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# A Comprehensive Approach to Eliminate English Second Language Learners' Grammatical Difficulties

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**Abstract.** In order to produce academically competent learners, a comprehensive approach addressing English Second Language (ESL) learners' grammatical difficulties needs to be developed. Research has shown that learners' essay writing skills are spoiled by incompetent writing abilities, in particular, grammatical difficulties. This enquiry, whose main objective was to unravel grammatical difficulties experienced by ESL learners and to propose a comprehensive approach addressing these, was guided by a theoretical framework that emphasises cognitive, socio-cultural, and communicative perspectives. An interpretive paradigm, embedded in a qualitative approach, was used to gather data from 16 conveniently nominated participants. A case study design was deemed suitable for this enquiry because of its ability to focus on a specified group of participants. The data were generated through semi-structured interviews and thematically analysed. The findings were that error analysis, followed by explicit instruction of language structures; learner engagement in corrective feedback; multiple exposure to and practice of a language structure; and immersion into rich target language environments could be beneficial. The learners would then take responsibility for their own learning. It is recommended that professional development for language educators is essential to employ these approaches to combat the widespread incompetence in learners' writing abilities, which negatively affect their academic performance.

**Keywords:** academic performance; comprehensive approach; corrective feedback; English second language; grammatical difficulties

## 1. Introduction

This paper explores comprehensive approaches that can be used to eliminate English second language (ESL) learners' grammatical difficulties that negatively impact their writing skills. Numerous studies have shown that ESL learners are faced with severe challenges when mastering grammar and grammatical cohesion (Emvula, 2020; Ndlovu; 2019; Widdowson, 2016). Because writing necessitates the use of lexicon, syntax, parts of speech, tenses, word order, paragraphing, subject phrases, supporting phrases, and closing phrases, writing is regarded as one of

the most difficult skills to master (Alsied et al., 2018). Moreover, in his research on academic writing of ESL learners, Opara (2016) further asserted that many learners understand the English language but have difficulty expressing their ideas accurately in writing.

Many studies indicate that ineffective teaching methods, incorrect use of teaching philosophies, and the predominance of the mother tongue (Alhaysony, 2017; Nzerem & Bob, 2021) are the major causes of grammatical difficulties. English second language learners are more likely to make grammatical and lexical mistakes when using English (Iipinge, 2018; Manan, 2017). Furthermore, inadequate instructional materials and ill-prepared English teachers also contribute to grammatical inefficiencies (Khatter, 2019). Learners' poor performance has been attributed primarily to teachers' weak abilities, lack of high levels of knowledge and poor teaching skills (Hoadley, 2012; Department of Basic Education, 2013, 2018; Spaul, 2013). According to Ayliff (2010) and Hassan (2018), language inadequacy is a problem that affects students' academic performance. As a result, their chances of succeeding in higher education is limited.

Grammar is described by (Eunson, 2020) as a system of rules, with exceptions to those rules, that constructs meaning in a language. Farooq et al. (2012) argued that because students must build sentences, paragraphs, and ensure that their material is coherent, ESL learners view grammar as the most difficult part of the writing process. In alignment with this, Ummah (2018) noted that the capacity to apply pertinent rules to effectively communicate with an audience is known as grammar. According to Moloney and Saltmarsh (2016), second language learners frequently make errors with grammar rules pertaining to parts of speech, tenses, and inflections.

English first additional language (EFAL) students struggle in several ways to effectively master English tenses. Widianingsih (2016) asserted that EFAL learners in Northern Ireland experience problems with tenses. Time is what determines 'when' an action occurs, and tense relates to time. It conveys the interval between the moment of speaking and the time when an action takes place. According to Cowan (2008), tense has three dimensions: present, past, and future.

Determiners are among the factors contributing to grammatical difficulties. English second language learners sometimes have difficulty understanding when and how to use articles in English. Determining whether to use 'a' or 'an' with singular countable nouns or knowing when to omit articles in specific contexts can be confusing. Jones (2016) explains determiners as modifying words that determine the kind of reference a noun or noun group has, such as *the, a, my, this, some, twenty, each, any*, which are used before nouns. Some determiners can also be used as pronouns (without a noun following).

Shin and Yoo (2019) highlighted the challenges faced by ESL learners trying to acquire English as a foreign language when employing determiners. The learners' ability to refer to a fact, an object, a concept, or a person who has already been introduced in the discourse, and to introduce a new one, is one of their major

challenges (Russia, 2018). The following sentence illustrates how ESL learners might use an incorrect determiner:

*Yesterday I saw the man driving a car*

In the sentence above, the noun 'man' has not been mentioned previously by the speaker. Therefore, the referent is not known by the addressed. If the referent is not known, an appropriate article to use here is 'a', while in cases where the referent has been introduced earlier by the speaker, the article 'the' would be more appropriate.

Worldwide, grammatical difficulties pose challenges to ESL and English foreign language learners, particularly because of the differences between the grammatical constructions of the mother-tongue languages and that of the English language. In a study by Shiu (2011) in Toronto, exploring EFAL learners' judgments of grammatical challenges in connection to ESL performance, knowledge, and proficiency, it was discovered that learners' perceptions of grammatical difficulty vary according to their implicit/explicit knowledge of the features in question.

Leki (2017) purported that grammar is more than just a series of rules; it is a dynamic language structure that is challenging to use. Ndlovu (2019) argued that learners in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa, face issues every day as they struggle to use the language structures and norms correctly that influence their writing.

Exposing students to a lot of reading, both within and outside of the classroom, is the best approach to teach grammar and expand their vocabulary, according to the South African Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) report. In addition, both grammar and lexicon must be taught through the use of texts (DBE, 2018). Given what is in the learners' texts, it is evident that learners ignore grammar rules (Ndlovu, 2019).

Grammar knowledge is also important for ESL learners to establish error-free phrases in essay writing, but grammar correction and grammar feedback do not lead to progress in writing for four specific reasons, as stated by Sjolie (2016). First, grammar correction merely addresses grammar superficially, not the way it is used. Second, the production of the acquisition of language and grammar appears hierarchically, which means that offering learners grammar correction that is well beyond their level is ineffective. Third, students may misinterpret the grammar statements of teachers, while teachers may misinterpret the grammar of learners too. Fourth, learners do not include the corrections they do not understand when they execute corrections (Sjolie, 2016).

English second language learners may encounter various grammatical difficulties in their language journey. Maintaining agreement between a subject and a verb is a common issue. Students might forget to match the verb with a singular or plural subject, leading to sentences that sound awkward or incorrect (Widianingsih, 2016).

In English, the word order is relatively fixed in standard sentence structures (subject-verb object). English second language learners may find it challenging to rearrange words in sentences correctly (Saddler, 2012), particularly if their native language follows a different word order.

Properly using prepositions (in, on, at, etc.) to express location, or other relationships can be problematic for ESL students. Prepositions often do not directly translate between languages, causing errors in usage (Widdowson, 1990). Using pronouns correctly and consistently can be a struggle. English second language learners may have trouble distinguishing between subject pronouns (I, you, he, she, etc.) and object pronouns (me, you, him, her) (Matiso and Tyantsi, 2023).

Modal verbs such as *can*, *could*, *should*, *may*, *might* and so forth, have various functions and meanings in English. English second language students might have trouble understanding when and how to use them appropriately.

Studies have been conducted on the rectification of errors made by learners. Most of these studies focus on the teacher as an identifier of errors, and the learners as executors of these corrections. A gap identified by this paper is the role played by both teachers and learners in eliminating grammatical errors. This gap could originate from the teachers' failure to provide effective feedback to learners, which will enable them (learners) to provide efficient and meaningful corrections. In this paper, the author has argued that learners should take responsibility of their own learning by taking initiatives aimed at reducing the occurrence of grammatical errors, which derail the efforts intended to produce error-free essays. In this regard, both the teachers and learners should actively participate in the reduction of errors.

Data were collected from 36 conveniently selected ESL grade 10 teachers in the Eastern Cape, in South Africa. The research questions used to collect data were:

- How can teachers eliminate the occurrence of grammatical errors committed by ESL learners?
- What strategies can be taken by learners to eliminate grammatical errors?

## 2. Literature Review

Numerous studies have been conducted on the analysis of errors caused by ESL learners while learning the language. Factors that have been identified as sources of linguistic errors are attributed to interlingual, and intralingual interference (Hassan & Munandar, 2018; Zafar, 2016; Sermsook et al., 2017; Shakir et al., 2020). Interlingual transfer occurs when learners negatively transfer vocabulary from their primary languages to the target language (Ozkayran & Yilmaz, 2020; Richards, 2004; Suhono, 2016). Intralingual interference results from an incorrect application of language rules due to, among other factors, syntactic overgeneralisation, and grammatical simplification. In ESL classrooms, grammatical errors are inevitable and, therefore, approaches aimed at avoiding their occurrence must be devised.

The communicative language teaching approach has gained prominence in ESL pedagogy. This approach promotes that learners must be subjected to a significant amount of the target language when learning the language, and be allowed to practice or use it in real-world circumstances. Richards and Rodgers (2014) advocated for a focus on communication rather than rote grammar drills. Incorporating interactive activities, such as role-play, debate, and collaborative projects (Matiso & Makena, 2022), encourages learners to apply grammar in real-life contexts. By doing so, learners not only enhance their grammatical accuracy but also develop practical language skills.

Ndlovu (2019) reported that the communicative language approach helps to improve the communicative dimensions of learners but fails to equip learners with the correct usage of grammar structures as errors are ignored to avoid creating a threatening environment for learners trying to communicate. Consequently, essay writing skills are ignored because the goal is to express messages rather than to use language correctly. Another negative consequence of the communicative language approach is that when writing essays, learners cannot detect mistakes (Toro et al., 2019).

Matiso's (2022) study focuses on how a text-based approach (TBA) can be utilised to eliminate EFAL learners' grammatical difficulties. Although the TBA was recommended by the Department of Education to be used to eliminate discrete instruction of language structures, numerous studies show that teachers, worldwide, still struggle to implement it due to a number of factors, which, among others, include teachers' varied views about it that it is time-consuming, a lack of a structured and specified approach to implement it, and lack of support and guidance from the policy and curriculum developers.

In this paper, the author argues that learners' writing difficulties emanate from the instruction of grammatical structures as discrete units. Matiso (2022) used a poem titled 'The Dry Grass Sings' from the grade 10 prescribed poems, to illustrate how the TBA can be used effectively to eliminate grammatical errors. In texts, words appear in relation to other words, and in the contexts in which they are used. The poem shows how concord can be taught using a text.

The poem shows how a text can be effectively used to eliminate grammatical errors committed by learners. It provides effective and efficient use of present tense form.

### “The Dry Grass Sings

When the sky's as hot as a baking pot  
 And the whole earth shrinks like a skin  
 The mopane leaves clap and the eagle cries  
 The turtles snap and the thorn trees scratch  
 And the dry grass sings and sings  
 On the crackling mud the crocodile smiles  
 And the kudu snort in the dust  
 And the zebras grunt and the jackals howl  
 And the elephants trudge for another mile  
 And the dry grass sings and sings  
 But when lightning strikes and the clouds drop down  
 And the whole earth drinks from the sky  
 The wood dove purrs and the fever trees sigh  
 And the rivers roll as heavy as blood  
 And the dry grass sings no more” (Gray, 2010)

Committing concord errors, such as subject-verb agreement and pronoun-antecedent, are among the challenges faced by learners when learning the English language (Widangsih, 2016). This poem contains phrases that show explicitly how the subject and verb agree. The poet shows how inflectional morphemes marking grammatical contrast, specifically, the third person singular marker ‘-s’ and ‘-es’, and plural markers ‘-s’ can be used to mark grammatical cohesion. These are indicated by the use of the third person singular in the following colloquial phrases:

- the earth shrinks, the eagle cries, the dry grass sings (3rd person singular);
- while the 3rd person plural is shown by the phrases that follow – the leaves clap, the turtles sap, the thorn trees scratch, rivers roll.

When learners have mastered these structures, they can construct their own phrases using these structures. Continuous use of these structures by learners can yield good results if they employ these structures to other texts as well.

Pardede (2011) opined that literary texts provide real examples of grammatical structures and vocabulary items. Literary texts raise awareness of the range of the target language and advance their competence in all language skills (Pardede, 2011). The prescribed books for language use fail to provide real contexts in which language structures are used. Consequently, literary texts are far richer and consist of more language forms than language textbooks. In literary texts, students encounter real aspects of written language, such the way sentences are put together, ranging from statements, interrogatives, commands, and simple, compound and complex sentences. Furthermore, learners are also exposed to the different ways of connecting ideas, which might not be explored in real contexts in language textbooks.

Tomlinson (2013) promoted the use of authentic materials in ESL instruction. Incorporating real-world resources, such as newspapers, podcasts, and videos, expose learners to natural language usage. Through immersion in authentic

contexts, learners develop an intuitive understanding of grammatical structures and nuances.

However, using literary texts to teach grammar is a debatable issue. Smit (2009) asserted that “since one of the main aims of ESL teachers is to teach the grammar of the language, literature, due to its structural complexity and unique use of language, does little to contribute to this goal”. Some academics contend that misinterpreting literature might result from using it to teach something else, like syntax.

Effective feedback is crucial in rectifying grammatical errors. Ferris (2003) stressed the importance of balanced error correction techniques that guide learners toward understanding and self-correction without stifling their confidence. Written feedback, peer editing, and one-on-one discussions contribute to a comprehensive strategy for addressing grammatical difficulties. Modern technology tools play a significant role in ESL education. Chapelle (2001) discussed the integration of computer applications and online grammar-checking tools. While these tools provide immediate feedback, they must be complemented by human guidance. Incorporating technology can create a blended learning environment that caters to various learning styles and speeds.

Language teaching can either be inductive or deductive. The fundamental factor that decides whether inductive or deductive instructional practices are employed in grammar teaching is linked to the goal of effective language teaching (Sadat, 2017). Some educators favour the inductive method, whilst others prefer the deductive method.

According to the inductive method, language rules must be learned implicitly through exposure to meaningful language use in a natural setting (Larsen-Freeman, 2015). Throughout the learning process, learners derive grammatical patterns from numerous communicative settings.

In the deductive, or rule-driven method of teaching grammar, each rule is introduced, then instances of its application are given. According to the deductive method, learners should be explicitly taught grammar rules through a formal presentation of those rules (Emvula, 2020). The teacher first presents and explains the rule, then gives examples of how to apply the rule in practice activities. Finally, the grammatical rules are provided in a pre-made format. The deductive method embeds in the learners’ minds the idea that learning a language depends on remembering grammar rules. When a teacher elicits a rule, students are passive recipients; they can memorise the rule but cannot use it to further their language proficiency (Ellis, 2009).

One widely recognised approach involves providing explicit grammar instruction. Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) emphasised the significance of breaking down complex grammatical rules into digestible components, incorporating clear explanations, examples, and interactive exercises. This

approach helps ESL learners grasp the fundamental structure of English sentences and subsequently minimises grammatical errors.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

The integration of various approaches to eliminate grammatical difficulties faced by English as a second language learners can be guided by a theoretical framework that emphasises cognitive, socio-cultural, and communicative perspectives. The combination of these perspectives creates a comprehensive approach that addresses the diverse aspects of language acquisition and usage. From a cognitive standpoint, learning grammar involves internalising rules, patterns, and structures. The cognitive perspective draws from the theories such as cognitive load theory and information processing theory. These theories suggest that breaking down complex grammar rules into smaller, manageable chunks supports better comprehension and retention.

Providing explicit grammar instruction, as suggested by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999), aligns with this perspective. By presenting grammar concepts in a structured manner, learners can process and practice each component before integrating them into their language production. Socio-cultural perspective, rooted in Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory, highlights the importance of social interaction and cultural context in language learning.

Communicative language teaching aligns with this perspective, as it encourages learners to engage in authentic communication through activities like role-plays and discussions (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). Such interactions facilitate the negotiation of meaning and allow learners to apply grammar in context, reflecting the socio-cultural nature of language development. The communicative perspective focuses on language as a tool for communication rather than a set of isolated rules. This perspective underpins communicative language teaching and emphasises the practical use of language in real-life situations. Authentic materials and exposure to natural language usage, as recommended by Tomlinson (2013), contribute to this aspect. Learners observe grammar in action, enabling them to grasp nuances and apply grammatical rules more effectively.

A constructive perspective, drawing from the works of Piaget and Bruner, posits that learners actively construct knowledge through experiences. Constructivist approaches advocate for hands-on learning and engagement with the material. Constructive feedback strategies, as outlined by Ferris (2003), align this perspective by guiding learners to self-correct their errors and understand the underlying reasons behind them.

An integrative perspective combines the socio-cultural, communicative, and constructive aspects. Technology integration, as discussed by Chapelle (2001) exemplifies this approach. Online-grammar checking tools provide immediate cognitive feedback while promoting communicative engagement through practical application. This integration bridges theoretical perspectives, enhancing both learning efficiency and efficacy.



An effective theoretical framework for addressing ESL grammatical difficulties involves a holistic integration of cognitive, socio-cultural, communicative, and constructivist perspectives. By incorporating explicit grammar instruction, communicative activities, authentic materials, constructive feedback, and technology tools, educators create a dynamic and comprehensive learning environment that caters to diverse learning styles and facilitates the elimination of grammatical difficulties.

#### **4. Methodological Design**

Research methodology outlines the methods used by the researchers to give comprehensive and convincing findings about the phenomenon under examination. Carefully selected methods include an appropriate paradigm, research approaches, design, and relevant data collection procedures related to a particular study.

##### ***Research Paradigm***

An interpretive paradigm, based on qualitative approaches, formulated the basis for the discussion of the participants' ways used to eliminate grammatical difficulties. The foundation of interpretivism is built on universal traits like the comprehension and interpretation of routine events and social structures, as well as the interpretations that people give to phenomena. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) argued that what is perceived by people to be true is more important than an objective reality. They further denoted that positions that are interpretivist are based on the theory that reality is socially created.

##### ***Research Approach***

Creswell and Creswell (2018) highlighted that qualitative research is the method of understanding by which a comprehensive, holistic picture is developed; words are analysed, informants' perspectives are reported in detail; and the study is carried out in a natural environment. Mack et al. (2022) noted that qualitative techniques are usually more adaptable. They enable more spontaneity and flexibility in the way the researcher and study's participants interact; for instance, qualitative approaches frequently ask questions that are not always phrased the same way with each participant.

##### ***Research Design***

A case study research design was employed to understand the approaches used by ESL teachers to eliminate grammatical difficulties that hinder learners' writing. Freitas et al. (2017) noted that conducting research using a case study allows researchers to immerse themselves in the context and gain intensive knowledge of a phenomenon, which in turn demands suitable methodological principles.

##### ***Participant Selection***

The population for this study was a total of 16 grade 10 ESL teachers from six conveniently selected schools in the province of the Eastern Cape, South Africa. From four of the schools, a total of 12 participants were drawn, that is, three teachers from each. The other four participants were from two schools, that is, two teachers from each. The number of teachers in each school depends on the class sizes, and that accounts for this varied selection.

### *Data Collection Instruments*

Semi-structured interviews, which were directed to the 16 conveniently nominated ESL educators, formulated the data collection instruments for this enquiry. Semi-structured interviews have the potential to allow the researcher to gain insight into the phenomenon under inquiry because the researcher has the opportunity to probe deeper and further to get rich data that will yield good effects (Creswell, 2014).

The interviews, which were conducted over a period of two weeks, were audio-taped with the authorisation of the participants. During data analysis, the author carefully studied the participants' responses, read them several times, and grouped similar responses for ease of interpretation. From this exercise, the themes that formulated discussion of this study emerged.

## **5. Discussion and Findings**

The findings of this study are discussed with specific reference to the themes that emerged from the data analysis. The themes were discussed based on the objectives of this enquiry, which were to determine teachers' ways to eliminate the occurrence of grammatical errors committed by ESL learners, and the strategies that can be adopted by learners to eliminate grammatical errors.

The themes that emerged from the first objective were error analysis, followed by explicit instruction of the language structure, and learner engagement in corrective feedback. From the latter, further themes that emerged included multiple exposure to a language structure through practice activities, and immersion into rich target language environments.

Table 5.1 shows a summary of the objectives and themes of this paper.

**Table 5.1: Objectives and themes**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Themes</b>
Teachers' ways to eliminate the occurrence of grammatical errors.	Error analysis followed by explicit instruction of the language structure. Learner engagement in corrective feedback.
Strategies that can be adopted by learners to eliminate grammatical errors.	Multiple exposure to a language structure through practice activities. Immersion into rich target language environments.

### **Objective 1: Teachers' ways to eliminate the occurrence of grammatical errors committed by ESL learners**

#### *Theme 1: Error analysis followed by explicit instruction of the language structure*

The participants indicated that error analysis is one method used by teachers to eliminate the occurrence of grammatical errors. Error analysis involves the identification of errors made by learners and they are grouped according to the frequency of their occurrence (Ozkayran & Yilmaz, 2020). However, for the effectiveness of error analysis, identified errors should be followed by explicit instruction of the language structure.

One participant revealed that she looks at common errors made by learners after administering a test. After that, exercises that deal with the identified errors are given. The participant also indicated that she teaches that particular structure explicitly.

*"When I administer a test, I usually give a test that includes comprehension skills, cartoons, summary, and grammar. After the test I look at common errors like the application of the apostrophe, parts of speech, that is, learners usually struggle with formulating nouns from verbs and adjectives from other word classes. After that I give them exercises and teach that particular structure explicitly."*  
(Participant K)

Participant K's response shows that language structures that usually pose challenges to learners are the use of the apostrophe, and parts of speech, in particular, the derivation of new words from different word classes. In this regard, these learners' errors are morphological, and, thus, inform the teacher to focus on the emphasis of both the use of inflectional morphemes and derivational morphemes. Such errors are intralingual errors, usually caused by incorrect application of language rules.

Brown (2023) purported that learners' errors are also informative to the teacher as they indicate which language structures have not been grasped by the learners. Furthermore, the teacher can also scrutinise their instructional practices and adopt innovative ways that will facilitate the comprehension of a particular language structure. Error analysis has been found to be a beneficial exercise by Zafar (2016) who conducted a study among Business Studies students to establish errors that were frequently committed by the learners. The outcomes of the analysis indicated that verb tenses were the most challenging area, and, the students had a remarkable improvement after a two months' period of explicit instruction in these structures.

Thus, error analysis has remarkable effects which include valuable information about how learners acquire and learn a language. Teachers also identify areas that pose challenges to learners (Ozkayran & Yilmaz, 2020).

### ***Theme 2: Learner engagement in corrective feedback***

The teachers have different beliefs about how grammatical difficulties should be addressed. Evidence of feedback to learners varies from teacher to teacher. Research has shown a positive effect of corrective feedback when learners are engaged in the feedback process. However, there is very limited evidence that teachers provide comprehensive feedback to learners. The participants' responses indicate that teachers struggle to give feedback for all the errors made by the learners.

*"What I do is to underline the mistakes and write the correct word. But it is very difficult to give correct answers for whole sentences. Learners struggle to construct sentences and if I try to correct the sentence myself that consumes time."*  
(Participant C)

The claim shows that teachers struggle to provide sufficient feedback on errors related to sentence construction. However, teachers use various methods,

including indirect feedback (Schenck, 2021), which can be more appropriate in cases where a correct word could not be given. In this regard, teachers should engage learners in the correction of syntactically related errors.

Hasan and Munandar (2018) contended that ignoring such errors might lead to the construction of ambiguous and anomalous sentences, and, thus, deprive learners of the opportunity to communicate their ideas.

Lira-Gonzales and Valeo (2023) articulated that studies that explain how learner engagement as a factor that can have positive gains in eliminating grammatical errors have not yet been widely researched. Learner engagement takes various forms and, as such, the manner in which learners react to written corrective feedback should be considered. Some learners might feel threatened, while some respond positively and seize the opportunity as a corrective measure of their linguistic errors.

The participants' responses indicate that in cases where the students struggle with sentence construction, some teachers are unable to give a corrective feedback. There is very little evidence that teachers monitor the correction of errors. Although the participants indicated that they mark the learners' scripts and identify errors, they do not monitor that the corrections are done.

*"Honestly, I do not monitor if corrections have been done although I insist that they should be done."* (Participant H)

*"I do not engage learners in doing corrections. I write the corrections in the learners' scripts, but I never discuss the learners' corrections with individual learners."* (Participant E)

Corrective feedback aids in error correction. When learners receive feedback that highlights grammatical, syntactical, or lexical errors, they become aware of their mistakes. This awareness is a crucial step towards improvement, as students are more likely to avoid making the same errors in future writings. Without this guidance, learners may persistently repeat errors, hindering their progress.

Different types of corrective feedback, such as direct, indirect, and metalinguistic cues, offer varied benefits to learners (Schenck, 2021). Direct feedback that includes clear error correction promotes quick error correction. In contrast, giving clues or pointing out mistakes as indirect feedback motivates students to self-reflect and self-correct.

Metalinguistic cues encourage students to examine the underlying grammatical or structural problems on their own, leading to a deeper comprehension of linguistic norms (Ellis, 2009). Metalinguistic cues involve the teacher indicating that a grammatical error has been committed and allows the learner to identify the type of error. Lee (2019) contended that problems with giving written criticism include a propensity to fix all mistakes, which prevents attention from being paid to certain grammatical aspects. However, in essay writing, teachers attend to all the errors, and, for this reason, essay writing might not be beneficial when the teacher targets a specific language feature. Classroom activities, usually found in

grammar books, are ideal for concentrating in a language structure that has been identified by the teacher as posing challenges to learners.

While some studies claim that providing explicit information about a written error (direct corrective feedback) leads to higher gains, others claim that providing unambiguous facts about a grammar error (metalinguistic corrective feedback), when combined with direct corrective feedback, leads to developed achievements (Bitchner & Knoch, 2009; Scheck, 2021). Corrective feedback depends on the learner's preferences in processing learning material. Moreover, timing, frequency, and format contribute to the effectiveness of the feedback.

The value of timely feedback is highlighted by Bitchener and Knoch (2009), since delayed input may make it more difficult for students to relate the comments to their work. The preferences and learning styles of each student should also be taken into account, since some may benefit more from direct discussion, while others may prefer more subtly worded instructions.

Lundgren (2022, p. 21) reiterated that "corrective feedback needs to provide constructive explanations so that the students are not left confused by the feedback." The effectiveness of corrective feedback lies in the understanding of the errors identified by the teacher. Then, learners will be able to complete the corrections without effort. Furthermore, monitoring of the corrected errors by the teacher is also essential. Identification of errors without monitoring the corrected structures is a futile activity. Without proper guidance, learners are likely to commit the same errors. In this regard, written corrective feedback will not be beneficial to learners.

## **Objective 2: Strategies that can be adopted by learners to eliminate grammatical errors**

### ***Theme 1: Multi exposure and practice to a language structure through practice activities***

The participants indicated that learners need multi exposure to texts and practice to a language structure. Learners need many opportunities to practise what they have learned. The participants indicated that when grammatical errors committed by learners have been identified, regular exercises that focus on the language in question should be administered. It was also indicated that common grammatical errors committed by learners are concord, that is, agreement of the subject and the verb.

*"Extensive reading, which familiarises them with grammatical structures, especially concord. Regular exercises as well, with specific focus on concord and punctuation, until they get it right. Another important aspect is tense alongside concord."* (Participant B)

Another participant indicated that learners' grammar books provide opportunities to practise exercises dealing with tenses, an aspect that was identified by the participant as posing problems to learners. Grammar books, in general, are tailored to address language structures, including comprehension exercises.

*“They usually struggle with tenses so we do a lot of sentence classification and I give them activities with tenses from our everyday texts.” (Participant C)*

The participants’ responses showed that learners struggle with grammatical structures, specifically tenses and concord. Teachers resort to error identification and explicit instruction of the language structures that pose difficulties to learners. All the participants indicated that the best option is to engage learners in multiple language exercises found in grammar books. Adrianova (2023) contended that there have been various approaches proposed by authors to eliminate the occurrence of grammatical errors yet there are continued reports about learners’ writing difficulties. Adrianova (2023) suggested that even while involving students in grammar-related activities does not provide positive outcomes, students should routinely participate in speaking and writing tasks that call for the use of grammar principles. This active output helps the student internalise grammar structures and solidify their comprehension, which improves accuracy and fluency.

### ***Theme 2: Immersion in rich target language environments***

Adrianova (2023) posited that to embrace immersion, language learners should surround themselves with English language media, such as books, movies, TV series, podcasts, and music. They should also practice with a specific goal in mind, using tools such as grammar workbooks, online resources, and language learning applications, to strengthen their knowledge and application of grammar rules, rather than just mindlessly doing exercises. Students must be accountable for their own learning, record their errors, and make an effort to employ the same grammar structures each time they speak or write in English. “A proactive approach that combines immersive experiences, purposeful practice, meaningful interactions, active output, personalised guidance, and the power of technology” (Adrianova, 2023) is the key to enhancing English grammar.

Participant G stated that one method that can be used by learners is to take advantage of their devices and utilise them to increase their vocabulary:

*“Nowadays learners have smart phones where they can watch You-Tube videos. Exposure to these can assist them eliminate grammatical errors.” (Participant G)*

The response reveals that various opportunities, which include the use of devices readily available to learners, could be used for vocabulary development. The virtual space, therefore creates an enabling environment for language development. However, teachers remain at the centre of the teaching and learning environment. Therefore, the teacher, as the facilitator of interactions and needs analyst, co-ordinates the learning environment by facilitating access to various text types ranging from written, oral, and multi-media texts.

## **6. Conclusion**

This paper explored approaches used by ESL teachers to eliminate learners’ grammatical errors. The findings of this study revealed that a comprehensive approach that could be used to eliminate grammatical difficulties incorporates the adoption of error analysis. Error analysis will yield good results if followed by explicit instruction of the language structures identified during the error analysis

process. Furthermore, learner engagement in the execution of errors is crucial but error correction will be delayed if feedback is vague and not properly communicated.

Moreover, multiple exposure to a language structure and immersion in rich target language contexts facilitate the ability to identify and correct errors. Thus, combining explicit grammar instruction, communicative teaching strategies, constructive feedback mechanisms, technology integration, and exposure to authentic materials offer a comprehensive approach. Educators can tailor these strategies to create dynamic and effective learning environments, ultimately aiding ESL learners in conquering grammatical challenges and achieving linguistic proficiency.

Learners also need to identify their areas of weaknesses, and focus on those areas by engaging in a wide range of texts. They should voluntarily practise utilising structures they have identified through speaking and writing activities. A joint effort between teachers and learners will produce good outcomes, and this will be possible when learners realise their roles as active participants in the learning environment. The author recommends that teachers should be trained to equip learners with error detection skills, and effective ways of engaging with corrections.

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