). Participants were asked to participate by agreeing to sign a consent form (found through the link that contains the essay topics). No names of participants were published. Their essays were labelled ‘Essay 1’, ‘Essay 2’, etc. This was to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the institution and the participants. They had the right to withdraw at any time during the process. All sources consulted in this study were acknowledged through the APA referencing style.

### **3.12 Validity and reliability**

A piece of work has to be valid for it to be effective and worthy. The researcher relied on the data collected from different students; she had not interfered with this data. This reflects ‘honesty’ as can be drawn from Cohen et al. (2011) who claim that “respondent validation is important” and “data validity in qualitative research, might be addressed through the honesty of the researcher” (p. 180). In authentication of this claim, the researcher had incorporated samples and extracts of the students’ essays in the presentation of the data. The rest of the essays and the tools are being kept in her research archive.

### **3.13 Chapter summary**

This chapter discussed the methods that were used in the research process. This chapter shows the research design, the population, and the sampling procedure. In addition, the methods that were used to describe the data used in the study and analytical procedure were given. The study identified the methods of data collection. The next chapter deals with the presentation, analysis and discussion of key findings based on the data that was collected in 2020.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1 Introduction

Prepositional phrases (PP) are a major component of the English language structure and function. This chapter is about the findings and discussions of the study. Essays that were collected from the participants were studied and analysed following the research objectives. The theoretical framework guided and integrated in the analysis as applicable to the research instruments. The theory of Transformational Generative Grammar assumes that sentences are units of grammatical analysis that possess transformational capabilities; these capabilities are made possible by a dominant feature of grammar which is 'recursiveness'. In other words, the theory considers grammar as a system of rules that allows human beings the ability to generate new sentences from existing ones (Chomsky, 1960). It is the purpose of this study to evaluate prepositional phrases. The chapter was analysed under the heading of types, grammatical functions and finally syntactic application prepositional phrases and their ambiguities. The following are the objectives of the study:

The main objective of this study is to analyse the use of English prepositional phrases in the essays of selected Bachelor of Human Resources Management first year students at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST).

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- Investigate the types of prepositional phrases used in the essays
- Analyse the grammatical functions of prepositional phrases in the essays
- Evaluate the syntactic application of prepositional phrases and their ambiguities in the essays



#### **4.1.1 Prepositions and their categories**

A preposition is a word in a sentence which introduces phrases that end with a noun or pronoun. It is an item that typically precedes a noun phrase to form a single constituent or structure using the syntactic approach (Benelhadj, 2015). There is little distinction between the preposition and the phrase. Prepositions are a single word while the phrase has several. There are many types of prepositions in the English language, depending on how they are used. Some commonly known prepositions can also be classified as prepositions of place, position, direction and time (Saravanan, 2014). There are only about one hundred prepositions currently used in the English language (Huddleston & Pullum, 2005). They may be compounded to change or to take many possible forms, but the root of the preposition remains identified as the main preposition. Prepositions are used in a sentence wherein they change their position and purpose to create prepositional phrases. The following are the types of prepositions and their definitions. They are followed by a table with examples of prepositions.

#### **4.1.2 Preposition of place**

Prepositions of place gives a person the ability to tell where something is located (Bainbridge & Wood, 2012). Prepositions of place allow the writer to be specific when talking about where action takes place in stories or when discussing important details for communication purposes.

#### **4.1.3 Preposition of position**

Words which tell us about the actual location of objects are known as prepositions of position (Klasone, 2013).

#### 4.1.4 Preposition of manner

A preposition of manner is used to show the way something happens, or how something is done. The most commonly used prepositions of manner are “by” and “with” (Bainbridge & Wood, 2012).

#### 4.1.5 Preposition of time

A preposition of time is a preposition that is used to refer to a specific time period, such as a date on the calendar, the days of the week, or the actual time at which something takes place (Bainbridge & Wood, 2012).

**Table 4.1 Examples of possible prepositions**

<b>PLACE</b>	<b>POSITION</b>	<b>MANNER</b>	<b>TIME</b>
<b>above</b>	<b>beyond</b>	<b>on</b>	<b>after</b>
<b>across</b>	<b>by</b>	<b>opposite</b>	<b>before</b>
<b>along</b>	<b>down</b>	<b>out (of)</b>	<b>at</b>
<b>among</b>	<b>from</b>	<b>outside</b>	<b>by</b>
<b>at</b>	<b>in</b>	<b>over</b>	<b>for</b>
<b>away from</b>	<b>in front of</b>	<b>around</b>	<b>during</b>
<b>behind</b>	<b>inside</b>	<b>through</b>	<b>from</b>
<b>below</b>	<b>into</b>	<b>to</b>	<b>in</b>
<b>beside</b>	<b>near</b>	<b>towards</b>	
<b>between</b>	<b>off</b>	<b>under</b>	

**Source:** (Lorincz & Gordon, 2012).

## **SEGMENT ONE**

### **4.2 The types of prepositional phrases used in the essays**

The study findings from the students' handwritten essays revealed that it is not possible to write an essay without using prepositional phrases of all types. There are two types of PPs that were found in the students' handwritten essays. A prepositional phrase (PP) is a group of words that consists of a preposition (Juliarta, 2021). In other words, it is a part of a sentence that consists of a preposition and/or a noun phrase. Prepositional phrases are never just one word; they are usually two or three words long but can be more than three words long (Orwell, 2021). There are two types of prepositional phrases that will be discussed in this study; that which modifies a noun (a prepositional phrase used as an adjectival phrase), and that which modifies a verb (a prepositional phrase used as an adverbial phrase) Arif (2020).

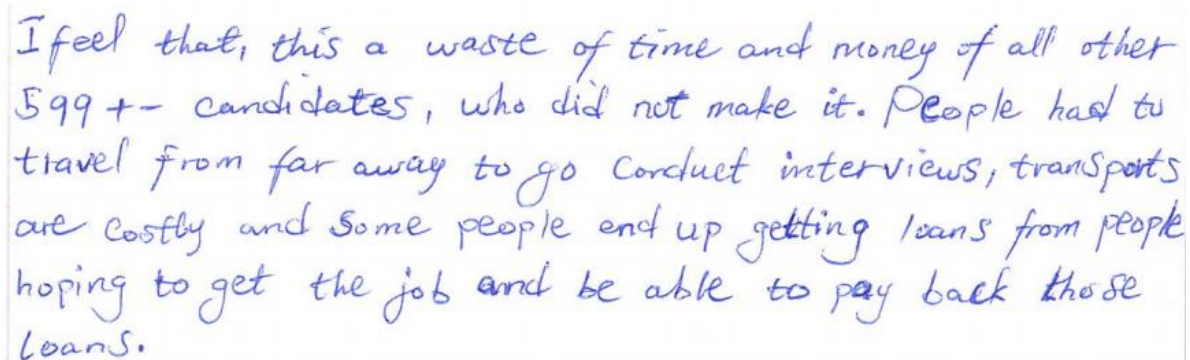
#### **Types of prepositional phrases (the adjectival)**

##### **4.2.1 Data presentation and analysis of the PP which modifies a noun (adjectival)**

The type of prepositional phrase (PP) that gives more information about a noun is known as the adjectival. They act as adjectives and provide more information about the noun. A study that was conducted by Özişik, (2014) showed that students have great difficulty in finding the correct preposition to form a prepositional phrase. It is the reasoning of the present study that English language learners in Namibia are likely to face a similar problem to that encountered by Turkish L1 speakers who use English in the same context as that of Namibians. Hence the purpose of this section of the study is to discuss the two types of PPs found in the students' handwritten essays. The adjectival type of PP acts on a noun in the same manner as an adjectival phrase. Prepositional phrases express meaning closely related to the meaning expressed by adverbs and adjectives with examples such as where, when, how, and what kind (Kök, 2019). These PPs act as adjectives that provide additional detail about nouns. The following excerpts are examples where PPs which modify a noun, have been used. In the process of spotting these PPs in this study, it is important

to define the procedure for identifying the adjectival PP. The PP can be simple words that provide more detail about the noun. The moment a noun is spotted, if the PP follows immediately after, it becomes the adjectival that gives more information about the noun. The nouns are marked in italics while the PP will be identified in bold italics. The examples presented from excerpt 1 to 7 are all adjectival prepositional phrases which suit the given characteristics. The examples below explain the types of adjectival prepositional phrases.

### Excerpt 1



I feel that, this a waste of time and money of all other 599+- candidates, who did not make it. People had to travel from far away to go conduct interviews, transports are costly and some people end up getting loans from people hoping to get the job and be able to pay back those loans.

Source: (Essay 9)

### PP examples from excerpt 1

- ***Loans from people hoping to get the job.***

### Excerpt 1 analysis

Of the two types of PPs identified in this study, the prepositional phrase which modifies a noun, known as the adjectival, is discussed (Juliarta, 2021). The example above proves that in the study of transformational generative grammar (TGG), human beings have the ability to generate new sentences from already existing ones (Hauser, Chomsky & Fitch, 2002). The example was extracted from students' handwritten essays. The type of PP in this sentence can be identified by finding the nearby noun or a noun in the surroundings (Zhang & Liu, 2011). In the sentence

example presented above that reads '*Loans from people hoping to get the job.*', the noun '*Loans*' leads to finding the PP. In the same sentence, the PP begins immediately where the word '*from*' is situated. There are however two prepositions in the same sentence. The next preposition is the word '*to*'. These would have been addressed as adjectival phrases if the word '*people*' was the first noun of the sentence. In this case, the word, *hoping*, that follows immediately after the noun is a verb, hence it qualifies to be addressed as an adverbial phrase. That part of the phrase fails to be identified as a PP which modifies a noun.

## Excerpt 2

The people on the agriculture sector, who are employed can get money too to support their family members. They can also inspired other unemployed people to make small farms where they be doing the same. example the Etunda irrigation project has given the local people an example to start growing crops at their houses. The animals on farms produce meat and their skins can be used for leather products such as bags and shoes, that can be exported as well.

Source: (Essay 6)

## PP examples from excerpt 2

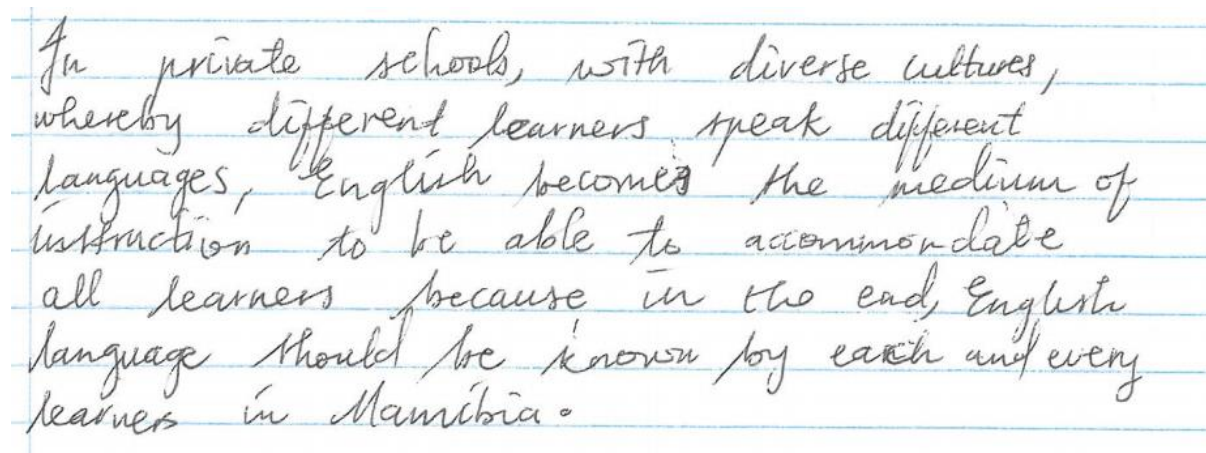
- The *people on the agriculture sector*.

## Excerpt 2 analysis

Another example is from excerpt 2. The sentence '*The people on the agriculture sector*' has one word that appears as a preposition. The word '*on*' was inappropriately used as a preposition.

Arajan, Abdullah and Roslim (2013, p. 168) emphasise that “confusion mainly emanates when recipients or learners are not certain of which prepositions to apply in a particular context.” The preposition ‘on’ gives more information about the noun ‘people’ even though it may confuse the reader whether it is indicating place, direction, position or just providing details. It becomes the adjectival phrase. Prepositions act as connectors, linking one word to another in a sentence (Nasser, 2020). They allow written or spoken utterances to be connected between individual elements. They convey information about time, place, or direction, or provide details. The PP can only become the adjectival when it gives more information about the noun in the proximity of the sentence (Arif, 2020). There are other PPs in the excerpt that begin with the PP heads ‘to’ and ‘for’.

### Excerpt 3



In private schools, with diverse cultures, whereby different learners speak different languages, English becomes the medium of instruction to be able to accommodate all learners because in the end, English language should be known by each and every learner in Namibia.

Source: (Essay 5)

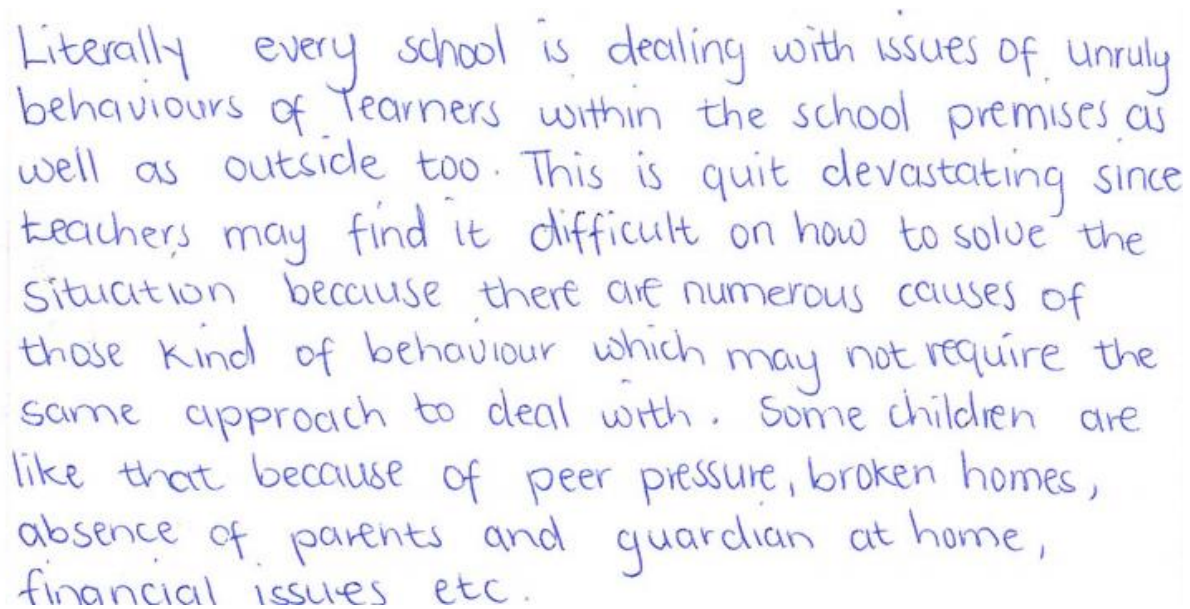
### PP examples from excerpt 3

- *English language* should be known by each and every **learner in Namibia**.

### Excerpt 3 analysis

In the following example, there are two prepositions. The first preposition in the example above is the word 'by' and the other is the word 'in'. The two prepositions are applied in a different manner. The first, 'by', gives more information to the noun 'English language'. Therefore, it acts as an adjectival in the sentence '*English language* should be known **by each and every learner in Namibia**'. The preposition 'by' is used as an example from the essay to show the person or thing that does something (Kulkarni, Premraj, Ordonez, Dhar, Li, Choi & Berg, 2013). This analysis explains how the sentence qualifies as the type of phrase known as the adjectival PP.

#### Excerpt 4



Literally every school is dealing with issues of unruly behaviours of Teachers within the school premises as well as outside too. This is quit devastating since teachers may find it difficult on how to solve the situation because there are numerous causes of those kind of behaviour which may not require the same approach to deal with. Some children are like that because of peer pressure, broken homes, absence of parents and guardian at home, financial issues etc.

Source: (Essay 2)

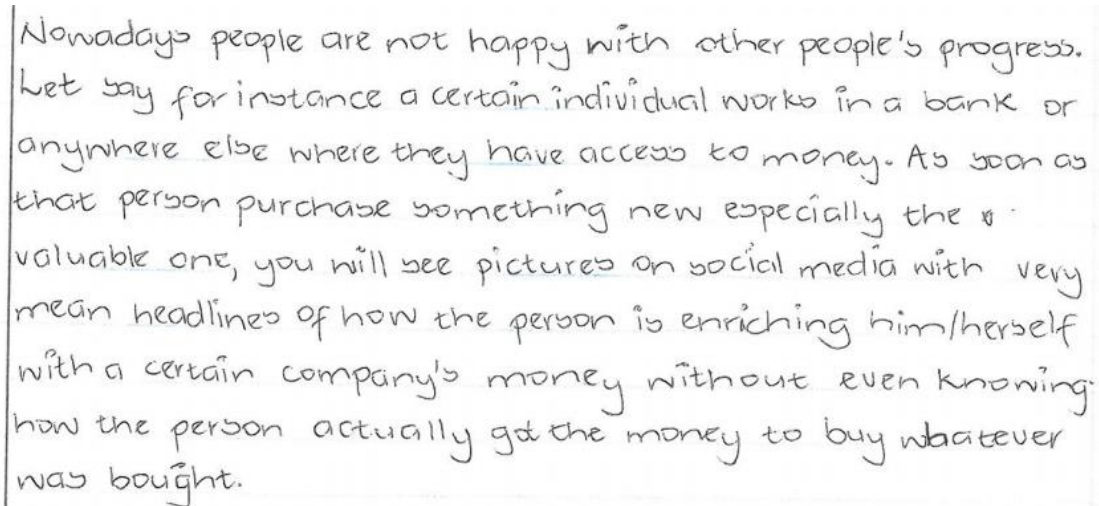
#### Examples from excerpt 4

- Some *children* are like that **because of peer pressure**.
- **Guardians at home, financial issues etc.**

#### Excerpt 4 analysis

The two prepositional phrases in the above examples have preposition heads 'because of' and 'at'. There are two words that sound like prepositions in the example, 'Some *children* are like that ***because of peer pressure***'. The first one is the word 'because' and the second one is the word 'of'. Although they are both PPs, only the PP head, 'of', is the preposition that makes the phrase an adjectival phrase. The reason is that the word 'because' was used as a conjunction. A conjunction is a word used to connect clauses or sentences or to coordinate words in the same clause (Pangaribuan, Haddina & Manik, 2018). The preposition 'of' gives more information to the nearby noun 'children'.

#### Excerpt 5



Nowadays people are not happy with other people's progress. Let say for instance a certain individual works in a bank or anywhere else where they have access to money. As soon as that person purchase something new especially the valuable one, you will see pictures on social media with very mean headlines of how the person is enriching him/herself with a certain company's money without even knowing how the person actually got the money to buy whatever was bought.

Source: (Essay 4)

#### Examples from excerpt 5

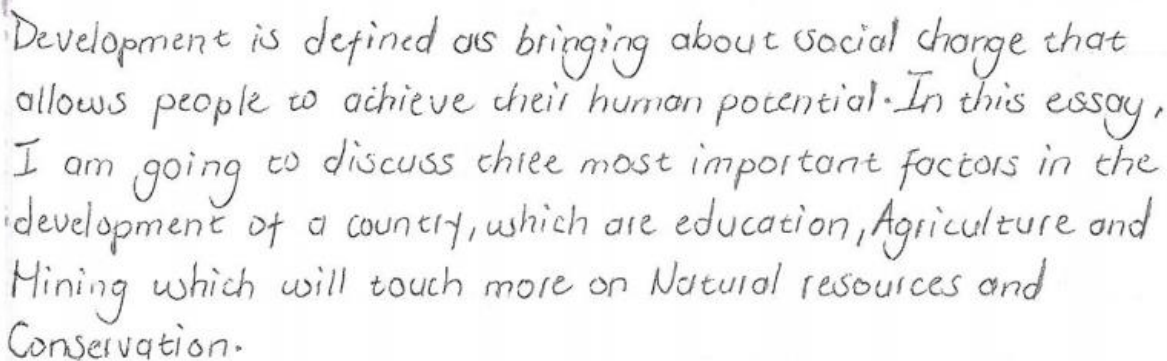
- Pictures ***on social media*** with very mean...
- Headlines ***of how the person is enriching*** him/herself...
- Him/herself ***with a certain company's money***...



### Excerpt 5 analysis

Handwritten essays were analysed through transformational-generative grammar (TGG). TGG is a system of linguistic analysis that analyses relationships between different sentence elements and between possible sentences in a language and uses processes or rules (some of which are called transformations), to express these relationships (Britannica, 2009). The three examples of phrases above were extracted from excerpt 5. In the first two examples, the phrases are prepositional phrases which modify nouns. The third phrase modifies the pronouns himself/herself. In the phrase that reads *'Headlines of how the person is enriching'*, the preposition 'of' is usually used to denote possession or position. In this phrase there is only one preposition. The PP begins where the word 'of' starts. The preposition refers to the noun 'headlines'. The usage qualifies the PP to be named an adjectival phrase type. The sentence 'Him/herself *with a certain company's money*' has one preposition 'with'. The PP begins immediately after the preposition. The PP, in the way it was used, simply gives more information about the pronouns 'Him/herself'. The difference between an adverbial PP and the type adjectival is that the adjectival PP modifies nouns while the adverbial modifies the verb. Both types of PPs were used in the students' handwritten essays. The PP head determines the type of PP.

### Excerpt 6



Development is defined as bringing about social change that allows people to achieve their human potential. In this essay, I am going to discuss three most important factors in the development of a country, which are education, Agriculture and Mining which will touch more on Natural resources and Conservation.

Source: (Essay 3)

### Examples from excerpt 6

- *Development* is defined **as bringing about social change**
- *People* **to achieve their human potential**
- In this essay, I am going **to discuss three most important**
- *Factors* **in the development of a country**
- Education and mining which will touch more **on natural resources and conservation**

### Excerpt 6 analysis

The five examples of sentences above are all prepositional phrases that modify nouns. The prepositions in the sentence '*Factors in the development of a country*' are two. The first one is the preposition 'in' and the second one is the preposition 'of'. The first gives more information about the noun 'factors'. This means that the PP that begins immediately after the noun 'factors' is an adjectival phrase. In the sentence '*Education and mining which will touch more on natural resources and conservation*' there is only one preposition. The PP starts where the word 'on' is situated. This preposition gives more information about the nouns 'Education and mining'. The types of prepositional phrases extracted from the students' handwritten essays were analysed using their grammatical structure (Putri & Syarif, 2020).

### Excerpt 7

As the global communication expands, through the world, so does the need for a global language. English has become the Lingua Franca in many parts of the world including our own country Namibia which is declared as an official language. This is because it is the only effective language which global communication can be done hence it is a global language.

Source: (Essay 1)

#### Examples from excerpt 7

- English has become the lingua Franca **in many parts of the world**.

#### Excerpt 7 analysis

The sentence example from excerpt 7 reads, 'English has become the lingua Franca **in many parts of the world**'. It is important to note that the PPs that are found in the students' handwritten essays were spontaneously written by students according to the given essay topics. The researcher administered the handwriting essays to ensure that they are written freehand without the help of the internet. The internet is encouraged but if used by students in the present study, the current results presented would not reflect the study expectations. There are two prepositions in this sentence that can be analysed 'English has become the lingua Franca **in many parts of the world**'. These are 'in' and 'of'. The preposition 'in' marks the beginning of the adverbial phrase. In this sentence the PP was used as an adverbial phrase, which is a type of PP that modifies a noun.

#### Types of prepositional phrases (the adverbial)

##### 4.2.2 Data presentation and analysis of the PP which modifies a verb (adverbial)

At this moment, it is important to state the main objective of this study. The objective of this study was to analyse the use of prepositional phrases in the essays of first year students studying towards the Bachelor of Human Resources degree at NUST. While the main objective of the study has been restated, the first sub-objective of the study is answered in the previous and present section, namely to investigate the types of prepositional phrases (PP) used in the students' essays. The study identified the adjectival and the adverbial as the two types of PP used in the essays. After analysing the adjectival type in the section above, the present section continues with the discussion and analysis of the adverbial type of PP. The determination of the type of prepositional phrase can be performed through the application of Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG). TGG permits the prepositional phrases from the students' handwritten essays to be analysed using the organisation of words in a sentence (Ayars, 2018). This means that a sentence is made up of different syntactic constituents. The two main constituents of a sentence are the noun phrase (NP) and the verb phrase (VP). Verbs can be modified by adverbs. They can become adverbial phrases when the preposition is the head of the (VP). The purpose of adverbials in a given sentence is to modify verbs and other adverbs. They act like adverbs to modify a verb or a clause. Adverbials can consist of a single word or an entire phrase. This type of PPs can be identified when they act as adverbs. They provide additional detail about verbs. In other words, an adverbial prepositional phrase is a group of words that functions as an adverb (Nilsen, 2017). Below are some excerpts from students' handwritten essays and the analysis under the present study. The purpose of this analysis is to establish the PP which modifies a verb known as the adverbial. Under the present study, the study identified two types of PPs that were used in the students' handwritten essays. The excerpts below are parts of the essays that were used as examples to explain and demonstrate the adverbial type of PPs. This analysis responds to the study objectives.

### **Excerpt 8**

I believe that, the evidence that should be used for judgements in court is the one found at the scene, when the police arrived or the one the person self confessed. The police take pictures of what happened at the scene, for filing purposes, and also if a person confesses to a crime, it must still be investigated and the person should be send to a social worker, perhaps is trying to lie for somebody. Those are the only authentic evidence, that qualifies to be used for judgement in court.

Source: (Essay 10)

#### Examples from excerpt 8

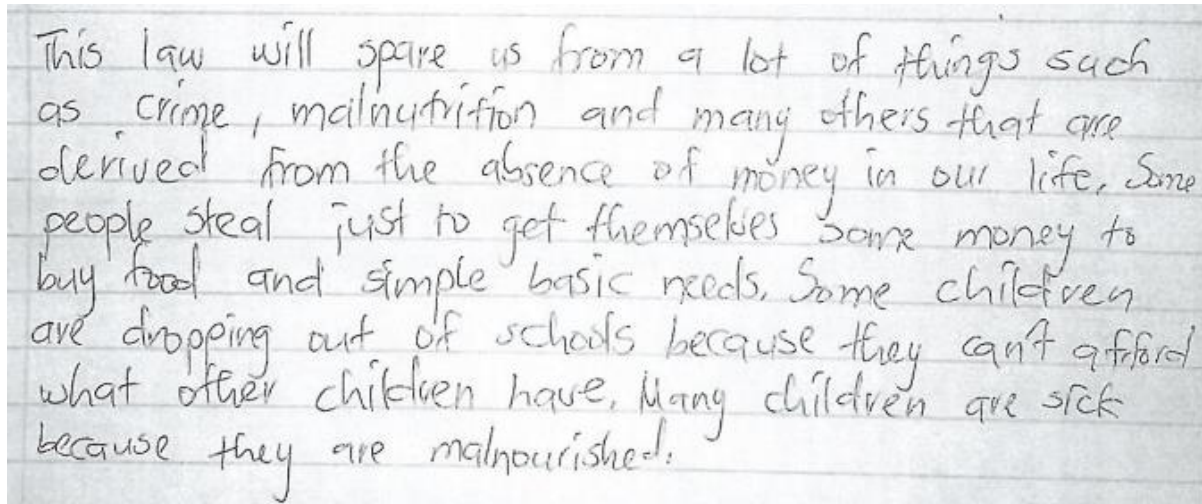
- The police *take pictures of what happened*.
- The person must *be send [sic] to a social worker*.
- Perhaps is *trying to lie for [sic] somebody*.
- That *qualifies to be used for judgement in court*.

#### Excerpt 8 analysis

Understanding the types of PPs is relevant to this study because it leads to addressing the primary goal of the study. The objective of the present study is to investigate the types of PPs that were used in the students' essays. The examples given above were taken from excerpt 8. The PP was used as an adverbial. In the example 'The police *take pictures of what happened*', the 'of what

*happened*' is modifying the verb 'take' that was identified in the sentence. The prepositional phrase acts upon a verb. It is when the type is ascertained to be an adverbial.

### Excerpt 9



Source: (Essay 12)

### Examples from excerpt 9

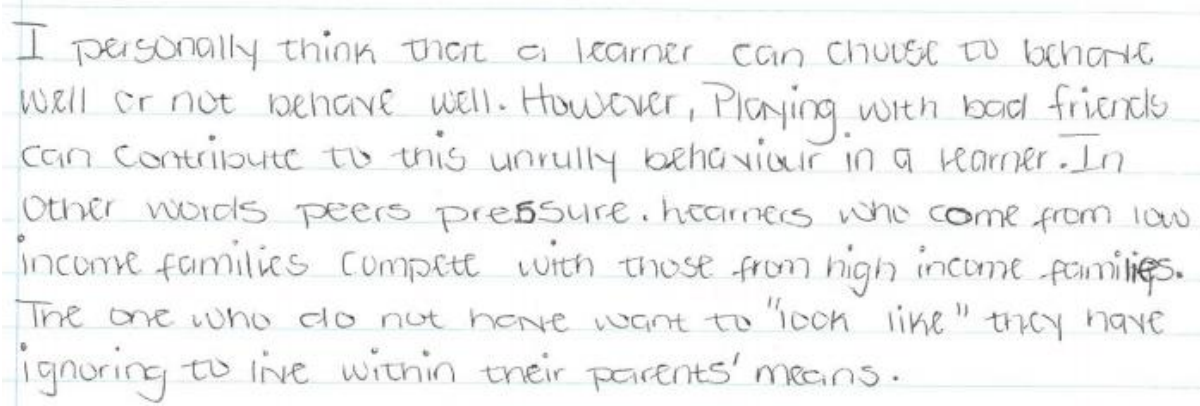
- This law will *spare us from a lot of things such as crime*
- Some people *steal just to get themselves some money to buy food*
- Some children are *dropping out of school because they can't afford what other children have*

### Excerpt 9 analysis

At a minimum, a prepositional phrase consists of one preposition and the object it governs (Šeškauskienė & Juknevičienė, 2020). The above three sentences that were taken from excerpt 9

show how PPs can be used in a sentence. The parts of a sentence which form the PP consists of an average of two prepositions per phrase. In the sentence, 'This law will *spare us from a lot of things such as crime*', there are two prepositions that make up the adverbial PP. These are the constituents 'from' and 'of'. The manner in which they were used determines the type of PP as adverbial. To determine this, the definition of the PP can help to analyse the adverbial type of PP. A prepositional phrase is a word that shows the relationship between a noun or pronoun and another word in the sentence (Lestary, Ras & Nababan, 2017). In this case the word in question is a verb. The last sentence of the four given examples above that reads, 'Some children are *dropping out of school because they can't afford what other children have*' has one PP. In the context it was used, the preposition has two words 'out of' instead of the usual one-word constituent. However, the phrase remains an adverbial because it is a PP that modifies the verb in the sentence.

#### Excerpt 10



I personally think that a learner can choose to behave well or not behave well. However, playing with bad friends can contribute to this unruly behaviour in a learner. In other words peers pressure. learners who come from low income families compete with those from high income families. The one who do not have want to "look like" they have ignoring to live within their parents' means.

Source: (Essay 44)

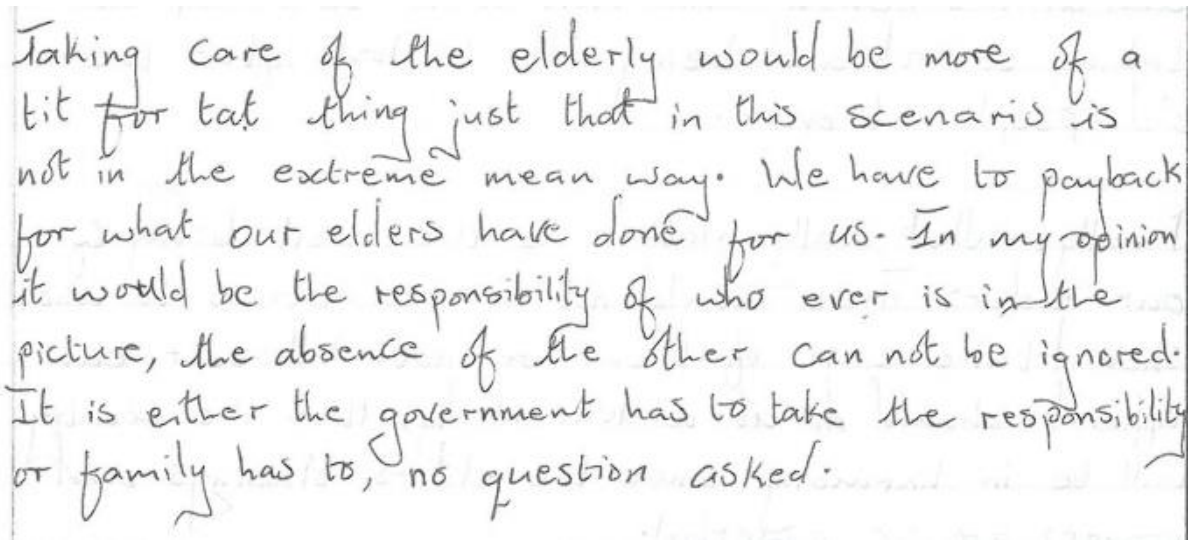
- *Playing with bad friends can contribute to this unruly behaviour in a learner.*

- Learners who have *come from low-income families compete with those from high income families.*
- The one who do not have want to look like they have *ignoring to live within their parents' means.*

### Excerpt 10 analysis

The examples given above were taken from excerpt 10. They are all adverbial because they present a PP that modifies the verb. For example, from the second example that reads, 'Learners who have *come from low-income families compete with those from high income families.*', there are two prepositions. The preposition is the constituent, 'from', appearing twice in different locations of the same sentence. The verb that is modified is the constituent 'come', located just before the first preposition. The purpose of the analysis is to assert that the three examples are the type of PPs that modify the verb known as the adverbial.

### Excerpt 11



Taking care of the elderly would be more of a bit for that thing just that in this scenario is not in the extreme mean way. We have to payback for what our elders have done for us. In my opinion it would be the responsibility of who ever is in the picture, the absence of the other can not be ignored. It is either the government has to take the responsibility or family has to, no question asked.

Source: (Essay 8)



## Examples from excerpt 11

- *Taking care of the elderly would be more of a tit for tat thing just that in this scenario is not in the extreme mean way.*
- *We have to **payback** for what our elders have done for us.*
- *In my opinion it would be the responsibility of **whoever is in the picture, the absence of the other cannot be ignored.***
- *It is either the government **has to take the responsibility.***

## Excerpt 11 Analysis

Excerpt 11 has four PPs that qualify as adverbials. The basic test that can be applied to evaluate the type of PP that qualifies as an adverbial is by asking one or more of these questions; when, where, how, why, or to what extent, things such as how many, how much, how long, or how far. This reflects what Fukuade (2000) maintains; that prepositional phrases express meaning which is closely related to the meaning expressed by adjectives and adverbs: where, when, how, and what kind. He also further elaborates that prepositional phrases can also express a sense of why and who. It is so that when the questions are asked, the type of PP can be established. The examples given above were taken from the students' handwritten essays. The first example that reads '*Taking care of the elderly would be more of a tit for tat thing just that in this scenario is not in the extreme mean way*', explains how the writer of the statement wants things to be done.

## Excerpt 12

To interpret wild behaviours in schools broadly one has to think of learners from both urban and rural areas. Urban learners are exposed to extremely a lot of things that can be a distraction and can also change their morals. At rural school learners are abusing alcohol, they have abusive parents and they fall victim for peer pressure.

Source: (Essay 7)

- *To interpret wild behaviours in schools broadly*
- Urban learners are *exposed to extremely a lot of things that can be a distraction and can also change their morals.*

## Excerpt 12 analysis

The PPs that reads '*To interpret wild behaviours in schools broadly*' and 'Urban learners are *exposed to extremely a lot of things that can be a distraction and can also change their morals*' are all adverbial PPs. Considering that the two sentences are both adverbial PPs, contrastive analysis can be used to study prepositions. Macková (2013), performed a contrastive analysis of the prepositions "To" and "Into"; the study states that prepositions are, together with articles, one of the most frequently used words in the English language. Prepositions eventually form PPs. In the present analysis, the study identifies the prepositions 'to', 'at', 'in', 'on' as the most frequently used in the students' essays.

## Excerpt 13

To begin with, natural resources plays a major role in the development of the country. Both the agriculture and mining sector fall under this category. Agriculture contribute to the country's development in so many ways, they produce vegetables and also they rear animals. The vegetables and other crops can be exported to other countries and in that way the country is getting money. Crops farmed on small scales can be used for food in the country and the surplus can be sold locally.

Source: (Essay 6)

### Examples from excerpt 13

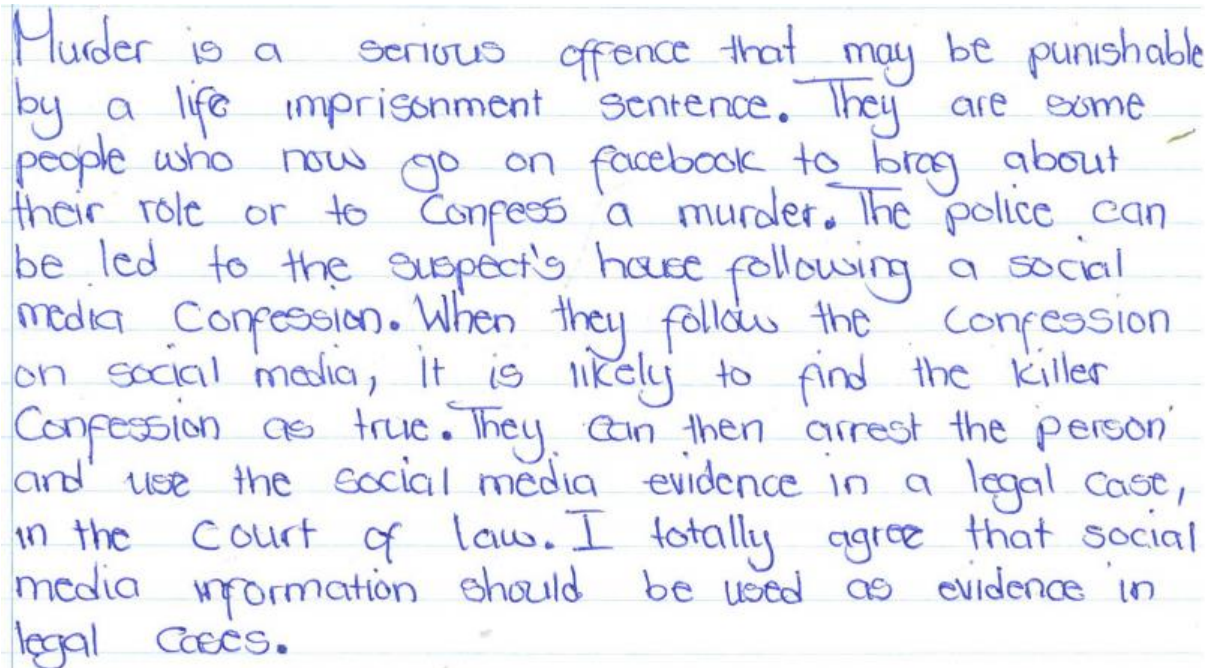
- The vegetables and other crops can be *exported to other countries and in that way the country is getting money.*
- Crops *farmed on small scales can be used for food in the country and the surplus can be sold locally.*

### Excerpt 13 analysis

Example 13 has two adverbial prepositional phrases. The first example that reads, 'The vegetables and other crops can be *exported to other countries and in that way the country is getting money*', applied two prepositions; the first one 'to' forms the adverbial, while the second preposition 'in' can still be analysed as an adverbial. The second sentence that reads, 'Crops *farmed on small scales can be used for food in the country and the surplus can be sold locally*',

has three prepositions. None the less it is a complete adverbial PP. It is a PP which modifies a verb in the sentence.

#### Excerpt 14



Murder is a serious offence that may be punishable by a life imprisonment sentence. They are some people who now go on facebook to brag about their role or to Confess a murder. The police can be led to the suspect's house following a social media Confession. When they follow the Confession on social media, it is likely to find the killer Confession as true. They can then arrest the person and use the social media evidence in a legal case, in the Court of law. I totally agree that social media information should be used as evidence in legal cases.

Source: (Essay 50)

#### Examples from excerpt 14

- The police can be *led to the suspect's house following a social media confession*.
- They are some people who now *go on Facebook to brag about their role or to confess a murder*.

#### Excerpt 14 analysis

When a sentence presents two separate PPs in two different places of the sentence, students may have been challenged to generate and appropriately know the types, depending on their purpose of usage. Murshidi (2014) contends that the different parts of speech in sentences may

lead to learner confusion, and may result in prepositional errors like omission, addition or selection of an inappropriate preposition. The two sentences above contain examples of prepositional phrases. The first one that reads, 'The police can be *led to the suspect's house following a social media confession*', has only one preposition, identified as the word 'to'. The constituent 'to' is the PP head. The PP is an adverbial because it gives more information to the verb in the sentence. The verb identified is the constituent 'led'. The second sentence also has the adverbial type of PP. The sentence that reads, 'They are some people who now *go on Facebook to brag about their role or to confess a murder*', has three prepositions (*on, about, to*). This is unnecessary addition of prepositions to a sentence. For the purpose of this study, the preposition 'on' that appears first, was considered.

#### **4.2.3 Segment one summary**

This section presented a discussion about the types of PPs found in the students' handwritten essays. One of the two types identified was the PP that modifies the noun known as the adjectival. The second type identified was the PP which modifies the verb, known as the adverbial. These two types were frequently used in the essays. The purpose of the study was achieved; the students were asked to write essays by hand because the method gives a true reflection of the students' writing. The use of a computer to type was discouraged because it provides students with the tools to detect common grammar fixes, especially considering that they are non-native English speakers. In disagreement with a study by Chodorow et al., (2007), which held that computational methods can be used to study prepositions, the present study needed to evaluate a real reflection without the assistance of a computer.

## **SEGMENT TWO**

### **4.3 Grammatical functions of prepositional phrases in the essays**

This segment of the study responds to the study objective that investigated the functions of prepositional phrases (PP) as applicable to the students' handwritten essays. When students write an essay, it is important that they understand how they function and where the PP appropriately fit in a written text. Due to the high rate of the English language failure of many high school leavers in Namibian schools, the Namibian government announced its plans to hold a national conference on English to discuss ways in which to address several factors contributing to the persistent poor performance in English (Iikela & Oliveira, 2020). It is undoubtedly important that these students know the function of PPs when they start their university studies because that contributes to their success. These high school students will eventually come to study at the university. Prepositional phrases are phrases that consist of a preposition plus another word, phrase, or clause functioning as a prepositional complement (Le Sourd, 2014). The essays studied have identified six English prepositional phrases that perform grammatical functions (Johnson, 2014). It is necessary to analyse the function of PPs according to the function that each one performs. The six PP functions that were identified were organised in this study under each sub-heading with relevant examples from the essay excerpts. The first one to be analysed was the prepositional phrase (PP) head, followed by the adjunct adverbial, disjunct adverbial, noun phrase (NP) modifier, adjective phrase complement (AdjP), and the verb phrase (VP) complement.

The following is a list of the grammatical functions of prepositional phrases:

**Table 4.2 Grammatical functions of prepositional phrases**

Prepositional phrase head	Only the preposition functions as a phrase head.
Adjunct adverbial	Are words, phrases, and clauses that modify an entire clause by providing additional information about time, place, manner, condition, purpose, reason, result, and concession.
Disjunct adverbial	Are words and phrases that provide additional information to frame an entire clause, which denotes the attitude of the speaker toward or judgment of the proposition such as truthfulness of manner of speaking
Noun phrase modifier	Are words, phrases, and clauses that describe a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase
Adjective phrase complement	Are words, phrases, and clauses that complete the meaning of an adjective or adjective phrase

**Source:** (Johnson, 2014).

#### 4.2.3 PPs that perform grammatical functions as a PP head

The prepositional phrase (PP) head is the word that functions as the **head** of the prepositional phrase (Brinton & Brinton, 2010). In the clauses and phrases analysed below, only the preposition functions as the phrase head. A PP is usually followed by a noun phrase (NP). Every PP begins where the preposition as a constituent, is located. That preposition becomes the PP head.

**Excerpt 15**

Elderly people need safety. In the past, house helpers / keepers were so good that they were entrusted with these jobs, to take care of the elderly, but now they are become greedy, rude and aggressive. So many cases of house helpers physically harassing the elderly and children were recorded. Elderly people need to be kept in an old age home, away from these cruel people, to not be harmed, as their health deteriorated, and any physical harassment might kill them. This houses' security would be tight.

Source: (Essay 15)

#### Examples from excerpt 15

- They were entrusted with these jobs **to take care of the elderly.**
- Elderly people need **to be kept** away **from these cruel people.**
- Not be harmed [sic], **as their health deteriorated.**

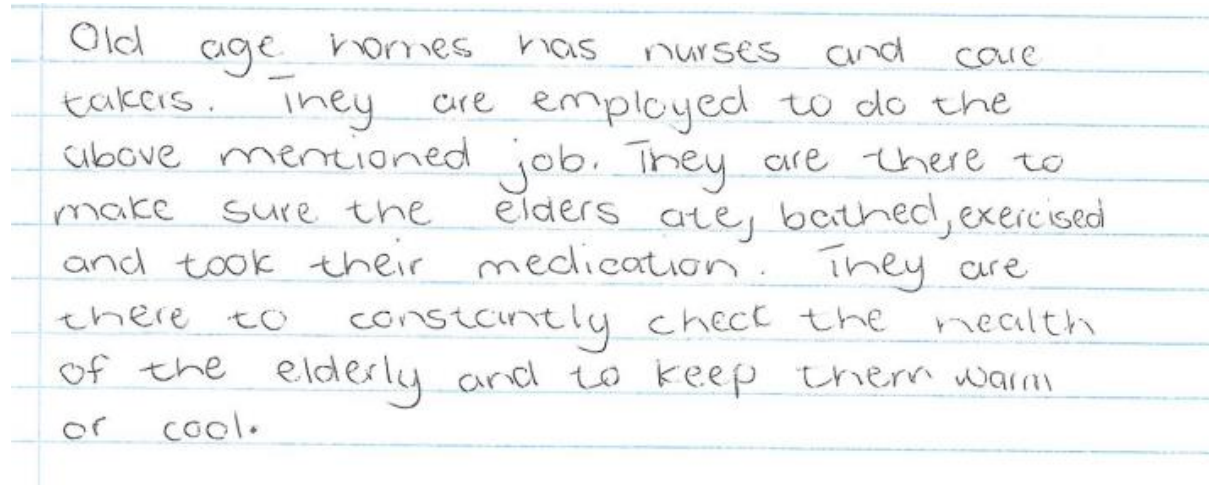
#### Excerpt 15 analysis

In the four examples given above, there are four prepositions that appear as PP heads. The prepositions that function as PP heads in the sentence that reads, 'Away **from these cruel people**' has the constituent 'from' as its PP head. The other examples explain the function of prepositional phrases as prepositional phrase heads. The four examples of PPs from excerpt 15 identified the prepositions, 'to', 'from' and 'as'. These prepositions were used as PP heads. The



PP head starts immediately at the point where the preposition is situated in the sentence. The preposition is a dependent of other constituents in the phrase.

### Excerpt 16

A photograph of a piece of lined paper with handwritten text in blue ink. The text reads: "Old age homes has nurses and care takers. They are employed to do the above mentioned job. They are there to make sure the elders are, bathed, exercised and took their medication. They are there to constantly check the health of the elderly and to keep them warm or cool." The handwriting is somewhat cursive and the lines are light blue.

Old age homes has nurses and care takers. They are employed to do the above mentioned job. They are there to make sure the elders are, bathed, exercised and took their medication. They are there to constantly check the health of the elderly and to keep them warm or cool.

Source: (Essay 14)

### Examples from excerpt 16

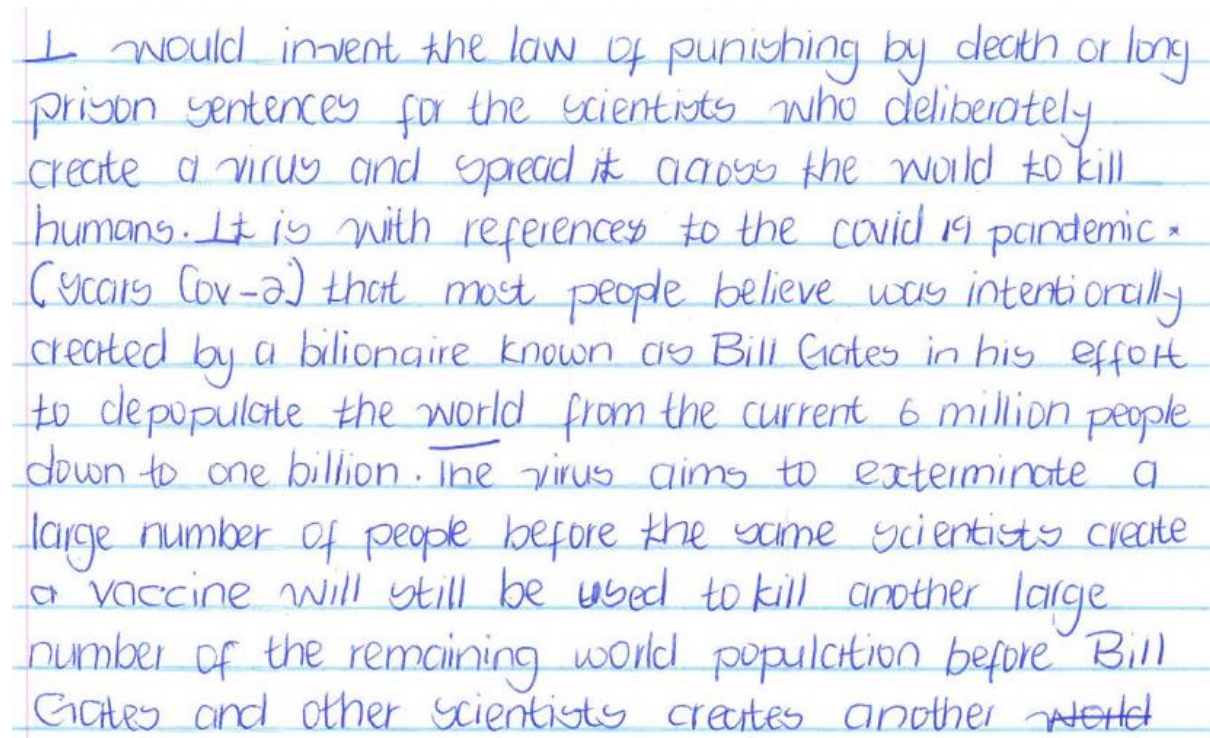
- They are employed **to do the above-mentioned job.**
- They are there **to make sure the elders are bathed.**
- They are there **to constantly check**
- The health **of the elderly and to keep them warm or cool**

### Excerpt 16 analysis

The rules of grammar permit the preposition to be used as a phrase head (Hasselgård, 2010). The pattern of PPs in excerpt 16 that was extracted from the students' essays indicate that the prepositions 'to' and 'of' were the most frequently used as a PP head. The reason could be that the prepositions were the most suitable for the chosen essay topic. The examples presented above illustrate the preposition as the prepositional phrase head. The preposition head begins at the point where the preposition is situated in the sentences. The only example with the preposition 'of' reads as follows; 'The health **of the elderly and to keep them warm or cool**'. In this example, the PP constituent 'of' is the PP head.

#### 4.3.2 PPs that perform grammatical functions as an adjunct adverbial

##### Excerpt 17



I would invent the law of punishing by death or long prison sentences for the scientists who deliberately create a virus and spread it across the world to kill humans. It is with references to the covid 19 pandemic (years Cov-2) that most people believe was intentionally created by a billionaire known as Bill Gates in his effort to depopulate the world from the current 6 million people down to one billion. The virus aims to exterminate a large number of people before the same scientists create a vaccine will still be used to kill another large number of the remaining world population before Bill Gates and other scientists creates another world

Source: (Essay 42)

Example from excerpt 17

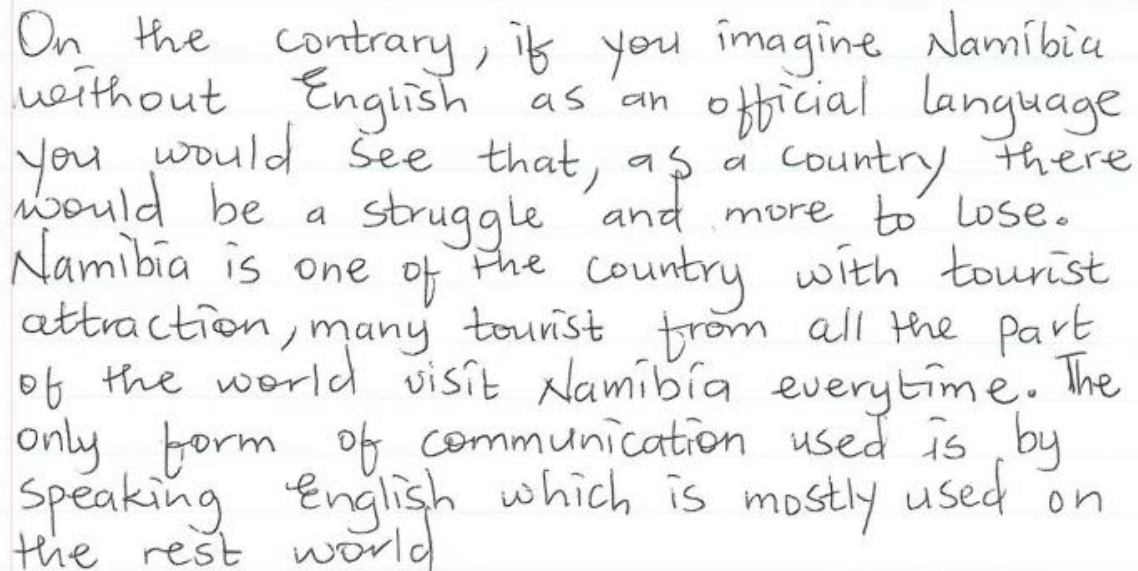
- *Spread it across the world.*

### Excerpt 17 analysis

The example above that reads, '*Spread it across the world*' was taken from the students' essays. The PP in this example functions as an adjunct adverbial. Adjunct adverbials are words, phrases, and clauses that modify an entire clause by providing additional information about time, place, manner, condition, purpose, reason, result, and concession (Hasselgård, 2010). On the other hand, a verb is a word that describes or gives more information about a verb, adjective, adverb, or phrase (Burroughs, Kazanina & Houghton, 2021).

### 4.3.3 PPs that perform grammatical functions as a disjunct adverbial

#### Excerpt 18



On the contrary, if you imagine Namibia without English as an official language you would see that, as a country there would be a struggle and more to lose. Namibia is one of the country with tourist attraction, many tourist from all the part of the world visit Namibia everytime. The only form of communication used is by speaking English which is mostly used on the rest world

In my opinion, the use of English has both advantage and disadvantage to the people in the country since the country has different people of different culture who speak different languages, English should be supplemented with other local languages for communication.

**Source:** (Essay 24)

### Examples from excerpt 18

- ***On the contrary***, if you imagine Namibia without English as an official language.
- ***In my opinion***, the use of English has both advantage and disadvantage.

### Excerpt 18 analysis

When PPs are used in essays, the organisation contributes to the correct usage and function. In his study, (Ahmed, 2010) noted that student teachers confuse PPs when they write English language essays. That may lead to a problem of cohesion and coherence in the function of PPs. That study agrees with the present study in that, the six functions of PPs identified may confuse essay writers in the Namibian context. One example is the PP that functions as a disjunct adverbial as in the example that reads, '***On the contrary***, if you imagine Namibia without English as an official language'. Disjunct adverbials are words and phrases that provide additional information to frame an entire clause, which denotes the attitude of the speaker toward or judgment of the proposition such as truthfulness of manner of speaking (Bergs, 2020). The other example that has a disjunct adverbial reads, '***In my opinion***, the use of English has both advantage and disadvantage'. The disjuncts '***On the contrary***' and '***In my opinion***' gives additional

information to the two phrases and presents the phrase with the attitude of the speaker. The first disjunct that reads, '*On the contrary*' has been used to intensify a denial of what has just been implied or stated by suggesting that the opposite is the case (Ren & Ji, 2017). In the second example, the adjunct reads '*In my opinion*'; here the attitude of the speaker is perceived in his/her thoughts but is not necessarily a fact.

#### 4.3.4 PPs that perform grammatical functions as a noun phrase (NP) modifier

##### Excerpt 19

The nowadays society is so toxic, that it instills unacceptable manners in the young generation. Older people are verbally harassing each other in-front of the kids. These kids be there listening to the insults and unacceptable words in the society and start immitating because, they hear them from elders and they think they are good words to use if there you want to solve a problem.

The use of cellphones of their age. Parents with learners who have cellphones should be informed, to confiscate these cellphones. Or if needs to use cellphones be, (like online learning) there should be parental guidance when these learners use their cellphones. Disable social media platforms, and only allow google chrome with child content.

Source: (Essay 19)

### Examples from excerpt 19

- It instils unacceptable manners *in the young generation*.
- Older people are verbally harassing each other *in front of the kids*.
- They hear them *from elders*.
- The use *of cell phones of their age*
- Parents *with learners who have cell phones* should be informed.
- Only allow Google chrome *with child content*

### Excerpt 19 analysis

In the study of language, the structure of a sentence is broken down into several constituents that allow it to be analysed. The constituents of a sentence consist of two main parts, that is the NP and the VP. The NP can be broken down as P = NP. This means that the PP is part of the NP where the PP can function as the NP modifier. PPs are defined as phrases formed by a preposition followed by a prepositional complement. NP modifiers consist of a noun including pronouns and any determinatives, modifiers, and complements such as adjectives, determiners, verbs, prepositions, and clauses (Huddleston & Pullum, 2020). The example that reads, 'Only allow Google chrome *with child content*' is a PP that functions as a NP modifier because it has a preposition which is followed by a prepositional complement.

#### 4.3.5 PPs that perform grammatical functions as an adjective phrase (AdjP) complement

##### Excerpt 20

I would do this invention to the one law for a plan that equalise the gap between the rich and the poor citizens of Africa and especially Europe and America. People in Africa can now be able to go buy whatever they wish in other parts of the world. This law would not include the people from China because the Chinese come here in Africa for corrupt our leaders with massive gifts of free loans. These leaders of Africa then take the money and use it at their personal use. They then sign lifetime contract loans with China that will remain for generations after the leaders die

Source: (Essay 41)

##### Examples from Excerpt 20

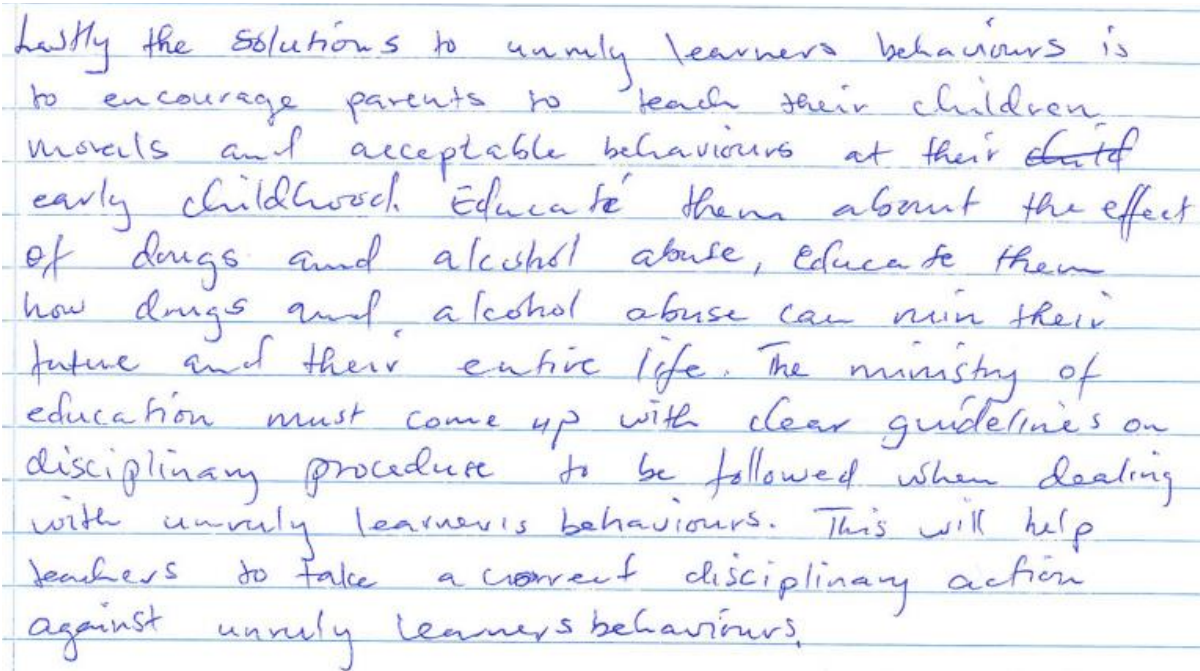
- I would do this **to the one law**.
- Plan that equalises **between the rich and the poor**.
- People in Africa can now be able **to go buy whatever they wish**.
- These leaders of Africa then take the money use it **for their personal use**.

##### Excerpt 20 analysis

An adjective phrase (AdjP) complement consists of an adjective (A) and any modifiers such as adverbs and prepositions. AdjP complements are words, phrases, and clauses that complete the meaning of an adjective or adjective phrase (Manetta, 2019). Unlike AdjP modifiers that modify or describe an A or AdjP, AdjP complements complete the meaning of an A or AdjP. Three grammatical forms can function as AdjP complements. The first grammatical form that can perform the grammatical function of an AdjP complement is the PP. A PP is defined as a preposition, which is traditionally defined as “a word or words that relates a noun, adjective, or verb to another noun, adjective, or verb,” directly followed by a prepositional complement in the form of a NP, noun clause, VP, or PP. The phrase ‘Plan that equalises **between the rich and the poor**’ consists of a preposition and adjectival complements, thereby qualifying it to be a PP functioning as an adjective phrase complement.

#### 4.3.6 PPs that perform grammatical functions as a Verb Phrase (VP) complement

##### Excerpt 21



Lastly the solutions to unruly learners behaviours is to encourage parents to teach their children morals and acceptable behaviours at their child's early childhood. Educate them about the effect of drugs and alcohol abuse, educate them how drugs and alcohol abuse can ruin their future and their entire life. The ministry of education must come up with clear guidelines on disciplinary procedure to be followed when dealing with unruly learners behaviours. This will help teachers to take a correct disciplinary action against unruly learners behaviours.

Source: (Essay 31)



## Examples from excerpt 21

- The Ministry of Education must come up with clear guidelines on disciplinary procedures to be followed when dealing ***with unruly learner's behaviours***.
- This will help teachers to take a correct disciplinary action ***against unruly learner's behaviour***.

## Excerpt 21 analysis

The students' handwritten essays were analysed and the PPs that function as VP complements, were identified. The example above that reads 'The Ministry of Education must come up with clear guidelines on disciplinary procedures to be followed when dealing ***with unruly learner's behaviours***' is a PP that functions as a VP complement.. PPs function as a (VP) complement. (VP) complements are constituents of a sentence or a phrase that helps the semantic part of a verb (V) or VP (Zagona, 2012). In contrast with VP modifiers that modify or define a verb or (VP), (VP) modifiers complete the meaning of the verb or (VP). The preposition of a prepositional verb functions as a (VP) complement. The first grammatical form that can perform the grammatical function of (VP) complement is the PP. A PP is defined as a preposition, which is traditionally defined as "a word or words that relates a noun, adjective, or verb to another noun, adjective, or verb," directly followed by a prepositional complement in the form of a NP, noun clause, (VP), or PP (Liu & Sagae, 2018). The PP of a prepositional verb functions as a (VP) complement.

### 4.3.7 Segment two summary

This segment presented data from the students' handwritten essays. There are six functions that were identified and analysed using examples from the students' essays. It is evident from the examples presented that PPs function differently, depending on how they were used. The six

functions presented are: the prepositional phrase (PP) head, adjunct adverbial, disjunct adverbial, noun phrase (NP) modifier, adjective phrase complement (AdjP), and the verb phrase (VP) complement. These essays were handwritten by the study participants spontaneously, using a pen and a paper, in other words, using a freehand technique. This allowed the students to refrain from generating content with the help of the internet. The researcher was pleased with the feedback from the handwritten essays as it reflects the reality of the students' competencies in writing prepositional phrases. It is the view of the TGG theory that language is spontaneous and human beings have the ability to create new forms of sentences from already existing ones (Chomsky, 1957).

### **SEGMENT THREE**

#### **4.4 The syntactic application of prepositional phrases and their ambiguities as observed in the essays**

Prepositional phrases (PPs) are entities that form part of a sentence. They are dependent because they do not contain a subject and a verb. This means that they cannot stand alone or convey a complete thought. PPs can be applied to perform a syntactic role when they are correctly used. This section of the study evaluates the syntactic application of the PP through tree diagrams and analyses relevant examples from the essay excerpts. The breakdown of the PP was also discussed in this section. PPs were analysed using the phrase structure rules (PS) of transformational-generative Grammar (TGG). TGG uses a set of prescriptive rules that govern the application of PPs. The PS rules of a PP are applied as follows:  $PP \rightarrow P (NP)$

##### **4.4.1 Prepositional phrases in relation to TGG**

Transformational-generative Grammar is a system of language analysis that recognises the relationship between the various elements of a sentence. In the present study, TGG analyses

prepositional phrases (PP) among the possible sentences of a language and uses processes or rules (some of which are called transformations) to express these relationships (Britannica, 2009). A PP is a dependent part of a sentence. It cannot stand on its own and does not convey a complete thought. Phrase rules (PS) govern sentences, including prepositions. The PS rules were discussed in this segment.

## Excerpt 22

There is a serious need in the evaluation of the Inheritance law in Namibia/world. Interstate Succession Ordinance 12 of 1946 states that, the surviving spouse of a deceased is declared to be an interstate heir of the deceased's spouse according to certain rules set out in that ordinance which essentially provide for a surviving spouse to succeed to the extent of a child's share.

To break this down, the spouse has an interstate heir of 50% of the deceased. The children of the deceased then inherit the remaining 50% of the estate, according to the percentages the deceased allocated. The spouse would inherit the deceased estate, even if they were in a process of a divorce which eventually didn't finalize because the petitioner died. The 50% estate inheritance by the surviving spouse is regarded as an obvious thing by law, even if the partners had no children together.

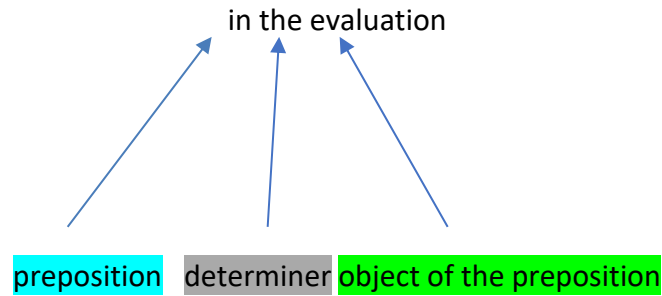
Source: (Essay 26)

### Example of a PP from excerpt 22

Breakdown of the prepositional phrase constituents

[in the evaluation]

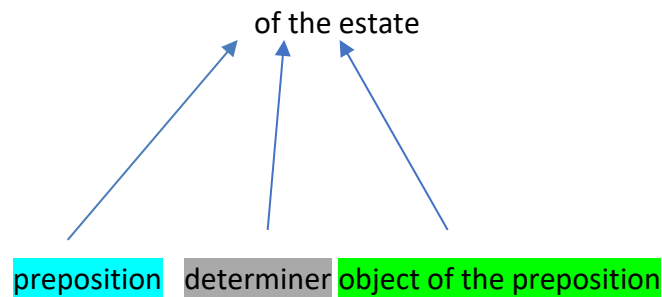
Figure 4.1



[of the estate]

Example of a PP from excerpt 22

Figure 4.2



The above example details the constituents of a PP. The PP has three basic constituents; the preposition, determiner, and object of the preposition. This denotes that the PP has the constituent, NP. The NP has the constituents (Det) and (N).

#### 4.4.2 Phrase structure (PS) rules terminology and definitions

Table 4.3

S (Sentence)	A syntactic unit that consists of one or more clauses, contains a subject and a predicate, and expresses a proposition.
NP (noun phrase)	A phrase composed of a noun as its head and the optional modifiers and determiners of the noun; alternatively, it may be composed of a single pronoun.
VP (verb phrase)	A phrase composed of a verb as its head, including all the dependents of the verb such as direct and indirect objects, adverbials, and subject complements.
AdjP (adjective phrase)	A phrase composed of an adjective as its head and the optional modifiers of the adjective; serves as a modifier of noun phrases.
AdvP (adverb phrase)	A phrase composed of an adverb as its head and the optional modifiers of the adverb; serves as a modifier of a verb or a clause.
PP (prepositional phrase)	A phrase composed of a preposition and its required complement which must be a noun phrase.

The table above presents the linguistic phrase structure rules terminology and definitions.

#### 4.4.3 The main phrase structure rules

$S \rightarrow NP VP$

$NP \rightarrow (Det) (AP) N (PP)$

VP → V (NP) (PP) (Adv)

PP → P (NP)

AP → A (PP)

#### 4.4.4 Phrase structure rules of prepositional phrases and examples

PP → P (NP)

##### Excerpt 23

Firstly we are going to look at alcohol. Alcohol is <sup>the</sup> causes of many problems in ~~at~~ many schools in Namibia. When learners ~~take~~ drink alcohol and goes to school, they start insulting the teachers and others learners because their drunk. This will affect the teachers lesson <sup>and</sup> other learners will not be taught because of the disturbances and fighting in the classroom. The solution to ~~the~~ problem is that Namibia must put a rule that no learners must drink alcohol and every learner who ~~is~~ will do it will be put in jail. This will help because the learners will not want to go in jail so they will not drink alcohol.

Source: (Essay 33)

##### Examples from excerpt 23

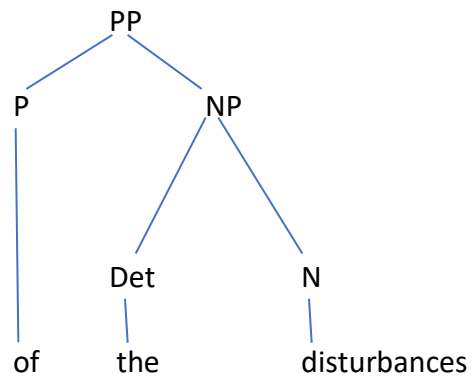
[PP of [NP the disturbances]]

[PP in [NP the classroom]]

The following PP was analysed, presented and applied to the tree diagram below:

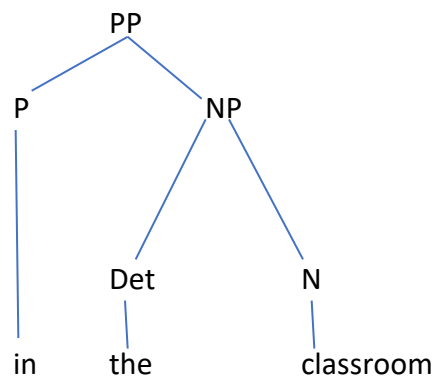
[PP of [NP the disturbances]]

**Figure 4.3**



[PP in [NP the classroom]]

**Figure 4.4**



#### 4.5 The PP in descriptive vs prescriptive grammar

There are certain rules that govern the use of language, including prepositional phrases. Descriptive grammar is a system which describes how language is actually spoken (Davis, 2019). In other words, it is a study of a language, its structure, and its rules as they are used in daily life by its speakers from all walks of life, including standard and nonstandard varieties. On the other hand, prescriptive grammar prescribes how one is supposed to talk, reflecting the grammarian's view of what is acceptable. Examples of prescriptive grammar rules is that a sentence never begins with a prepositional phrase such as 'because of'.

#### **4.6 The PP as a dependent part of a sentence**

The PP is an element of a sentence that cannot stand alone. A prepositional phrase is a part of a sentence that consists of one preposition and the object it affects. The object of a prepositional phrase can be either a noun, gerund, or clause (Zeller, 2020). The following excerpt presents examples of PPs that are dependent phrases.

#### **Excerpt 24**



There are many factors that influence the development of a country. The first and most important is politics. Uneducated politicians or ordinary men are voted to participate as leaders in a government in parliament. This means that they don't understand economics. These uneducated men and women are so corrupt to steal all that they can from government.

The second factor is the abundance of resources natural to be specific. For example here in Namibia we have diamonds and sea fish. Namibia sells raw diamonds and unprocessed fish to Europe and China. This means that the value of an unprocessed product is sold at a very low price thereby affecting the development of a country.

Source: (Essay 49)

The following are examples of PPs taken from the excerpt above. Prepositional phrases form part of a sentence which cannot stand on its own. They are a dependent part of a sentence.

#### Examples from excerpt 24

- There are many factors that influence the development **of a country**.
- Uneducated politicians or ordinary men are voted **to participate as leaders**.
- These uneducated men and women are so corrupt **to steal**.
- Namibia sells raw diamonds and unprocessed fish **to Europe and China**.
- This means that the value **of an unprocessed product**.

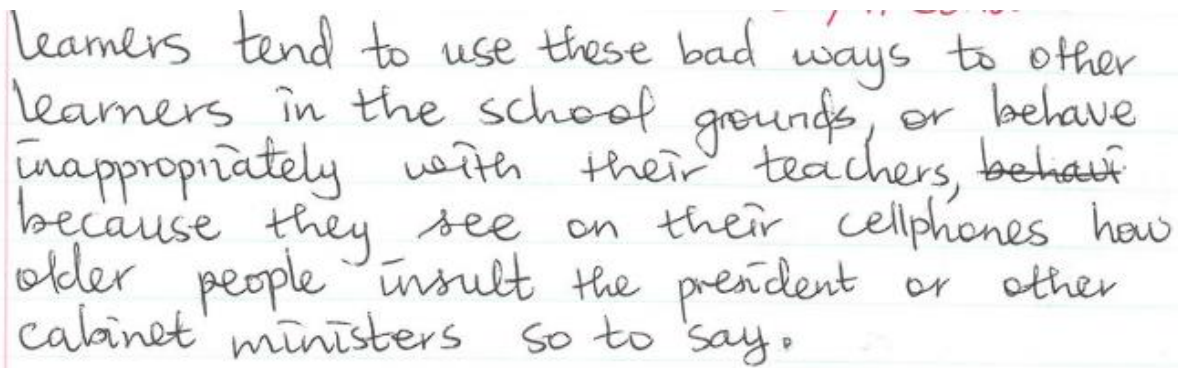
### Excerpt 24 analysis

The examples of PPs above only demonstrate that in the structure of a sentence, PPs do not form a complete thought, and thereby cannot be independent parts of a sentence. A PP does not have a subject and a verb. The present study identified two types of prepositional phrases; these are adjectival and adverbial phrases.

### 4.7 Syntactic ambiguities in the students' handwritten essays

Syntactic ambiguity occurs when words in a sentence or a phrase can be grouped in more than one way to produce two underlying interpretations (Kurniasari, 2017). In other words, ambiguity can be defined as a characteristic of natural language whereby a word, sentence or text can be interpreted in more than one way (Hamdan & Khan, 2018). In the present study, students' handwritten essays presented PPs which can be grouped in more than one way. The following are examples of phrases from the students' handwritten essays that present syntactic ambiguity.

### Excerpt 25



learners tend to use these bad ways to other learners in the school grounds, or behave inappropriately with their teachers, because they see on their cellphones how older people insult the president or other cabinet ministers so to say.

Source: (Essay 19)

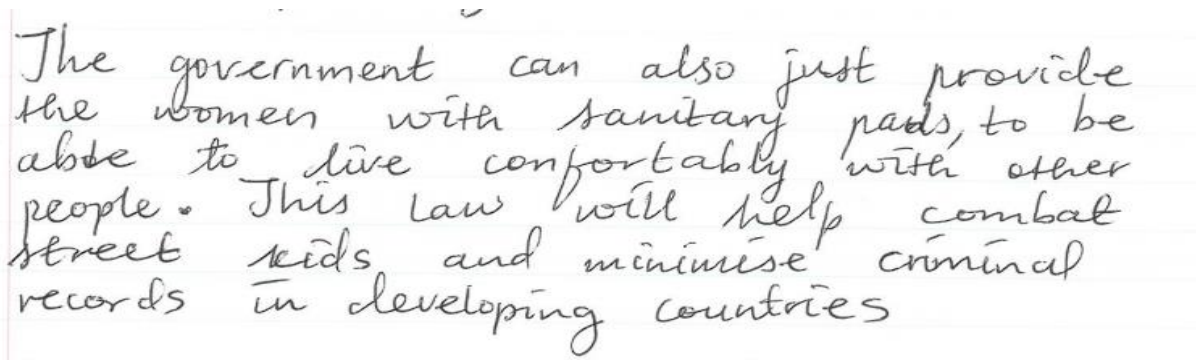
### Example from excerpt 25

- Behave inappropriately **with their teachers**.

### Analysis of excerpt 25

This part analyses the syntactic ambiguity example above that was extracted from the students' handwritten essays. The ambiguous phrase above is a PP attachment which modifies a noun phrase (NP). The example reads, 'Behave inappropriately **with their teachers**'. The meaning of the PP attachment can be interpreted in more than one way. First the preposition 'with' modifies the NP in the example interpretation (1). as; [**Behave inappropriately**] with their teachers] Example interpretation (2). [Behave [**inappropriately with their teachers**]]. This means that the PP, **with their teachers**, is attached to the NP, **their teachers**, as an adjunct.

### Excerpt 26



The government can also just provide the women with sanitary pads, to be able to live comfortably with other people. This law will help combat street kids and minimise criminal records in developing countries

Source: (Essay 21)

### Example from excerpt 26

- The government can also just provide the women **with sanitary pads**.

### Analysis of excerpt 26

The example presented above from excerpt 26 is a PP attachment which modifies a noun phrase (NP). The example reads, 'The government can also just provide the women **with sanitary pads**'. The PP attachment has two underlying interpretations. First the preposition 'with' modifies the NP in the example interpretation (A). as; [The government can also just provide [**the women**] with sanitary pads]. Example interpretation (B). [The government can also just provide [**the women with sanitary pads**]]. This means that the PP, **with sanitary pads**, is attached to the NP, **the woman**, as adjunct.

#### **4.8 Segment three summary**

This segment discussed the syntactic application of prepositional phrases and their ambiguities in the students' handwritten essays. The PP is a constituent of a sentence that is governed by phrase structure (PS) rules. PS rules are a type of rewrite rule used to describe a given language's syntax and are closely associated with the early stages of transformational grammar (Chomsky, 1957). The section demonstrated how the PPs were applied in the students' handwritten essays. Tree diagrams were used to demonstrate the syntactic application of PPs in the students' essays. The section further discussed syntactic ambiguities with relevant examples taken from the students' essays.

#### **4.9 Discussion**

The handwritten students' essays presented two types of prepositional phrases (PP). These are the adjectival and the adverbial. In a study about prepositional phrases, Benelhadj, (2015), identified two types of prepositional phrases that agree with the two types in the present study. Students' written essays presented these two types of PP in all the 50 essays studied. This means that the PP is a very important aspect of grammar. The types were determined by means of an objective evaluation. The PP that behaves as an adjective is termed an adjectival phrase. This is so because the adjective is a part of speech in grammar that modify nouns (Sassoon, 2010). In the present study, studied students' written essays contain the prepositional phrases that modify nouns; they are known as adjectival. This type of PP occurs when the adjective in the phrase gives additional information about the noun in the surroundings. A preposition must be present in the phrase. The other type of PP is the adverbial phrase. This is the type of PP that modifies verbs (Luraghi, 2010). They behave as adverbials. The prepositional phrase is a major constituent that contributes to the structure of a sentence and the human written text as a whole. A sentence may not ordinarily perform as required in the absence of a prepositional phrase. In some conditions, the sentence ceases to be a complete sentence according to the manner in which it supports the other parts of the sentence such as the verbs, nouns, and elements of conjunctions. Prepositional phrases contain a preposition plus a noun or pronoun (Saleh, 2019).

The study identified six functions of prepositional phrases. These PPs were found to be present in all 50 students' handwritten essays. The reason for handwritten essays as a data collection method was that students were encouraged to write in a natural method that did not give them access to the internet and computer assisted and corrected text; this scenario might not have reflected the intended study results. The six functions were explained as the PP that functions as the PP head. Only the preposition functions as the phrase head. The noun phrase modifier is another function. These are words that describe a pronoun, such as she, he, them or his, nouns and the noun phrase. The third one is the adjective phrase complement; these are words or phrases that are used to complete the meaning of adjective phrases or simply an adjective. This is followed by the verb phrase complement. This is when the PP serves to complete the meaning of a verb or in some instances, the verb phrase. The adjunct adverbial is the other function of a PP. These are words or phrases that modify and provide additional information. They usually modify the whole clause. They add information about manner, place, time, purpose, result, and reason. The last function is when the PP serves as the disjunct adverbial. These are words that add more information to a phrase and that signify the attitude of the speaker directed at the manner of speaking. This may signify the truthfulness of the manner of speaking. In all the students' handwritten essays, the PP functioned to indicate the relationship between the different constituents mentioned in a sentence.

The prepositional phrases that were analysed from students' handwritten essays in this study were evaluated using the transformational generative grammar (TGG) method. The study noted that all prepositional phrases used in the study were dependent clauses. They are parts of a sentence that cannot stand on their own. The syntactic evaluation of prepositional phrases was achieved by the application of the phrase structure (PS) rules (Chomsky, 1957). The PS rules state that  $PP = P NP$ . This means that a prepositional phrase consists of a preposition and a noun phrase. The study observed that on all the evaluated students' handwritten essays, the PS rules were used several times in every essay. There are few cases where the PP was wrongly used, thereby breaking the PS rules. An example of incorrect usage is when a PP does not begin with a preposition and end with an object. That makes the syntax of the PP structurally incorrect. As asserted by Arjan, Abdullah and Roslim (2013), this confusion mainly emanates when recipients

or learners are not certain of which prepositions to apply in a particular context. It was also observed in this study where students used the wrong preposition in a particular context of the essays. However, the majority of the students succeeded in using the PPs correctly. Erroneous PP structure was identified in a handful of students' handwritten essays.

#### **4.10 Chapter summary**

This chapter discussed the major findings and presented the data of the study. The chapter was analysed and presented according to the three study objectives. First, the types of prepositional phrases were discussed according to the types. The next part analysed the functions of prepositional phrases when they are applied to a text. Lastly, the chapter discussed the syntactic functions of prepositional phrases while applying the transformational generative grammar theory. The chapter ended by discussing the findings in the discussion section.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusions

Transformational generative grammar is a key concept that is used in the study of modern language. The theory dictates that human beings have the ability to generate new sentences from already existing ones (Chomsky, 1957). The study revealed that there are two types of prepositional phrases that were used in the students' handwritten essays. The present study agrees with the study findings of Nghikembua (2014), that errors in students' essays, including the wrong use of prepositional phrases is largely caused by the context of learning and lack of knowledge of English grammar. Another reason could be the misplacement of the PP head. The students used prepositional phrase heads in their writing. The most frequently used prepositional phrase heads were of, at, to, on, in and for. However, their writing and choice of variety shows that the students have a limited knowledge of the available variety. This means that the handwritten essays were too common and repetitive in the use of the same prepositional phrase heads. Students who are studying for a degree are expected to have a variety of essay writing skills and a wide prepositional phrase vocabulary that adds value to their text.

### 5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends the following according to the study objectives:

#### **Objective one**

To Investigate the types of prepositional phrases used in the essays

- A similar study that analyses noun phrases and verb phrases of students' essays can be conducted.
- A contrastive analysis of the use of English prepositional phrases in comparison with prepositional phrases in indigenous languages can be studied.

- Mother tongue (Namibian indigenous languages) influence of the use of English prepositional phrases can be evaluated.
- An error analysis on the use of prepositional phrases can be conducted.

### **Objective two**

To analyse the grammatical functions of prepositional phrases in the essays

- A functional syntactic study can be conducted to analyse other parts of speech such as the noun phrases, verb phrases or even the function of pronouns.
- Besides studying the grammatical functions of prepositional phrases, methods of stylistics can be applied to the study of essays. This can bring a new understanding on how students write their academic essays.
- A semantic functional analysis on the use of prepositional phrases can be conducted.

### **Objective three**

To evaluate the syntactic application of prepositional phrases and their ambiguities in the essays

- A morpho-syntactic analysis of prepositional phrases and their ambiguities in the essays can be studied.
- A syntactic application of other parts of speech such as the noun and the verb phrases can be conducted to find and resolve students' grammatical problems.



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## **ANNEXURES**

### **ANNEXURE A**

#### **Research instruments**

A competency essay was used to collect data. The students were asked to handwrite essays of about one and a half page on a chosen topic. The instructions were administered to selected first year students studying for a Bachelor of Human Resources Management through full-time mode at NUST in 2020. Essays with the following topics were administered to the students through this link:

**<https://forms.gle/QgiAwpFz1SkGgLcn8>**.

Students were asked to send the scanned handwritten essays in the form of a PDF to the email: **[tkadhimbwa@gmail.com](mailto:tkadhimbwa@gmail.com)**

#### **Essay instructions**

**Write an essay based on ONE of the following topics. You should write between 300 and 350 words (about one and a half pages).**

##### **Topic 1**

In recent court cases, photos and information gathered from social media sources, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, have become acceptable evidence in a courtroom. Some people argue that this practice is unreliable and invalid as information on social media can be easily manipulated and tampered with. Give your arguments as to whether information found on social media websites should be used as evidence in legal cases.

##### **Topic 2**

Discuss the three most important factors that could lead to the development of a country.

##### **Topic 3**

If you could change or invent a law to be implemented worldwide, what would it be and why?

**Topic 4**

Unruly learner behaviour has become a serious problem in many schools in Namibia. Discuss, in your own opinions what you think could be the causes. Also suggest the possible solutions to this problem.

**Topic 5**

A lot of languages in Namibia remain less used or even unknown while English is becoming used more and more as a global language. Some people feel this is a positive trend in a modern world and that a world with fewer languages promotes harmony and understanding between people. Analyse both sides of this argument and give your opinion.

**Topic 6**

The life expectancy of people is becoming longer than before, and many old people are unable to look after themselves. Many people believe that the family is responsible for looking after the elderly, while others say the government should provide old-age homes for them where they can be taken care of properly. Discuss.

The collected data were analysed using the following categories:

**Data analysis checklist**

<b>Analysis of types of prepositional phrases</b>	
● The prepositional phrase which modifies a noun (adjectival)	✓
● The prepositional phrase which modifies a verb (adverbial)	✓

### **Grammatical functions of prepositional phrases**

- prepositional phrase heads ✓
- noun phrase modifiers ✓
- adjective phrase complements ✓
- verb phrase complements ✓
- adjunct adverbials ✓
- disjunct adverbials ✓

### **Syntactic analysis**

- Sentence structure PP = P NP ✓
- Syntactic/Structural Ambiguity ✓

## **ANNEXURE B**

### **Ethical Clearance Letter**

FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (F-REC)  
DECISION: ETHICS APPROVAL

Ref: S006/2020  
Student no.: 212097814

Issue Date: 02 June 2020

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RESEARCH TOPIC

Title: An analysis of the use of English prepositional phrases in the essays of selected first year students at the Namibia University of Science and Technology

Researcher: Martha Tyninga Natanael  
Tel: +264 81 299 8722  
E-mail: [marthanatanael@gmail.com](mailto:marthanatanael@gmail.com)

Supervisor: Dr Niklaas Fredericks  
E-mail: [nfredericks@nust.na](mailto:nfredericks@nust.na)

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Dear Ms Natanael,

The Faculty of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee (F-REC) of the Namibia University of Science and Technology reviewed your application for the above-mentioned research. The research as set out in the application has been approved.

We would like to point out that you, as principal investigator, are obliged to:

- maintain the ethical integrity of your research,
- adhere to the Research policy and ethical guidelines of NUST, and
- remain within the scope of your research proposal and supporting evidence as submitted to the F-REC.

Should any aspect of your research change from the information as presented to the F-REC, which could have an effect on the possibility of harm to any research subject, you are under the obligation to report it immediately to your supervisor or F-REC as applicable in writing. Should there be any uncertainty in this regard, you have to consult with the F-REC.

We wish you success with your research, and trust that it will make a positive contribution to the quest for knowledge at NUST.

Sincerely,



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Dr Hennie J Bruyns  
Chairperson: FREC  
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ANNEXURE C

Consent letter for staff and students

to conduct research at NUST



**NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY  
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

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**Office of the Registrar**

03 December 2020

Ms. Martha Tyiningwa Natanael  
Email: marthanatanael@gmail.com  
Windhoek  
NAMIBIA

Dear Ms. Natanael,

**RE: CONSENT TO CONDUCT YOUR RESEARCH WITH THE NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY STAFF AND STUDENT**

The email dated 03 December 2020, has reference.

Approval is hereby granted for you to conduct the research on *"An analysis of the use of English prepositional phrases in the essays of selected first year students at the Namibia University of Science and Technology"*

Any information gathered during the research is to be used for the purpose of the study only and must be treated as confidential. The results of the study should be shared with the University. Individual information of staff and students will not be made available, nor will biographical information of students be made available in such a way that individual students can be identified.

I wish you all the best with your research.

Yours sincerely,

**Ms. Selma Heelu  
ACTING REGISTRAR**

CC:

Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Innovation  
Assistant Registrar



## ANNEXURE D

### Students' handwritten essays



## Essay 1

### Essay 1

Several languages in Namibia remain unknown while English is becoming used more and more as a world language and many people feel this is...

Language death is caused by various contributing factors, such as globalisation. This brought the rising of the controversial topics of other languages dying while English remains the most used language in the world.

As the global communication expands, through the world, so does the need for a global language. English has become the Lingua Franca in many parts of the world including our own country Namibia which is declared as an official language. This is because it is the only effective language which global communication can be done hence it is a global language.

Even though it may be the global language, massive of people feel like learning and appreciating a foreign language while ignoring and letting native languages die, is dishonoring and belittle of your heritage. Languages play a lofty role in cultural identity, it defines who we are as people.

It is with clear evidence that most of the languages in Namibia are slowly dying and the young generation know less about them. Native languages may easily be forgotten

## Essay 6

### Essay 6

Factors that contribute to the country development

The development of the country will determine the condition of how the people will live. There are numbers of factors that influence the development of the country. But in this essay only 3 most important will be discussed, that is natural resources, technology and education.

To begin with, natural resources plays a major role in the development of the country. Both the agriculture and mining sector fall under this category. Agriculture contribute to the country's development in so many ways, they produce vegetables and also they rear animals. The vegetables and other crops can be exported to other countries and in that way the country is getting money. Crops farmed on small scales can be used for food in the country and the surplus can be sold locally.

The people on the agriculture sectors, who are employed can get money too to support their family members. They can also inspire other unemployed people to make small ~~farms~~ farms where they be doing the same. example the Etunda irrigation project has given the local people an example to start growing crops at their houses. The animals on farms produce meat and their skins can be used for leather products such as bags and shoes, that can be exported as well.

## Essay 19

### Essay 19 Cont...

Learners tend to use these bad ways to other learners in the school grounds, or behave inappropriately with their teachers, because they see on their cellphones how older people insult the president or other cabinet ministers so to say.

For us to eliminate these unhealthy and unacceptable behaviours of learners, there should be strict rules to be adhered to, by anyone that wants to study at that school, in the school premise. Learners, should not be allowed to carry their society manners to school. Parents of learners that are undisciplined should be informed, to help tackle their behaviours, and to stay away from toxic people in the community.

The use of cellphones of their age. Parents with learners who have cellphones should be informed, to confiscate these cellphones. Or if needs to use cellphones be (like online learning) there should be parental guidance when these learners use their cellphones. Disable social media platforms, and only allow google chrome with child content.

## Essay 21

### Essay 21 Cont...

Furthermore, people who are living in those hostel like accommodation should keep their places clean, the sanitary facility like toilets should be kept clean all the times, there should be rules and regulations of the place like no smoking, no consuming and selling of alcohol and no fighting.

The government can also just provide the women with sanitary pads, to be able to live comfortably with other people. This law will help combat street raids and minimise criminal records in developing countries.

In conclusion, we are all humans, nobody deserves to be poor or unaffording. Nobody ~~chose~~ the ~~living~~ live they want to live, we all have basic needs, and no country is too poor to take care of its people, we just have greedy leaders who fail to be empathetic.