

**An examination of the implementation of active learning strategies that enhance
active learning of secondary school English grammar**

By

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Declaration

I declare that the research work, ‘Examination of the implementation of active learning strategies that enhance the active learning of secondary school English grammar’, is my own original work and that all the quotes or sources used have been indicated by means of complete references. This thesis is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Teacher Education at Mzuzu University. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my parents, Mr M.G.W. Manda and Mrs Regina Kaunda, my wife Melliness Chisi, my children Brian and Brandina and my brothers, sisters and Aunt Veronica. You did endure all the pains, financial hardships and absence from home during the whole period of my study.

Abstract

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the implementation of learning strategies that enhance active learning of secondary school English grammar. Simple random sampling and purposive sampling were used to select the study site and participants respectively. The study targeted twenty-one secondary school teachers of English from seven selected secondary schools in Lilongwe Rural East Education District under the Central West Education Division (CWED). The study was guided by Constructivism Theory of learning. The study used interpretivism research paradigm, qualitative research approach, and case study research design. Data were collected through observation of lessons, interviewing teachers of English and examining official documents. Thematic analysis was used when analysing data.

The study reveals that most teachers do not use lesson plans when teaching English grammar. The development makes teachers not to select appropriate active learning strategies. As a result, students fail to participate effectively during lesson delivery as teachers tend to use teacher-centred techniques. The teachers who participated in this study used techniques like questioning, role playing, storytelling, lecturing and explanation. Some of the techniques like questioning, role playing and storytelling were effective because students had a chance to practise language in the classroom, and classroom activities informed real life situations. However, lack of interest, students' poor background knowledge, lack of understanding and shyness of the students were some of the challenges that were encountered when using active learning strategies. These problems can be mitigated by supervising group activities, encouraging students to speak English all the time, cultivating the culture of reading in students and encouraging students to participate in English grammar lessons as a way of practising language in a classroom setting.

Table of Contents

Declaration	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Dedication	iii
Abstract	iv
Glossary of acronyms/abbreviations	xi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Chapter overview	1
1.2 Background information	1
1.3 Statement of the problem	5
1.4 Justification of the study	6
1.5 General objective.....	7
1.5.1 Specific objectives	7
1.6 Significance of the study	7
1.7 Theoretical framework	7
1.8 Delimitations of the study	9
1.9 Limitations of the study.....	9
1.10 Operational definitions of terms.....	10
1.11 Organisation of the study	11
1.12 Chapter summary	12

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	13
2.1 Chapter overview	13
2.2 Importance of using learning strategies when teaching English grammar.....	13
2.3 Strategies used when teaching English grammar	15
2.4 Barriers faced by students when learning grammar	18
2.5 Solutions to the challenges	20
2.6 Chapter summary	22
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH APPROACH, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	24
3.1 Chapter overview	24
3.2 Research paradigm	24
3.3 Research approach.....	25
3.4 Research design.....	25
3.5 Research site.....	26
3.6 Target population	26
3.7 Sampling.....	26
3.7.1 Sampling procedure	27
3.8 Research participants.....	28
3.9 Data collection methods	28
3.9.1 Document analysis.....	29
3.9.2 Interviews	29

3.9.3 Observation.....	30
3.10 Data analysis	30
3.10.1 Document analysis data	31
3.10.2 Interview data	32
3.10.3 Observation data	32
3.11 Trustworthiness and credibility	32
3.11.1 Triangulation	32
3.11.2 Pre-testing data instruments.....	33
3.11.3 Peer debriefing.....	33
3.12 Ethical considerations	34
3.13 Chapter summary	35
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS	36
4.1 Chapter Overview	36
4.2 Active learning strategies used in teaching and learning English grammar	36
4.2.1 Lesson preparation by teachers of English	36
4.2.2 Selection of active learning strategies and use of resources	42
4.2.3 Selection of learners' activities for learners' practice	47
4.3 Strategies teachers used during lesson presentation.....	50
4.3.1 Questioning technique	50
4.3.2 Role playing technique	53

4.3.3 Story telling technique.....	54
4.3.4 Lecturing technique	56
4.3.5 Explanation technique	57
4.4 Effectiveness of active learning strategies	59
4.4.1 Effectiveness of questioning technique	60
4.4.2 Effectiveness of role playing technique.....	62
4.4.3 Effectiveness of storytelling technique.....	64
4.5 Challenges experienced when using active learning strategies during an English grammar lesson.....	68
4.5.1 Lack of interest in the way English grammar is taught using role playing	68
4.5.2 Students' poor background knowledge	71
4.5.3 Lack of understanding of the target language when using questioning technique	73
4.5.4 Shyness of the students when using role playing teaching technique	74
4.6 Suggested solutions to the challenges	77
4.6.1 Solution to students' lack of interest	77
4.6.2 Solution to poor background knowledge on the part of the students	79
4.6.3 Solution to the lack of understanding of the target language	80
4.6.4 Solution to shyness of the students.....	82
4.7 Chapter summary	84

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND	
CONCLUSION	85
5.1 Chapter overview	85
5.2. Summary of the findings	85
5.2.1 Active learning strategies used in English grammar lessons.....	85
5.2.2 Effectiveness of active learning strategies.....	86
5.2.3 Challenges experienced when using active learning strategies	86
5.2.4 Suggested solutions to the challenges	86
5.3 Implications of the study	87
5.4 Contributions of the study to the education field	88
5.5 Recommendations	88
5.6 Suggested areas for further research	89
5.7 Conclusion.....	89
REFERENCES	91
APPENDICES	101
Appendix 1: Timeline.....	101
Appendix 2: Document analysis guide.....	102
Appendix 3: Interview guide for teachers	103
Appendix 4: Classroom observation checklist.....	105
Appendix 5: Approval letter from MZUNIREC	108

Appendix 6: Letter from the Department of Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Studies	109
Appendix 7: Letter of introduction.....	111
Appendix 8: Letter from Central West Education Division (CWED)	113
Appendix 9: Letter of introduction to Headteachers	114
Appendix 10: Consent form	115
Appendix 11: Information sheet for participants	116

Glossary of acronyms/abbreviations

CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CoP	Communities of Practice
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CWED	Central West Education Division
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELL	English Language Learners
ESL	English as a Second Language
INSERT	In-Service Training
JCE	Junior Certificate Examination
L2	Second Language
MSCE	Malawi School Certificate of Education
MIE	Malawi Institute of Education
OER	Open Educational Resources
SLA	Second Language Learning
SSCAR	Secondary School Curriculum and Assessment Reform
UG	Universal Grammar

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter overview

This chapter introduces the study. It specifically presents the following: background information, statement of the problem, justification of the study, general and specific objectives, significance of the study, theoretical framework, delimitations of the study, limitations of the study, operational definitions of the terms and chapter summary.

1.2 Background information

Learning strategies are techniques teachers use to help students become independent and strategic learners. These strategies become learning strategies when students independently select the appropriate strategies and use them effectively to accomplish tasks or meet goals. Learning strategies motivate students during the learning process to the extent that they become eager to learn. In addition, learning strategies also organise information for understanding and remembering and monitor and assess learners. Saskatchewan Education (2009) asserts that learning strategies are the most specific category of teaching behaviours. They are necessary for procedural purposes and for structuring appropriate learning experiences for students.

Nwachukon (2005) describes learning strategies as decisions about organising people, materials and ideas to provide learning. Weston and Cranton (1986) view learning strategies as both teaching methods and the materials used in the process of teaching. That is, learning strategies determine the approach a teacher might take to achieve learning objectives. Some of the learning strategies that teachers use include demonstration, inquiry, discussion and lecturing. Furthermore, for students to become successful strategic learners, they need step-by-step instructional strategy. They also need a variety of learning approaches and learning materials. In addition, students need appropriate support that includes modelling, guided practice and independent practice. They also

need opportunities to transfer skills and ideas from one situation to another. Students need to make meaningful connections between skills and ideas and real-life situations.

Effective instructional and learning strategies can be used across grade levels and subject areas and they can accommodate a range of student differences. The situation is like that because these strategies aim to promote critical and reflective thinking, research and evaluation skills. These skills help students to take positive action to protect, enhance and advocate for their own and other's health, wellbeing and safety. Students use personal and social capability to work collaboratively with others in learning activities to appreciate their own strengths and abilities and those of their peers and develop a range of interpersonal skills such as communication, negotiation, teamwork, leadership and an appreciation of diverse perspectives. Teachers are encouraged to use their professional judgement to review the suggested strategies and decide on the most appropriate ones for meeting the needs of their students and deliver the essential content in resilience and wellbeing. The learning strategies linked to learning activities are a suggestion only. Since teachers know their students learning styles and needs, they can select alternative strategies or adapt those suggested to deliver the content (Saskatchewan Education, 2009).

On the other hand, grammar is used in a variety of senses to identify different types of grammar ranging from linguistic topics to linguistic competence. Hornby and Wittie (2010) define grammar as the study and practice of the rules by which words change their forms and are combined into sentences. There are two basic elements in this definition: the rules of grammar and the study and practice of the rules. According to Hornby and Wittie (2010), the rules of grammar are concerned with how words change and how they are put together into sentences. For example, our knowledge of grammar tells us that the word 'walk' can be changed to 'walked' in the past tense. Thus an example of a word changing its form. Our knowledge of grammar also tells us what to do if we

want to put the phrase ‘not many’ into a sentence. For example, ‘There are oranges on the shelf’ to ‘There are not many oranges on the shelf.’ This serves as a clear example of how words are combined into sentences. Grammar, then, is the way in which words change themselves and group together to make sentences (Harmer, 2015).

Andrews, Togerson, Beverton, Freeman, Locke, Low and Zhu (2004) posit that there is no evidence that the formulaic teaching of grammar by labelling and identifying items of language use has any beneficial effect on language production. However, there is powerful research evidence, including a large scale study from Exeter University. Mayhill and Fisher (2010) demonstrate the benefits of relevant grammar when taught explicitly and in context. Teachers who contextualise the study of grammar within the reading of literature and discuss real life texts reported a positive impact on pupils’ writing and a deeper knowledge and understanding of language. Mayhill et al. (2010) explain that the key to effective use of grammar is to open children’s eyes to the infinite repertoire of choices that are available to them as writers. When used in this way, grammar helps children to understand how language works and how to express themselves with greater craft and creativity. Furthermore, grammar should be taught within English lessons and support the children’s learning of a specific text type.

The present study is in line with the current trend in the field of instructional design and technology, where developmental studies are being seen as the right way to advance direction in the discipline. In fact, Reeves, Herrington and Olives (2005) observe that developmental research can contribute to the field as it can inform the field of instructional design as it may well advance the quality and usefulness of a field that is presently at risk of becoming inconsequential and irrelevant through the ineffective media comparison studies. Actually, Reeves et al. (2005) point out that if educational technologies want to be more socially responsible, they should pursue

developmental goals. In his study, Sanga (2016) posits that the framework was developed by English methodology faculty members in Malawi's five secondary school teachers training institutions. The framework is important to the field of instructional design and technology as it provides a model for the use of theory, to drive effective instructional practices. The studies indicate that situated cognition provides a more authentic learning experience.

The framework has been created to inform future teaching of English as a second language in Malawi. Recent studies also provide a gap that while situated strategies have shown to improve teaching in various areas throughout the world, these strategies are not in use in Malawi, especially in the teaching of English as a second language in the classroom (Lave, 2008). To that end, a different way to teach English as a second language more meaningfully in Malawi has been identified based on the literature. The features contained in the framework have been derived from situated cognition and they serve to contextualise the teaching of various topics in English language and grammar. This, in essence, proposes a solution to a problem where the teaching of English as a second language in Malawi is to a large extent being done using strategies that do not enable learners to seemingly close the gap between what they learned and how the skills would be used in real life outside the classroom. Therefore, the current study supports the creation of the framework, informed by the literature, and guided by the input of educational experts and practitioners who would be employing these strategies.

The framework has been predominantly developed to be used in Malawi. From the analysis phase, its development is guided by views and practices of English methodology faculty members in Malawi's five secondary school teacher training institutions. For example, the eight faculty members emphasise the importance of developing the framework around the four language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. To that end, there is a deliberate effort in the development

process to vary content in the examples used in the framework across these four important skills in language teaching. Furthermore, learning materials and aides used in the examples are typically Malawian including literary genre pieces and names of places. It must further be pointed out that views from English methodology practitioners on the potential challenges that the framework would face in Malawi are also taken into consideration in its development. For these reasons, the framework is, to a large extent, good for use in Malawi and it might work in other countries with minor modifications (Sanga, 2016).

1.3 Statement of the problem

The Malawi government introduced the new secondary school curriculum and assessment reform in 2015. The aim of the new curriculum is to address some gaps that are there because issues of assessment are not being addressed adequately. The new curriculum focuses much on the use of various learning strategies in order to meet the needs of the students (Ministry of Education (MoE), 2015). The current system of varying the learning strategies has been adopted worldwide, and it is bearing fruits in addressing the challenges learners experience during the learning process. The government of Malawi adopted the system with an aim of meeting the needs of learners both in the classroom and outside the classroom. However, the research which was done by Sanga (2016) reveals that although the system is being practised worldwide, and it is yielding good results, this system is not being practised adequately in secondary schools in Malawi. That is, teachers are still clinging to traditional ways of teaching.

Several studies were conducted in Malawi in relation to active learning strategies. For instance, Altinyelken and Hoeksman (2021) conducted a study entitled “improving educational quality through active learning: perspectives from secondary school teachers in Malawi.” The study targeted teachers who were interviewed. The findings of the study reveal that active teaching and

learning is positively viewed by all participants as beneficial because it is improving student academic performance and skills development. In addition, Mizrachi, Padilla and Banda (2010) embarked on a study titled “active-learning pedagogies as a reform initiative: the case of Malawi.” The study targeted teachers, supervisors and school management committees from sixteen schools in six districts. The findings reveal that teaching students using active learning strategies is beneficial as it enables students to remember and master the subject matter better. The process also allows for discovery learning and that students are less shy when working in small groups. However, most studies dwell much on the active learning strategies across all teaching areas and not the teaching of English grammar in particular. This prompted the researcher to embark on the study that seeks to examine the implementation of active learning strategies that enhance active learning of secondary school English grammar.

1.4 Justification of the study

Most countries across the globe are implementing learning strategies that promote active participation of students in the teaching of secondary school English grammar. However, Malawian secondary school teachers do not use active learning strategies. Teachers are still sticking to traditional methods that make learners become passive recipients of knowledge. Therefore, this study will assist secondary school teachers in embracing up-to-date learning strategies that liberate students to become active participants during the learning of secondary school English grammar. Furthermore, the teaching of secondary school English grammar using active learning strategies enables students to use language in various contexts because students practise language extensively during lesson delivery; hence the need to embark on this study. A further personal motivation for this is that of professional development. In his foreword to the government *‘Learning and Teaching: A Strategy for Professional Development’*, David Blunkett,

the then Secretary of State for Education and Employment in United Kingdom, stated that, ‘I believe that professional development is above all about developing extraordinary talent and inspiration, and especially the classroom practice of teachers by making sure they have the finest and most up-to-date tools to do their job’ (DfES, 2001, p. 5).

1.5 General objective

The general objective of the study was to examine the implementation of active learning strategies that enhance active learning of English grammar in secondary schools.

1.5.1 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Identify active learning strategies that are used in the teaching and learning of English grammar;
2. Analyse the effectiveness of active learning strategies in achieving goals and objectives of lessons; and
3. Examine the challenges experienced when using active learning strategies during English grammar lessons.

1.6 Significance of the study

The results of the research will assist teachers to realise the learning strategies that liberate the students and how to use of learning strategies to assist in ensuring active participation of students during English grammar lesson delivery.

1.7 Theoretical framework

This study was informed by Constructivism Theory of learning. Constructivism is regarded as a variant of cognitivism. Its proponents are Jean Piaget and John Dewey. This theory is relevant to

guide this study because the constructs that the proponents propounded are also relevant to the examination of the implementation of active learning strategies that enhance active learning of English grammar. In this theory, the proponents advocate that an individual constructs his or her understanding of the world in which he or she lives by reflecting on personal experiences. Learners are not supposed to wait for knowledge to be filled, but they play an active role to seek meaning and nurture self-awareness. When encountering a principle, concept or phenomenon that does not make sense, learners often interpret or generate new rules to comprehend ideas (Biggie & Wilson, 2006). Furthermore, students have different interpretations about similar things based on their living environments and interaction with others. In other words, human understanding is contextually embedded and interpersonally influenced by the living.

Lefrancois (2009) asserts that according to constructivist perspectives, learning occurs when individuals are actively engaged in the learning process and integrate new knowledge with existing knowledge. Learning is considered as an active process of constructing rather than receiving knowledge. In addition, teaching is also considered as a process of supporting the learners to construct ideas rather than delivering knowledge. When applying constructive strategies, teachers must start with the information that students already know and lead them to new knowledge by using thought provoking questions and scaffolding techniques. Scaffolding refers to a spiral instructional model that provides extensive support and a framework of sequential lesson contents to gradually build up students' understanding of new concepts based on their prior knowledge.

Constructivism emphasises on the need to have social communities because they have a strong impact on constructed meaning, thus initiating the term social constructivism. Social constructivism emphasises the important role social and cultural contexts that help transform and share meaning among groups of people. In other words, without social interactions and

interdependent relationships, learners cannot construct understanding. This principle encourages a teaching approach that should emphasise the social interaction in a sense that it can engage learners in learning tasks and optimise learning outcomes. Among the learning germane to constructivist theories are cooperative learning and service learning as they help learners to build up learner understanding of disciplinary areas through team collaboration, everyday communication and application of academic knowledge to real-life situations (McGonigal, 2005).

Constructivist learning is of critical importance in this study in that participants were explaining their experiences. That is, what they know in relation to the study. The theory advocates that individuals construct their own knowledge or understanding of the world based on personal experiences. The theory also guides the study in that the researcher visited participating schools, natural environment, to appreciate the role teachers are playing when using active learning strategies when teaching English grammar. The theory also determines the data analysis methods because responses from the participants were transcribed, coded and grouped into themes.

1.8 Delimitations of the study

Delimitation is the setting of boundaries for the study or limiting the scope of the study to make it manageable (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). This study was confined to seven public schools in one education division in Malawi; Central West Education Division. More specifically, the study focused on teachers of English.

1.9 Limitations of the study

As noted by Cohen et al. (2007), every research has its own inevitable limitations. In the case of this study, the following were the limitations. This study was limited to public secondary schools in one Education Division (i.e. CWED), and one education district of Lilongwe Rural East. The

study focused much on seven community day secondary schools which was not a full representation of the entire secondary school sector. Therefore, the findings of this study could not be generalised.

1.10 Operational definitions of terms

Learning

Learning is the process that leads to change which occurs as a result of experience, and increases potential for improved performance and future learning.

Active learning

Active learning is an approach to instruction that involves actively engaging students with course material through discussions, problem solving, case studies, role plays and other methods.

Learning strategies

Learning strategies are instructional methods that include specialised instructional phases in line with the particular purposes of the subject and the features of the content area so that learners can gain the target behaviour.

Active learning strategies

Active learning strategies include a wide range of activities that share the common element of involving students in doing things, and thinking about the things they are doing.

Grammar

Grammar is the whole system and structure of a language in general, usually taken as consisting of syntax and morphology, and sometimes also phonology and semantics.

1.11 Organisation of the study

Chapter one

Chapter one serves as an introduction to the study. It provides the background information and it outlines the purpose of the study. It also contains statement of the problem, significance of the study and specific objectives that was used to carry out the study. The chapter also contains theoretical framework.

Chapter two

Chapter two is literature review and contains information on the use of learning strategies, and how it relates to the teaching of English grammar in secondary schools. The chapter further expounds literature on constructivism theory which is the theoretical framework guiding this study.

Chapter three

Chapter three discusses the research approach, design and methodology. It is concerned with sampling techniques used, data collection methods and how data was be analysed. The chapter further looks at the validity, reliability and ethical considerations.

Chapter four

Chapter four dwells much on data analysis and discussion of findings.

Chapter five

Chapter five is the last chapter and concludes by summarising the findings. The chapter also gives recommendations basing on the findings of the study. This chapter also looks at the implications.

1.12 Chapter summary

The chapter has provided background to the study which has also laid the basis for the entire study. It has further discussed how English grammar is taught in schools. A statement of the problem has been presented followed by the justification of the study and the research objectives. The chapter has also highlighted the significance of the study followed by theoretical framework and the delimitations of the study. The next chapter presents literature review.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter overview

This chapter reviews related literature. It mainly targets studies that are in line with the current research. Furthermore, the chapter shows how these studies are informing the current research. It dwells much on the importance of learning strategies when teaching English grammar, strategies used, barriers faced and solutions to the challenges.

2.2 Importance of using learning strategies when teaching English grammar

Yu (2013) conducted a study that focused on the teaching of English grammar using focus on form approach in CLT. The study targeted teachers and students in the Korean middle school. The study highlights some reasons as to why English grammar should be taught in schools. The first one is to prevent fossilisation. Fossilisation means using a broken, ungrammatical and pidginised form of language. He also posits that purely meaning-based on instruction, which do not focus on grammar, can facilitate this fossilisation because some complicated structures cannot be acquired by natural conversation.

The argument above is in line with Constructivism, which advocates that teachers should be facilitators, whose role is to support the learning process by helping students who are struggling by, among other things, correcting learners' mistakes. The fact is that it enables learners to be aware of how to construct grammatical English. The arguments in the research inform the current study as it seeks to make sure that students own the learning process by doing self-discovery of the grammatical rules, and they are able to apply them in their conversations in class as well as in real life situations. In addition, students are able to use these rules in various settings because of the confidence they accumulate by mastering the rules of English grammar.

Secondly, Dornyei (2008) asserts that teaching English grammar using focus on form approach had a positive influence on the EFL students' spontaneous classroom participation. For instance, learners who are already familiar with English grammar instruction could speak English with confidence only when they are convinced that their speech was grammatical in nature. This was in accordance with Lefrancois (2000), who considers that Constructivism strongly perceived that learning occurs when individuals are actively involved in the learning process and integrate new knowledge with the existing knowledge.

The findings of the study augur well with the current research as the study seeks to help teachers use learning strategies that will enable students to interact well with the teacher and fellow students. Students should be the ones owning the entire learning process with the teacher supporting students in the learning process. Therefore, teachers should devise strategies that are learner-centred, which would bring out students' autonomy and be able to vary them in a lesson. The development is quite crucial in English grammar lessons because learners are able to practise language extensively by interacting with others as well as the teachers. In addition, learning takes place in an environment where teachers motivate students. It enables the students to become eager and respond positively to the learning process. A positive response from students should be appreciated while a negative response should be discouraged. This makes the students to become focused in the learning process and to achieve their goals.

Baker (2000) states that the teaching of English grammar helps students to use grammar more creatively. EFL students learn grammar in communicative language teaching (CLT) classes. They do not only use set phrases or insert alternative words but also make choices within a grammatical system itself. For instance, "Would you like a cup of tea?" or "Would you like a piece of cake?" Biggie and Wilson (2006) stipulate that constructivism encourages students to embrace different

interpretations about similar meanings based on their living environments and interactions with others. In other words, human understanding is contextually embedded and interpersonally influenced by the living.

The results of the study are in line with this study as they promote the use of active learning strategies to help students become strategic and bring out students' autonomy. Furthermore, it would enable students to use language in a creative manner by applying what has been learnt in the classroom to different situations in real life. Some strategies would enable students to act out situations thereby accumulating vocabulary that can be used in various real life settings.

2.3 Strategies used when teaching English grammar

Since the mid-20th century, the positive impact of teaching grammar in context on students' writing had been recognised. A host of current studies have emphasised the fact that humans tend to learn in a web-like fashion, the web of content. Anderson (2005) states that teaching grammar in context provides a meaningful framework that connects to reality in the targeted language. We must provide a practical approach that allows ELLs to generate thoughts and to make use of the received knowledge. Poth (2006) stresses the importance of providing writing input into the teaching of grammar. Language learners must have the opportunities to produce output in order to gain fluency and accuracy. Somervill (2017) asserts that teaching methods like role playing are very important to students because they provide learners with structural learning experiences to develop skills for work in the real world of work. Role playing is a technique in which students spontaneously act out assigned roles in a given historical, literary or contemporary situations in order to understand situations more thoroughly. The current project also seeks to ensure that teachers provide students with the conducive learning environment that allows them to practise language in a classroom setting so that it informs the world of work. Therefore, teachers are urged to use active teaching

strategies that allow students to use technical words or terminologies that are used in various contexts like courts and hospitals.

Teaching English grammar using focus-on-form method is one such example of teaching grammar in context. The approach is also known as the grammar-in-context approach and it is based on the notion that students need to construct knowledge of grammar by practising it as part of what it means to write (Ehrenworth & Vinton, 2005). Advocates of this method ensure that students tend to learn and apply language structure through practice and that manipulating sentences through writing helps students practically use the language and therefore, increase the language proficiency level. The term context is defined in the Merriam-Webster online dictionary as “the parts of a discourse that surround a word or passage and can throw light on its meaning.” Under this definition, this approach is linked to Krashen’s language acquisition theory. Krashen (2005) proposes that language acquisition goes beyond reciting, memorising and completing closed exercises. He further explains that in order to be functional, language needs to be taught and experienced through authentic contexts. Anderson (2005) clarifies that contexts do not necessarily mean a lengthy text; it can be a paragraph or even a sentence. Thus, contextual grammar approach could be applied through mentor sentences and paragraphs to explain grammar concepts and mechanics in a relatively meaningful situation that ELL students could relate to. The approach is clearly influenced by the Constructivist Theory. The efficacy of this method presents both, explicit grammar instruction and meaningful input. This allows students to elaborate on, experiment with and relate to received knowledge.

As accomplished practitioners, acknowledging and being aware of the theories and methodologies that have influenced ELL teaching and learning is a crucial step. Yet, it is critical for teachers to consider that all theories are based on limited information and that this information is consistently

being examined and perhaps, even amended (Wilson & Peterson, 2006). Therefore, teachers must know what works for their students and use a balanced view of learning and teaching (Wilson & Peterson, 2006). This might mean that it is necessary to employ more than one approach when teaching, rather than focusing on just one approach. For instance, following the Behaviourist Theory alone can lead to learning grammar rules in isolation and students' inability to transfer this knowledge to other language skills.

Similarly, following the Universal Grammar (UG) or Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory, both of which, stress language learning without grammar instruction, may not be ideal for many students either. Many experienced teachers who have interacted with ELLs realise that some students need a type of grammar coaching, as well as meaningful input, depending on the students' level and style of learning. Thus, having a solid understanding of how we teach, possessing the ability to articulate our instructional approach, and being aware of the various learning theories may hold a lot of promise in boosting teaching performance and that might provide satisfying results. However, it is important that we choose the appropriate approach that suits our learners' needs. The study by Mohajan (2017) acknowledges that this is in line with the method referred to as Community of Practice (CoP), where students formed a group or community of practice. The study targeted the community that indulges in CoP. They were engaged in joint activities and discussions, helped each other and shared information. In this case, the community refers to the social structures that encourage learning through interaction and relationships among members. Furthermore, it is a crucial element for an effective knowledge structure about a specific practice. The current research is trying to make the teacher become vigilant as it provides room for them to use a variety of active teaching strategies in a particular lesson. The development ensures that learners' needs are taken care of and, at the same time, students build strong relationships by

working in groups. For instance, by working in groups, students share knowledge and they are usually comfortable, and shy learners do participate. The argument above is against the use of teacher-centred strategies, which are not effective in terms of practising language.

2.4 Barriers faced by students when learning grammar

Azar (2002) posits that although the use of active learning strategies in the teaching of English grammar is of critical importance to both English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) students, there are some factors that hinder the smooth implementation of the active learning strategies. For instance, in most EFL classes, the curriculum, which is more often not designed for test preparation, is determined and fixed through the teaching ministry and employing each material could be a hurdle for many teachers who mandatorily teach from the textbook alone. The constraint might pose a challenge in exposing ELLs to authentic and meaningful input of the targeted language. Therefore, EFL teachers should conceive and explore various ways to implement authentic English material with a tight curriculum and little resources. The current study is seeking to equip teachers to use teaching and learning resources so as to make sure that students are exposed to learning activities that are meaningful and expose them to real life situations. Active learning strategies alone cannot work unless there are adequate learning materials for the English grammar lessons. Teachers are also at liberty to improvise materials in order to cater for the whole class.

Azar (2002) argues that another obstacle is the class size against the number of teachers. Having a large number of students can impact a teacher's feedback, especially in providing one-on-one guidance. Giving EFL students' one-on-one feedback might possibly result in generous learning. However, such a practice could be difficult for teachers who teach large numbers of students. Therefore, the burden is placed on teachers in adapting strategies to allow to receive feedback in a

constructive and efficient manner. For instance, teachers could utilise peer feedback amongst their students. Dhillon and Wanjiru (2013) argue that the education system and a literacy focused ESL curriculum is further pressured by the shortage of English teachers in schools. The study further reveals that shortage of English teachers in schools makes it difficult for the teachers to provide quality language work for learners. They cannot manage to give individual attention to students due to class workload and time factor. The study sought to expose the challenges and attempts to provide solutions to them. Class size is an issue that needs an immediate solution by either recruiting adequate teachers or constructing more schools to decongest the existing ones. The development would enable teachers to handle a reasonable number of students. Such being the case, students can be assisted individually during English lessons.

Furthermore, Graus and Coppen (2017) argue that students have different characters and learning styles. This results in influencing their attitude on learning English grammar. In grammar classroom activities, sometimes students lack attention and they are not serious at all because there is no background knowledge of English grammar. They are usually demotivated in developing their own grammar knowledge because they lack vocabulary. The study entitled “Challenges and strategies for teachers and learners of English as a second language” by Dhillon and Wanjiru (2013), stipulates that some students have negative attitudes towards learning English and pupils forget easily what they have been taught due to poor memory. This is the case because pupils lack motivation. The negative attitudes that students have towards the learning of English grammar possess a great challenge to teachers on how best to handle English grammar lessons in secondary schools. Another one is lack of proper training on English teaching methodologies dealing with active learning strategies provided by the government. It cannot be denied that most students perceive learning English grammar as the most boring learning activity when they learn it in

school. Even if teachers try to vary teaching strategies, sometimes they would still produce an unenjoyably teaching atmosphere. The argument augurs well with the current study which stipulates that the adoption of different approaches when teaching English grammar promotes the use of target language efficiently and clearly, and it encourages a degree of automaticity in production. The absence of these appropriate methodologies means that there is language under-achievement.

2.5 Solutions to the challenges

From the challenges highlighted above, some expectations are proposed to be considered in designing teaching grammar. The first one is providing students with varied teaching approaches and methods in teaching grammar by considering students' learning styles, their attitude and perception of English grammar. This can help EFL teachers create enjoyable and meaningful English grammar activities. The study by Naka (2017) was aimed at orienting EFL teachers to consider choosing the right strategies when teaching EFL students. The results of the study consider differentiated instructions as a way learners acquire the knowledge and strategies they apply during the delivery of an instruction. Differentiated learning is of critical importance because it accommodates learners of diverse backgrounds with diverse abilities to show their prerequisite knowledge. Therefore, differentiation can be defined as a learning method that allows teachers to twist the curriculum, their learning strategies, the educational sources used, the learning tasks and the evaluation approaches to and in accordance with students' diverse needs with an aim of maximising the instructional opportunities for every learner. The assertion supports this study as it enables teachers of English to accommodate learners' needs when devising a lesson. The teachers of English should use various teaching strategies that can make students active throughout

the lesson. This is the case because students learn differently, as such varied methods are crucial in enhancing language practice in a lesson.

In addition, the teachers of English should make sure that the authentic learning materials are used when delivering English grammar lessons. These supplementary materials should be based on students' contextualised life. That is definitely helpful in minimising the challenges that teachers of English grammar experience. In addition, considering students' preferences and teachers' difficulties in teaching English in EFL context can help educators and developers in creating EFL curriculum and EFL teaching materials which match with both students' and teachers' needs. Dhillon and Wanjiru (2013) posit that students should be provided with adequate teaching and learning materials. These materials should be interesting and curiosity-arousing in nature because such materials enhance a language-learning environment and initiate positive classroom interaction. The research recognises the use of materials as a crucial component of language practice. Resources help teachers in managing the class and they help learners to grasp the concepts with ease. Therefore, teachers of English should be resourceful enough when preparing for an English grammar lessons because this enables students to practise language effectively.

Furthermore, there is need for designing training programmes that are related to teaching methodology to enrich the teachers' conceptual and practical knowledge on grammar so that they can develop a teaching model based on the characteristics of EFL frame (Lee & Lin, 2019). The recommendation augurs well with the study done by Ucan (2016), which targeted teachers because they are the custodians of change in the education system. The study stipulates the need to conduct Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in order for teachers to develop their teaching career. One of the imperatives of CPD is to assist the teachers to advance their profession by enhancing their performance with the view of improving performance in order to improve the learning

outcomes of learners. The development can be done by exposing the teachers to current learning strategies that can allow active participation of students in the learning process. The current study aims to engage teachers of English be aware of the current teaching strategies that are used worldwide, which help in the mastery of content on the part of the students so that they become autonomous and strategic.

Investing in education is critical if a country is to achieve meaningful development. Human capital development that is globally competitive and highly motivated contributes significantly to the development of the nation. The youth should be equipped with relevant skills and this could be enhanced through the provision of quality education. Most Malawian youths are lacking the skills; hence; they fail to contribute effectively to national development. This has been the case due to mismatch between education and the world of work (Malawi, 2063). In order to address the issue of mismatch of the activities, there is need to contextualise the education system so that what is taught in class should inform the world of work. The use of active learning strategies should be employed in order to contextualise the teaching process. To this end, communication is also critical if a country like Malawi is to attain significant development. Hence; there is a need to contextualise the teaching of English grammar for use locally and internationally. Malawi adopted English as an official language and there is need for youths to practise the language extensively for them to be able to use it in various situations for them to achieve communicative competence.

2.6 Chapter summary

Literature indicates that extensive research has been done about active learning strategies in the teaching of English grammar worldwide, and literature also shows that Malawi's education system is not employing active learning strategies in the teaching of English grammar. The researcher aims at exposing the current strategies in use, its effectiveness and the challenges being

experienced when employing these strategies. The next chapter will present the research approach, design and methodology.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH APPROACH, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter overview

Kalu and Bwalya (2017) assert that methodology means a framework of theories and principles on which methods and procedures are based. According to Newby (2014), methodology is a set of beliefs that give guidance to the study, especially when collecting and analysing data. Furthermore, research methodology is defined as a set of systematic techniques used in research which include procedures by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomenon (Igwenagu, 2016). Therefore, the definitions clearly show that the aim of the research methodology is to give guidance to research on how it can be conducted. Therefore, the chapter focuses on the methods that are used to collect and analyse data. It encompasses concepts like paradigm, research design, research methods, research approach, methods of data collection, selection of the sample, research process, data analysis techniques and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research paradigm

According to Cresswell (2014), there are four types of paradigms namely; post-positivist, interpretivism, transformative and pragmatic. However, this study was guided by interpretivism research paradigm. Interpretivism paradigm is concerned with understanding the world as it is from subjective experiences of individuals (Reeves & Hedberg, 2003; Lather, 2006). In addition to that, it uses meaning oriented methodologies such as interviewing or participant observation, which rely on a subjective relationship between the researcher and participants (Cresswell, 2009). Therefore, interpretivism paradigm was relevant in this study because this approach would allow close collaboration between the researcher and participants. Participants are able to tell their stories and describe their views of reality which in turn enables the researcher to better understand the participants' actions implementing the instructional strategies when teaching English grammar in

secondary schools. Furthermore, the study used mean oriented methodologies such as interviewing and participant observation which augured well with interpretivism paradigm.

3.3 Research approach

The approaches in social research include quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods (Cresswell & Clark, 2011). This study used qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomenon in the natural context (Maree, 2007; Kumar, 2011). Therefore, qualitative research approach afforded the researcher the opportunity to observe teachers in their natural settings in order to find out exactly what happened in their classrooms. The researcher visited teachers in their own schools where they were interviewed and observed in their classrooms. The interactive nature of qualitative research further made it possible for the researcher to obtain an in-depth understanding of respondents' views and to gain a holistic understanding of how teachers implement active learning strategies when teaching secondary school English grammar, analysed the current use of instructional strategies, the effectiveness of the instructional strategies and the challenges teachers experienced when implementing active instructional strategies.

3.4 Research design

Brink, Van der Walt and Van Rensburg (2012) explain that research design forms the blueprint of research that sets out the methodology to be used by the researcher in obtaining information, such as elements, units of analysis and participants for collecting and analysing data and interpreting results. Therefore, the aim of the research determines the choice of appropriate research design for a given study (Seidman, 2006; Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2010). There are different types of research designs in social science and these include survey, experiment, observation, case study and content analysis, among others (Seidman, 2006). This study adopted

the case study design. Baxter and Jack (2008) alluded to the fact that a case study is an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources such as interviews, observations, documents and reports, with selection based on fitness for purpose. The case study research design was employed because of its relevance in helping the researcher not to explore the phenomenon through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allowed for multiple facts of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood.

3.5 Research site

The study was conducted in seven different selected community day secondary schools in Central West Education Division (CWED) in Lilongwe Rural East Education district. The selected institutions are offering core education.

3.6 Target population

The target population was thirty specialised secondary school English teachers who are directly involved in the implementation of the active instructional strategies in the teaching of English grammar in secondary schools. Therefore, the researcher needed to sample participants from the larger population who were teachers, who were involved in the implementation of active learning strategies in the seven schools in Lilongwe Rural East. For the purpose of this study, twenty-one teachers of English were involved. They were interviewed and their lessons were observed as well.

3.7 Sampling

A sample can be comprised of individuals, items or events selected from a larger group. The purpose of sampling is to gain information about the population by using a sample. In this study, twenty-one teachers participated in the study.

3.7.1 Sampling procedure

There are different types of sampling techniques, but this study used simple random sampling in selecting the Education Division and purposive sampling, when selecting participants.

3.7.1.1 Simple random sampling

In Malawi, there are five education divisions, but the researcher needed to conduct the study in one education division. Therefore, in this study, all the names of education divisions were written on piece of papers and were put in a box that was shaken later. Then the researcher put a hand in the box to pick the education division randomly. The first paper to be picked from the box was the education division where the study will be conducted, which is Central West Education Division (CWED). In Central West Education Division, there were five education districts but the researcher needed to conduct the study in Lilongwe Rural East to check if at all community day secondary schools in rural areas were implementing active learning strategies in English grammar lessons. Therefore, in this study all names of education districts were written on pieces of paper and were put in a box that was later shaken. Then the researcher put his hand in the box to pick the education district randomly. The first paper to be picked in the box and was taken as the education district where the study took place. The education district was Lilongwe Rural East.

3.7.1.2 Purposive sampling

In this study, the researcher employed purposive sampling to select teachers of English in Lilongwe Rural East Education district who had an in-depth knowledge of the active learning strategies used in teaching English grammar in secondary schools. The researcher involved specialised teachers of English who have more than five years' teaching experience in the subject in order to be sure that they were aware of the learning strategies used when teaching English grammar. The researcher further considered that the selected participants would shed more light

on the researcher's questions due to their subject specialisation, practices and expertise as teachers of English.

3.8 Research participants

The study involved a total of twenty-one participants sampled from the seven community day secondary schools who are specialised English teachers each with a minimum of five years and above, of teaching experience. In line with ethical considerations, the researcher used codes instead of the names of participants and schools. Teachers in the one-on-one interviews were referred to as teacher A, B and C in each school, while the schools in the study were referred to as NKHO, MWA, CHIG, KAU, CHING'O, MCHI and KAL. Participants in this study were specialised English teachers identified from each of the seven sampled schools with five and above years of teaching. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) contend that in a qualitative research design, the sample size should neither be too small nor excessive but manageable and limited by time and money. Cohen et al. (2007) further state that a sample size within the range of 8 to 15 is ideal in order to fulfil the requirements of efficiency, representation, reliability as well as flexibility. From the demographic data, there were seven females and fourteen males that were involved in the study. The difference in the number of females and males was based on the availability of teachers in the schools under study. The demographic data also showed that participants who were involved in the study were qualified English teachers who have taught English subject for more than five years.

3.9 Data collection methods

Data collection methods involved the actions that a researcher took to gather relevant information to offer solutions to research questions. The current study employed qualitative methods of data collection. The instruments that the researcher used to collect data in this study were document analysis, interviews and classroom observations from the sampled schools.

3.9.1 Document analysis

According to Coffee (2014), documents can either be official records of different types designed as records of action and activity or everyday documents of an organisation and routine documents that were at the core of everyday social practice. The documents that were analysed in the schools include syllabus, teacher's guide, student's textbooks, supplementary teaching materials and schemes of work. These provided a wider variety of materials with information concerning the availability of resources for implementation of active learning strategies.

3.9.2 Interviews

There are four types of interviews commonly employed in social sciences. These are structured interviews, unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. However, this study used semi-structured interviews to collect data because such interviews allow the researcher to determine in advance the exact wording and sequencing of questions to be asked (Cohen et al. 2007). The method saves time and allows the researcher to explore, probe and classify answers (Maree, 2007). Twenty one teachers from the seven community day secondary schools were interviewed individually after school hours at their schools at times convenient to them, with the purpose of gaining an in-depth understanding of the teachers' experiences on the implementation of active learning strategies in the teaching of English grammar.

The researcher arranged the interviews with each individual well in advance, while permission to use the venues was requested from the headteachers of the participating schools. All teachers consented to participate in the study by signing the consent forms. Each teacher was interviewed once for about ten to twenty minutes. The data collected through interviews was audio-recorded for accurate transcriptions of verbal interactions, of course with the permission of the participants and transcribed verbatim.

3.9.3 Observation

Ndengu (2012) asserts that observation is immersing oneself in a research setting so that one can experience and observe at first hand a number of issues in that setting. Observations were very important as part of the data collection for this study because it served to describe the settings; in this case, the classrooms, and provided a social context for what teachers said and did in the field during contact time with learners when they presented their lessons. The teachers explained the researcher's presence in the classroom to the learners and the researcher sat at the back of the classroom. Each lesson was observed for at least forty minutes using an observation checklist. The observation checklist guided the researcher to determine what should be observed. Furthermore, the researcher played the role of the non-participant observer where the researcher only took field notes without interfering with the activities included as part of the lessons. Non-participant observation minimised the presence of the researcher in the classroom. It helped to ensure that the classroom process was as 'normal' as possible (Liu & Maitlis, 2010). Lesson observation helped the researcher to find out first-hand information on the preparation of English grammar teachers in as far as implementation of active learning strategies was concerned in the classroom.

3.10 Data analysis

Data analysis is central to credible qualitative research. According to Ndengu (2012), data analysis is about making sense of the data collected. Qualitative data analysis is basically interpretivist whose purpose is to provide a thick description which involves going through description of the characteristics, processes, transactions and content that constitute a phenomenon being studied (Terre-Binche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). There are different types of qualitative data analysis, but this study used content analysis because it offered a clear and usable framework for analysing the contents of interviews or observational notes (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Kumar, 2011). The

data was analysed using thematic content analysis which employed four steps. The first step was to identify the main themes. This step was employed in the descriptive responses from the participants in order to understand the meaning they communicated. The second was to assign codes to the main themes by using key words. The third step was to clarify responses from the participants under the main themes. Having identified the themes, this step was used to sift through the transcripts of all the interviews in order to classify responses from the participants. The fourth step was to integrate themes and responses into the text of the report. The content analysis was used to analyse the relevant data collected through document analysis, participant observation and semi-structured interviews. This helped the researcher to relate the themes found during thematic content analysis with the chosen theoretical framework.

3.10.1 Document analysis data

The researcher analysed the data that was collected from official documents thematically. Thematic analysis is a form of pattern recognition within the data, with emerging themes becoming the categories for analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The process involves a careful, more focused re-reading and review of the data. In this case, the researcher took a closer look at the documents to check if active instructional strategies that enhance active learning of English grammar in secondary schools had been included in the schemes of work and lesson plans. The researcher performed coding and category construction based on the data's characteristics in order to uncover themes pertinent to a phenomenon. Like any other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis data requires that data should be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

3.10.2 Interview data

The researcher analysed interview data by transcribing verbatim following the order of the interview schedule. The researcher replayed the audio several times to ensure accuracy in the transcription process. Cohen, et al. (2007) explains that replaying the audio several times assists the researcher to transcribe the right information and maintain its accuracy. The researcher coded and grouped key points into categories.

3.10.3 Observation data

The researcher performed coding and category construction based on the data's characteristics in order to uncover themes pertinent to a phenomenon. Just like in document analysis, observation data is examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

3.11 Trustworthiness and credibility

Trustworthiness is paramount in qualitative research. Trustworthiness enables the researcher to check for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures (Cresswell, 2014). Credibility establishes whether or not the research findings represent believable information drawn from the participants' original data and whether or not it is a correct interpretation of the participants' original views (Granaheim & Lundman, 2004). This study used triangulation, pre-testing data instruments and peer debriefing to ensure trustworthiness and credibility.

3.11.1 Triangulation

Triangulation involves the use of multiple and different methods, investigators, sources and theories to obtain corroborating evidence (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Triangulation helps the investigator to reduce bias and it cross examines the integrity of participant responses. Data triangulation was achieved in this study by using different sources of data collection instruments

such as document analysis, interviews and observation to enhance the quality of the data from different sources. In addition, triangulation was achieved by verifying the researcher verified what the participants said during interviews and what they did during classroom observations.

3.11.2 Pre-testing data instruments

Krishnaswami and Ranganatham (2010) argue that the purpose of pre-testing is to test whether or not the instruments obtain the responses required to achieve the research objectives. This can be enhanced in the following ways: to test whether or not the content of the instruments is relevant and adequate, to test whether or not the wording of the questions is clear and suitable to the understanding of respondents, to test the other qualitative aspects of instruments such as question structure and to develop appropriate procedures for administering the instrument with reference to field conditions. Therefore, pre-testing improves the quality of data significantly (Babbie, 2004; Rubin & Babbie, 2008). In this study, pre-testing data instruments was done in one of the schools in Lilongwe Rural East Education District. The researcher did document analysis, interviewed the specialist English teachers and observed teachers' lessons. This assisted the researcher to establish the timeframe for the interviews, it ensured clarity of questions by removing items that did not yield useful data and established the trustworthiness of instruments.

3.11.3 Peer debriefing

Debriefing provides the inquirer with the opportunity to test their growing insights and to expose themselves to searching questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Pitney & Parker, 2009). During the study, the researcher consulted other academic staff in Department of Education and Teaching Studies who provided scholarly guidance. Furthermore, feedback from peers also helped the researcher to improve the quality of findings. This was so because peer debriefing looked into

background information, data collection methods and process, data management, transcripts, data analysis procedure and research findings.

3.12 Ethical considerations

The issue of protecting the rights of participants in the study is very sensitive and special efforts were made to protect the rights of those who are vulnerable. The researcher ensured that the study adhered to all the ethical considerations by obtaining a clearance letter from Mzuzu University Research and Ethical Committee (MZUNIREC), permission letter from Mzuzu University, a permission letter from the Central West Education Division, a letter of informed consent from the headteachers of participating schools and participants were requested to sign a consent form which outlined the rules and procedures of the study, and to show that they agreed to participate in the study. The researcher also considered ethical matters such as voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity of respondents.

On voluntary participation, participants were informed that their participation in the study was free and voluntary, and that they could withdraw their participation from the study at any time they desired. Secondly, getting informed consent from respondents is a pre-requisite before the commencement of any research. Informed consent in this research was obtained from the potential participants of the study who were given full and relevant information regarding the study in which they were invited to take part in the study, to indicate their decision of whether they would like to take part in the study. Furthermore, the researcher told the participants about how data would be collected and that they were requested to provide the researcher with copies of their instructional plans to be used for study purposes only. All the stakeholders were assured that data would be anonymous and confidential. Cooper and Schindler (2014) argue that the research must be designed in a way that participants do not suffer any physical harm, discomfort, pain,

embarrassment or loss of privacy. All efforts were made to establish trust between the researcher and participants to ensure that their privacy was not compromised. This was achieved by giving pseudonyms to participants' names and that of their schools.

3.13 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the research design and methodology that were used to collect data. In the process, the chapter discussed concepts such as interpretivism paradigm, qualitative case study research design. The selection of the research site was done using simple random sampling while research participants were selected using purposive sampling. The data was collected using document analysis, interviews and lesson observations. Data was analysed using thematic content analysis. The study used triangulation of data instruments, pre-testing data instruments and peer debriefing to ensure trustworthiness and credibility. The study also considered ethical matters such as voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity of respondents, and of participating schools.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study by following the order of the three specific objectives. The three specific objectives were: (i) to identify active learning strategies used in the teaching and learning of English grammar, (ii) analyse the effectiveness of active learning strategies in achieving goals and objectives during English grammar lessons and (iii) examine the challenges experienced when using active learning strategies during English grammar lessons.

4.2 Active learning strategies used in teaching and learning English grammar

Under this objective, the study sought to identify active learning strategies that teachers of English use when teaching English grammar in secondary schools. The findings reveal that secondary school teachers of English do use active learning strategies in their English grammar lessons, but not to the expected standard. Upon analysing the data under this objective, three main themes emerged that represented how the strategies are used in English grammar lessons emerged: (i) Lesson preparation by the teachers of English, (ii) selection of appropriate active learning strategies, (iii) selection of learners' activities for learners' practice and (iv) strategies teachers used during lesson presentations.

4.2.1 Lesson preparation by teachers of English

The researcher considered how teachers of English in secondary schools prepare for English grammar lessons in order to ensure that the students own the learning process. It was revealed that most teachers do not write lesson plans. This was also observed when the researcher was observing lessons and analysing official documents of the participants. The researcher observed seventeen lessons and only four lessons were delivered following the lesson plans. This is against the

Ministry of Education's expectation which is to ensure that every teacher should have lesson plans well written in advance.

The lesson plan serves a lot of purposes in the delivery of a lesson. For instance, planning work that can be taught in a single period taking into account the abilities of students. It was worth noting that some participants who had well written lesson plans were able to deliver their lesson logically. The teachers ensured a step by step presentation of the lesson and students were active throughout the lessons.

For instance, participant C from KAU School explained that:

So you consider the abilities of learners so that you can plan work which the learners can manage to do or you (teacher) can manage to cover in a particular lesson. Otherwise, if you don't consider the abilities of learners, you may end up finding yourself that you don't finish the work planned on each day, so it's important to consider that.

On the other hand, participant B from CHIG School hinted by saying that:

You have to write a lesson plan in advance to be used when teaching. And you should also bear in mind that you are following the syllabus.

Furthermore, participant C from KAU School concurred with the other participants on the importance of lesson planning.

She had this to say:

So, on planning these strategies, the strategies are aligned to the success criteria. For example, if I have a success criteria, for example, learners should be able to identify adverbs from a given story, that means if I want to use group work, that group work will be used to achieve that success criteria because in those groups, I will tell them to discuss and identify that are found in that story.

The comments made by participants above imply that some teachers of English in secondary schools do understand that lesson plans are important when delivering English grammar lessons. The findings are in line with what Okai (2010) describes as the usefulness of a lesson plan. He asserts that if teachers have well written lesson plans, they are able to follow the correct steps and procedures in teaching, and activities are related to the content as well as the objectives of a lesson. The explanation above is also consistent with the research that was conducted into pre-service teachers on lesson planning, which concluded that the process of designing a written lesson plan is useful in preparing and organising for teaching. The findings are in line with constructivism theory which asserts that when applying constructive strategies, teachers may start with the information that students already know and lead them to new knowledge by using thought provoking questions and scaffolding techniques.

During lesson observation that involved participants with well written lesson plans, the researcher appreciated that most participants used teaching and learning resources effectively, at an appropriate time and the resources were indeed suitable for the lessons.

For instance, participant C from KAU School commented that:

Lesson plans assist teachers to carefully select active learning strategies that would help achieve a particular success criterion.

The statement above clearly shows that learners utilised the resources and were able to comprehend concepts. Therefore, a conclusion can be drawn that most learners including shy ones take part in the lesson thereby acquiring linguistic competence and the teacher could talk less while students dominated the lessons. Azar (2002) posits that although the use of active learning strategies in the teaching of English grammar is of critical importance to both EFL and ESL students, there are some factors that hinder the smooth implementation of active learning strategies. For instance, in most EFL classes, the curriculum, which is more often not designed for test preparation, is designed and fixed through the teaching Ministry of Education and employing each material can be a hurdle for many teachers who mandatorily teach from a textbook alone. This constraint may pose a challenge in exposing ELLs to authentic and meaningful input of the target language. Therefore, EFL teachers must conceive and explore various ways to implement authentic English materials with a tight curriculum and little resources.

In addition, the teachers of English who had prepared for their lessons were able to give their students assignments to be done at home after school hours. This is quite vital when it comes to practising the rules of English grammar that define a particular language. Students were given a good platform for language practice to be continued from where they left while in a classroom setting. For instance, participant B from NKHO School gave his students an assignment of finding a passage that contains phrasal verbs and deducing meanings of those phrasal verbs as used in the passage. Assignments have an implication in that extensive practice of English grammar helps

students acquire linguistic competence which can be applied in various contexts. Such scenarios will help reduce shyness among students when expressing their feelings in various contexts.

Furthermore, during lesson observation, the researcher noted that teachers of English with well written lesson plans were able to guide students on what is to be learnt in the next lesson. That is, students were able to know well in advance. This was quite essential as it enabled students to prepare for the next lesson by reading ahead the stuff to be taught. This is important as it enabled students to participate effectively during lesson delivery, by among others, asking relevant questions that would prompt a teacher to clarify certain grammatical elements that they did not understand when they encountered the stuff on their own. These strategies augur well with Tabbers and DeKoeijer (2010) who posit that Second Language (L2) learning requires that learners take ownership of learning activities through interaction, active participation and the use of target language in a more authentic context.

On the other hand, teachers who did not plan for their lessons did not give assignments to their students for practice. In addition, students were not told what is to be learnt in the next lesson. This kind of practice hindered students from realising their potential when it comes to language practice. Therefore, the acquisition of linguistic competence is limited thereby failing to enhance communicative competence because of failing to practice linguistic rules outside the school environment because the classroom environment failed to provide room for the same. This resonates well with Onukaogu (2001) who remarks that the traditional methods of teaching provided learners with fewer opportunities to participate actively in class; hence, learners are less confident to express themselves.

The researcher, however, discovered that a number of participants taught English grammar without lesson plans. This development made the teaching of English grammar not to be effective because

among other factors, the lessons did not progress as expected; that is, logical presentation of stuff was not enhanced. For example, participant B at MWA School failed to teach a lesson from known to unknown because the introduction was not relevant to the content taught on that particular day and the lesson did not reflect real life. Fullan (1992) asserts that lack of proper assessment on how teachers prepare to implement innovations in the education system contributes to failure in many innovations.

Despite the importance attached to the use of lesson plans, most participants whose lessons were observed did not have lesson plans well written in advance for the lessons. This implied that their lessons were not delivered in an orderly manner, that is, lessons were taught without following the proper order. In so doing, teachers dominated the talking throughout the lessons of English grammar and learners were reduced to mere passive listeners. Such lessons rendered nothing to learners because learners had no freedom to practice the rules of English thereby failing to gain linguistic competence, and in turn, learners could not acquire communicative competence. Therefore, the implication was that such students could not practice language outside the school setting. As such, students were being denied the chance to master English language effectively. Sanga (2016) argues that although the system of varying active learning strategies is being practiced worldwide and it is yielding good results, this system is not being practiced adequately in secondary schools in Malawi. That is, teachers, including those of English, are clinging to traditional ways of teaching. Lefrancois (2000) posits that constructivism vehemently perceives that learning occurs when individuals are actively involved in the learning process, and they integrate new knowledge with the existing knowledge.

Therefore, it can be deduced that despite having active learning strategies available in the official documents that were available in the participating schools, the active implementation of the same

leaves a lot to be desired. Teachers of English are failing to use them effectively during the learning process of English grammar. The ineffective use of the active learning strategies in English grammar lessons robs students of their chance to practice language in the classroom and outside the classroom environment. For instance, teachers of English failed to use questioning technique effectively by, among others, failing to pose high order questions. They mainly concentrated on asking low order questions. On the same, they also failed to nominate students randomly, but only nominated those that were volunteering or raising hands as a signal that they have responses to the questions. Another contributing factor to the ineffective use of active learning was that most teachers of English grammar taught students simply to pass national examinations and for them to cover a lot of work within the stipulated period. They resort to using teacher centred methodologies, like explanation and lecture. These strategies allow a teacher alone to explain concepts without involving students in the learning process. As a result, students are always struggling to acquire the target language, which is English.

4.2.2 Selection of active learning strategies and use of resources

During the interview session, most participants' reactions showed that they chose learning strategies that liberate students in most cases. That is, strategies that are participatory in nature with an aim of making sure that most students were actively engaged throughout the lesson and in addition, learners should be strategic. That is, they should be able to do activities on their own with minimal supervision from the teacher. Some of the active learning strategies that these teachers did mention are group work, pair work, think ink pair share, brainstorming, debate, question and answer, individual work, demonstration and drama.

Participants cited several reasons as to why they used active learning strategies when teaching English grammar. The first importance of using active learning strategies is that they could be used even when the resources were inadequate.

For instance, participant A from NKHO School said this:

Just because of the shortage of books, I do not have enough books. The school does not have enough school books to cater for each and every learner. So because of that I usually use group work so that at least they have to share the books. The few books that we have.

Generally, the researcher did appreciate that most teachers of English in the targeted secondary schools had few resources against the total number of students in class. These resources could not cater for all the students. When the researcher analysed the official documents, it was noted that the situation as regards resources was pathetic in all the schools. For instance, the situation is worse at KAL School where there were no books. This is like that because the students there went on rampage and vandalised school property. In the process, they went away with the school property including books. This was a clear indicator that most secondary schools are faced with this challenge of inadequate teaching and learning resources, thereby rendering teachers of English destitute. This development puts teachers of English as well as students in an awkward position because they fail to effectively implement English grammar lessons. Oni (1992) argues that instructional materials are teachers' strategic factors in organising and providing education. The materials help to elaborate a concept that the teacher could not do without the instructional materials. He further posited that this allows students to learn more comfortably, therefore influencing positively their academic performance. This implies that there is need to source adequate instructional resources that can cater for all the learners to ensure that the quality of education is not compromised.

Another important element worthy noting was that the active learning strategies help cater for all students in the classroom setting. The teachers in this study acknowledged that the active learning strategies have the power to influence most learners to participate in English grammar lessons. For instance, participant C from KAU School argued that:

Mostly the group work caters for the diverse learning needs of the students because through group work, slow learners are helped by the fast learners, and the pace of fast learners is also checked through group work because all work at an average pace whereby slow and fast learners meet in between and all work together.

On the other hand, participant C from CHIG School had this to say:

The one that actually caters for most of them is pair work itself because when we tell them to be in pairs, then everyone will be involved in that particular activity.

Participant B from MWA School posited that:

Mostly, the best one is individual because each and every learner you involve his or her capability, the challenges and the strengths. This is the best because you can assist the learners accordingly.

The few examples cited above clearly show that the teachers have trust that the active instructional strategies make students participate fully in the teaching of English grammar. However, the culture being portrayed during the delivery of English grammar lessons is pathetic. During lesson observation, it was revealed that most teachers tend to use one strategy throughout the lesson. Such an incident is not good as it leaves some learners behind, without being involved in the lessons. A classroom setting has learners who have different learning styles. Therefore, teachers are urged to devise mechanisms that would enable them to vary active learning strategies in a single lesson, so

that, most of the students can be accommodated. Emerson and Taylor (2004); Johnson (2005) argues that different pedagogical strategies have varying degrees of success. Students' academic performance may be influenced positively by their active engagement in the classroom. Constructivism Theory of learning advocates for the need to have social communities because they have a strong impact on constructed meaning. It emphasises the important role of social and cultural contexts that help transform and share meaning among groups of people. Furthermore, it posits that without social interactions and independent relationships, learners cannot construct meaning. This principle promotes a teaching approach that should encourage the social interaction in the sense that it can engage learners in learning tasks and optimise learning outcomes (McGonigal, 2005).

Generally, a teacher prepares for a lesson in order to impart the much needed knowledge, skills and attitudes to the students, and in so doing, achieve lesson goals and objectives. Likewise, this study sought to engage participants to hear from them and also observe them teach English grammar lessons to appreciate the situation on the ground if at all the students are grasping the concepts being delivered when using active learning strategies. It was made clear by all the participants that active learning strategies play a great role in ensuring that the goals and objectives of English grammar lessons are achieved. Proper use of these active learning strategies was beneficial to students because they gave room to the students to practice language. Teachers also took their time to assess students and they made corrections where necessary in the course of the lessons.

For instance, participant C from NKHO School shared this:

Since they are interesting in most cases and they arouse learners' interest, so, in this case they cannot be switched off. Proper use of them, definitely, you take all the learners on board and they will really achieve what is in the success criteria why there are lively questions.

In addition to that, participant A from MCHI School commented that:

And again it helps the teacher so that students are able to know parts of speech and how to come up with meaningful sentences using the grammar.

The implication was that active learning strategies were crucial components in the achievement of lesson goals and objectives as evidenced above. When the researcher observed lessons, the few teachers who had well written lesson plans and used active learning strategies, were able to achieve the goals and objectives. The students were able to participate fully during the lesson by doing most of the activities, and the teachers were reduced to facilitators. Verkler (2004) opines that a language is learned best when a student engages in rich and authentic communication with peers. On the other hand, Moore (1989) posits that without interaction, there would be no education because the educational process entails the learners' intellectual interaction with fellow students and or teachers resulting into changes in the learners' understanding, the learners' perspective, or the cognitive structure of the mind. The Constructivist Theory of learning encourages the need to embrace a teaching approach that emphasises on the need to use social interaction and interdependent relationships in the sense that it engages learners in learning tasks and it optimises learning outcomes (McGonigal, 2005).

However, lesson observation showed that fourteen out of twenty-one teachers failed to implement active learning strategies during the delivery of English grammar lessons. Consequently, the lesson goals and objectives were partially achieved by both teachers and students. This was the case because many teachers went to class to facilitate English grammar lessons without being prepared. So, the lessons were dominated by teacher talk.

Participant C from NKHO School said that:

If they are not well prepared, they will have some of the disadvantages. So learners will even fail how to connect from this stage to the other stage. Thus, when you are to organise these things, you have to be well prepared and creative enough, and you have to really know what your goal is, what you want to achieve at the end of the lesson.

4.2.3 Selection of learners' activities for learners' practice

Learners' activities are crucial in a lesson presentation because they determine whether learners have achieved the goals and objectives of the lesson. This is the case because learners' autonomy is appreciated through active engagement in the activities that the teacher prepared for them. Therefore, the teachers should thoroughly select learners' activities that will enhance students' engagement in the lesson. Similarly, lessons involving English grammar are no exception because language is about practising in order for students to master both linguistic and communicative competences. Hence, the selection of learners' activities in such situations is of critical importance. This therefore, calls for a number of issues to be looked into. It is against this background that the researcher sought to find out how teachers are handling the issue of learners' activities.

During the interview, language teachers were asked to give an account of how they select learners' activities. It was noted that most teachers of language did not tackle the issue of instructions, except

one. It was obvious therefore, that most teachers did not treat this issue as a serious one. It should be noted that clear instructions to the students are given in order for them to understand the concept to be discussed, and give them proper direction in their respective groups.

For instance, participant A from MCHI School said:

They are given questions after they have been highlighted on what they are going to do. They are asked to discuss some work that I prepared so that in the end they are asked questions to answer.

This statement showed that learners work best when they are given clear instructions on the task at hand. Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) (2004) posits that a quality teacher will acknowledge the needs and interests of the learner, permit the learner to learn at his or her own pace, encourage learning through doing and, where necessary, provide remedial and enrichment instructions among others.

Another element is that when selecting learners' activities was the issue of students' participation. Learners' activities should be chosen on the basis that they allowed students to be fully engaged in the activities at hand.

For instance, participant B from MCHI School said:

As they are discussing, that means they will be helping each other so that those who were behind can be assisted.

So, the goal of language learning when coming up with learners' tasks was to make sure that students' involvement was enhanced because through practice, one is able to acquire a language. Moore (1989) argues that participation of learners in a classroom situation is of critical importance

because it influences cognitive development, and it is important for raising the quality of education.

Learners' activities should also be selected on the basis that they reflect real life situations. That is to say, a language teacher should be creative enough to ensure that classroom activities were linked to real life situations so that students should be able to connect with classroom activities and continue practising language while outside the classroom environment.

Just to cite an example, participant B from KAU School said:

Okay, as it is, English grammar has a lot of things to look at. First of all, we look at may be, students should be speaking and writing at the same time. And also may be reading, and also should be able to know how to use may be the parts of speech, the grammar that they are being taught. They should be able to use it in the classroom, and should also be able to use it outside the classroom.

According to Zhou and Brown (2017), meaningful learning develops through authentic tasks. Using authentic tasks means that the activities are chosen to stimulate those that will be encountered in real life situation or in an assignment. McGonigal (2005) stipulates that among the germane to Constructivist Theories are cooperative and service learning because they help learners build up learners' understanding of disciplinary areas through team collaboration, everyday communication and the application of academic knowledge to real-life situations.

Despite the assertions from both literature and the theory in use, it was worrisome to note during lesson that many teachers of English did not consider learners' activities as a crucial component in their lessons. Most teachers did not carefully select learners' activities due to the fact that they did not prepare for their lessons. Most of the activities that were given to students were simply

demanding students to identify or pick out a particular part of speech that was being taught at that time. Such kind of activities did not provide room for students to discuss adequately with their colleagues at group work level, hence students could not practice language extensively. Furthermore, such learners' activities did not give a true reflection of the real-life situation in the outside world, thereby denying students a chance to link classroom activities with the outside world or world of work. A similar situation was also encountered when analysing official documents like lesson plans, the syllabus, learners' books, teachers' guides and the schemes of work. These prescribed books need to be reviewed as they do not contain the learners' activities that can bring out learners' autonomy in the learning process. On the other hand, the teachers should be creative enough when coming up with learners' activities. They should not rely much on the activities that are in the books because students cannot benefit much in the area of language practice.

4.3 Strategies teachers used during lesson presentation

During lesson observation, the researcher observed a number of teaching strategies that teachers of English grammar were using to entice students to get fully involved in the teaching and learning process. More than three quarters of the students were responding well to the active learning strategies that were being employed by their teachers. Some of the strategies that were commonly used by the teachers of English were:

4.3.1 Questioning technique

Teachers of English grammar employed this kind of technique in order to make sure that they checked how students were following and how to involve them in the teaching and learning process.

Participant A from MWA School shared this:

The first one is question and answer. This is whereby you pose a question and they respond just like that.

The participant went further to explain the reason behind asking questions in a classroom setting and she had this to say:

Because they engage learners most since it's all about outcome based education, so I need to engage learners more.

Questions were asked at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the lessons. It was observed that asking questions at the beginning of the lesson, was beneficial as it helped students who had knowledge gap from the previous lesson to catch up with their colleagues. That is, this session was essential to remind learners about the previous lesson's work before tackling new stuff and it also helped students to integrate new material with the old one.

Furthermore, teachers were able to ask students questions during the learning process. This was also a crucial aspect in English grammar lessons because the questions were asked in order to give students a chance to make clarifications of expressions with ambiguous meaning in the learning process.

For instance, participant A from MCHI School commented that:

This is whereby the teacher explains something to students and then students are asked questions in the end, to actually test their understanding after the explanations.

The questions were also posed to students during the learning process with an aim of motivating students to learn more. Questions that were asked at the end of the lesson were aimed at checking

students' understanding and also assessing students' learning. In addition, such questions were asked to test students' input and evaluate both teachers' teaching quality and the teaching and learning process, whether it had been running well or not. In this section, it was essential to note that teachers applied recall questions; that is, referential questions just to check students' understanding.

Teachers asked questions as a way of establishing if students were learning and checking if they were indeed following what the teacher was teaching. Different types of questions were asked to students. That is, those questions falling in the category of low order and those in higher order. Both closed and open-ended questions were. Questioning technique is a crucial component in the teaching and learning process as it enables students to be active throughout the lesson. This was achieved by making sure that when a question is posed to one student and he or she responds correctly, another student could be asked the same question just to repeat what his or her colleague answered.

Gattis (2002) argues that in the question and answer session, teachers can practise a variety of questioning techniques and reinforcements to motivate students, and encourage their thinking in the classroom. Questioning is one of the most effective ways to get students involved in the delivery of the lesson. By asking questions, teachers could engage students to think about the content of a lesson and simultaneously get feedback from students to demonstrate the effect of teaching. This augured well with the constructivism theory which provides that people learn to learn as they learn. The theory further states that one needs knowledge to learn. Therefore, it is not possible to assimilate new knowledge without having some structures developed from previous knowledge to build on (McGonigal, 2005).

4.3.2 Role playing technique

This has proven to be beneficial to the students in learning English as a foreign language. About eighteen participants have embraced it and are making strides in the teaching and learning process. Some participants used this technique during the delivery of English grammar lessons. The investigator noted that role playing plays a great role in ensuring that students develop fluency. This is enhanced through promotion of interaction and increases the motivation of learners. Furthermore, the technique also helped to contribute to the sharing of teaching responsibility between students and the teacher, and as well as the fact that role playing is the most flexible technique in the range.

For instance, participant B from MWA School said this:

Learners will be involved whether to role play. It means learners will be at the summit of the lesson. It means the teacher will talk less and the learner will talk more to enhance their language skills.

When developing a role play, teachers should bear in mind the fact that there is need to have clear learning objectives, encourage spontaneity, maintain motivation and activate background knowledge and involve all the students. Participants who used this technique ensured that students were given various roles to play. For instance, participant B at NKHO School used this technique when teaching registers used in the judicial system. Students were particularly interested in assuming roles like judge, lawyer, plaintiff and defendant, just to mention a few. The investigator was also particularly interested in the way the lesson was connected to real life situations. This type of learning engaged students more in the lesson and students owned the whole process. As such, students were able to practice language extensively.

Participant B from NKHO School commented this:

The students may try to come up with grammatical units from that role play, may be identify some words from that role play and make sentences using those words or they can find meanings of those words which have been used in that role play.

Altintas and Ozdemir (2015) posits that within a classroom, role play, which includes simulations, plays and others, is usually used as a tool for practising speaking and communication skills. It also serves as a means of providing real life context to specific linguistic elements. Altintas and Ozdemir (2015) comments that role play in EFL can be divided into different forms and each has its own use. These forms of role plays include: conflict, cooperative, information gap and task-based. This stipulates that a teacher is at liberty to choose which form of role play to engage because it should be aligned to the learning objectives set. Constructivism Theory stipulates that learning is contextually based. People learn in relation to what they know, what we believe, our prejudices and our fears (Biggie & Wilson, 2006).

4.3.3 Story telling technique

This is another important technique that some teachers of English use to teach English grammar. The technique is essential because it is participatory in nature. The technique enhances speaking skills and accumulation of vocabulary with ease. The stories to be told should be of the level of the students, interesting and should indeed help in achieving learning goals and objectives. Participants who used this kind of teaching technique were successful in their delivery of the lessons since the activities were interesting on the part of the students and stimulated the desire to learn more.

According to Atta-Alla (2012), a story is a method people use to transfer their experiences, opinions as well as cultural values. Furthermore, stories are important for societies, politics and education. That is, stories are about how people understand themselves and their worlds. Teachers can tell a story and could as well advise the students to answer some comprehension questions to check their understanding of the story which they have just read. The teachers can also go further to let the learners find meanings of words as used in the story, and make sentences using such words. Activities like these engaged students more in the lesson by sharing knowledge and experiences.

These sentiments were shared by participant B from NKHO School who said that:

Learners should identify grammatical units from the story such as phrasal verbs. They identify phrasal verbs and they make sentences using them.

In this study, storytelling was a means of sharing and interpreting experiences. Stories were important in that they assisted in filling a gap in linguistic and cultural divides. The researcher observed that it was a technique that could be adopted for all ages thereby ensuring inclusiveness. The investigator further observed that storytelling could be used as a method to teach values of the society, ethics and cultural norms and differences. The implication is that as the learners were practising language using stories being told, they were also inherently becoming culturally oriented by acquainting themselves with the values of their culture since culture and language are inseparable. Constructivism theory advocates that construction of meaning happens in the mind. Therefore, we need to provide activities that engage the mind as well as the hands (Lefrancois, 2009).

4.3.4 Lecturing technique

This was one of the techniques that seventeen out of twenty-one participants adopted in their teaching of English grammar in six participating schools. Though the participants knew pretty well that the technique was not viable in terms of the accumulation of vocabulary and enhancing speaking skills, but four participants used this technique because they thought it was the only way that could be adopted to ensure syllabus coverage since they had a lot of work to be covered before the students write their examinations.

Participant C from KAU School had this to say:

*There is too much work in grammar. So we have to work hard so that we finish the work.
So, sometimes we side-line these participatory methods.*

The statement quoted above clearly showed that much as teachers of English would appreciate to use techniques that liberate students, they failed because the teachers of English they are under pressure because there is too much work to be covered before students sit for the national examinations administered by the Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB). This had a bearing on the students because they were not being exposed to the situation of practising language at classroom level; that is, during the learning process. This meant that the students being produced cannot be competent enough to use language in various situations because they were denied the chance to practise language at classroom level during the learning process.

Lecture method as a teaching technique allows for a teacher to dominate the talking throughout the learning period. Huxham (2005) suggests that lecture method is a technique of teaching by which the teacher gives oral presentations of concepts to students and students are supposed to write down some short notes. This means that there was little or no class participation by means

of questioning or discussion during the class period. The above definition speaks volumes in itself. Students are not given the freedom to interact with their fellows and the teacher at classroom level. Such being the case, they cannot use language meaningfully outside the classroom setting. Acquisition of linguistic competence, coupled with communicative competence, makes students acquire the second language in a meaningful way since they are able to practice the language in various situations at classroom level.

Lake (2001) argues that the objective of a teaching technique should be to view the students as an active processor of information rather than as a passive recipient of knowledge. He further posited that the purpose of a technique should be to facilitate the objectives of the course, not to present unusable information to passive learners. Constructivist Theory advocates that learning is an active process in which the student uses sensory input and constructs meaning out of it (Biggie & Wilson, 2006). This clearly shows that the involvement of the students in the learning process is of vital importance since it enables students to process information in a meaningful way. The same applies to the involvement of students in the course of learning English grammar. Students are exposed to linguistic rules as well as communicative competence, which enables them to use the target language meaningfully outside the classroom setting. Hence, there is need for teachers of English to involve students when facilitating English grammar lessons to avoid denying students the chance of practicing the target language.

4.3.5 Explanation technique

Explanation technique also dominated a lot in the teaching of English grammar in almost all the seven schools the researcher visited and observed lessons. Many participants used to explain concepts to students while the students were listening and taking down some short notes. This kind of teaching technique made students become passive during English grammar lesson presentations.

They could not fully participate because the teacher is the only source of knowledge. The situation was detrimental to students since they were not involved. Hence, they were not given an opportunity to practice language in the classroom. The development had a bearing on the part of students as they were not exposed to various activities that could essentially inform the outside world, and in so doing, students could not competently acquire linguistic rules which are essential for language practice.

Some participants cited a number of reasons as to why they tend to use strategies that do not bring out students' autonomy. All teachers have the tendency of using teaching techniques, like explanation because as teachers, they are able to teach a lot of stuff within a short period compared to using active learning strategies. This is like that because most language teachers teach so that students excel in the national examinations like Junior Certificate (JCE) and Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE), which are administered by the Malawi National Examinations Board. This makes the teachers of English not to engage the students effectively in the teaching of English grammar.

For instance, participant C from KAU School had this to share:

So, too much work doesn't match with the time we have per year. We have to work hard so that we finish the work. Sometimes we sideline these, not just because we want to sideline them, but because we want to catch up with the work that is there.

Wegner, Minnaert and Strehlke (2013) emphasise on the need to use cooperative learning. They further comment that silent students who often take the outside position in class, and children with attention deficit or hyperactivity disorders, can be integrated into the learning group more easily. They are enabled to join conversations and discussions with their class members. This implies that

some students whose attention span is small, cannot bother listening to the teacher explaining concepts throughout the lesson. Such individuals tend to lose concentration in the course of the lesson. Therefore, teachers should use active learning strategies that assist students in interacting with the teacher and fellow students. If applied in the teaching of English grammar lessons, students will be able to grasp linguistic rules of English grammar, which can enable them to use it in various contexts upon being practised in a classroom setting. The theory of constructivism argues that learning is considered as an active process of supporting students to construct ideas rather than delivering knowledge (Lefrancois, 2009).

4.4 Effectiveness of active learning strategies

The researcher sought to find out from the teachers of English on the effectiveness of the active learning strategies. The effectiveness of active learning looks at how students are taken on board when teachers use active learning strategies. In addition, the researcher wanted to find out if the active learning strategies assist in achieving learning goals and objectives. Assessment of the effectiveness of the active learning strategies in the teaching of English grammar can be enhanced in many ways. The goal of every English grammar lesson is to ensure that students practice language extensively during delivery of the lesson. Teachers of English should strive hard to ensure that they devise various ways of making sure that their students are exposed to constant practice of English. During the interviews with various participants in various secondary schools, a number of factors cropped up illustrating the effectiveness of active learning strategies in the teaching of English grammar.

4.4.1 Effectiveness of questioning technique

Students' involvement in the lesson of English grammar was enhanced by the use of questioning technique. Questions were asked at the beginning of the lesson, in the middle and at the end of the lessons. This was done to ensure that students are active throughout the English grammar lessons. Since English is a L2, it requires that students be actively involved throughout the lesson. Such being the case, students are assured of the mastery of the many skills that are attached to English. For instance, through constant engagement of students in English grammar lessons, they were able to acquire linguistic competence, which are the rules of language and, they were able to master communicative competence, which is about the use of language in various contexts.

Participant B from MWA School shared this:

Sometimes yes, the moment you are involving them into practice because language is a skill based subject. For example, English is a skill based subject. The moment you are giving the practice, they internalise the knowledge or skill.

When students are involved, there are improvements in the way students perform in class. Among others, sentence construction and word articulation improve. Questioning technique always provides room for immediate feedback from students whereby students provide feedback after being asked a question, they are able to give feedback right away which was reinforced by the teacher. Therefore, the proper way of tackling questions was given to students.

These sentiments were also shared by participant A from CHIG School who said:

Yes, these active English strategies they are really effective in grammar lessons because students are able to improve their proficiency. They improve in terms of word articulation, in terms of phonology, in terms of fluency and even vocabulary.

All these can be enhanced through active involvement of students in the teaching of English grammar. So teachers of English have an obligation to ensure that they engage their students in the teaching process. They should move away from the traditional way of teaching whereby students were reduced to passive listeners and rote memory was encouraged.

Participant C from CHIG School added that:

Yes, through this one they are able to make good sentences through these particular methods or strategies that are being taught, why? Because they are fully involved in the teaching and learning process. They acquire these, they use these in order to improve for the better.

The effectiveness of the questioning technique is manifested in various ways as it constantly checks the progress of students in the course of learning English grammar. For instance, questions are asked at the beginning of the lesson to enable a teacher to establish the prior knowledge students have pertaining to the new lesson to be delivered on that particular day. This assists a teacher and students to integrate what they already know with the new knowledge. In addition, the questions are also asked to the students in the course of the lesson in order to make sure that students follow and they are able to understand the concepts that are imparted to them. Questions are also asked at the end of the lesson to check if students have understood the entire lesson. Teachers were able to make decisions whether to reteach the lesson or not. Another unique feature in the use of this technique is the fact that teachers were able to nominate anyone whether those who volunteered to answer the questions or not. The development enables students to be alert always and thereby ensuring that students are attentive throughout the learning period.

Shanmugavelu, Ariffin, Vadivelu, Mahayudin, Arasi and Sundaram (2020) posit that in the question and answer session, teachers can practise a variety of questioning techniques, and reinforce to motivate students and encourage students' thinking in the classroom. Questioning is one of the effective ways to get students involved in the delivery of the lesson. By asking questions, teachers can engage students to think about the content of a lesson and simultaneously get feedback from students to demonstrate the effect of teaching. This implies that students who are constantly engaged through this technique are always active and they are able to acquire grammatical rules of English, and they are able to apply them in real life situations. Constructivism Learning Theory advocates that learning occurs when individuals are actively engaged in the learning process and they integrate new knowledge with existing knowledge (Lefrancois, 2009).

4.4.2 Effectiveness of role playing technique

Role playing is another active learning strategy that enhances active learning of English grammar. Some participants used role playing as a teaching technique. This was very effective as most students participated in the lesson. As such, students were able to grasp concepts and registers that are used in various places like the court of law, hospital as well as school, just to mention but a few. As some students were performing, others were busy taking note of whatever was happening and at the end of the lesson, those who were writing were able to share with their colleagues by correcting the mistakes that were made by those who were acting out. In addition, the students also developed public speaking skills, which are essential in the world of work. Students were able to express themselves freely in the course of acting out the situation. This was quite effective since it provided room for practising grammatical rules thereby enhancing communicative competence.

During the interviews, about nineteen participants showed that these active learning strategies do assist a lot in English grammar lessons as they helped in making sure that most learners are not

left behind in the course of lesson delivery. Their full participation in the lessons assists in mastering a number of grammatical elements in the lesson.

For instance, participant C from NKHO School shared this:

I mentioned about three just because I handle a number of people who were born differently. So, in that case when you use this one, the role playing and dramatization, I think almost sixty and seventy percent of learners, are really following.

Another element worthy noting with the use of role playing as a teaching technique is that it helps to cater for the diverse learning needs of students in an English grammar lesson. This helped students to become fully engaged throughout the lesson because students have different learning styles. Therefore, to help cater for the diverse learning needs of students, there is need to vary active teaching and learning strategies. Teachers of English are urged to ensure that they take on board a lot of students when delivering English grammar lessons by varying active learning strategies since this would ascertain that most students are able to practice language extensively in a classroom setting.

The participants had the view that students' engagement in the teaching of English grammar lessons is of critical importance if learning English language was to be enhanced. Simanjalam (2008), considers learners' participation in the classroom as one of the aspects of interaction. He further points out that it was an opportunity for learners to practice the second language and produce the output. Students can learn better the correct usage of English language if they practice in their daily life. Hence, English language classrooms actually create an opportunity for students to participate in the lesson and learn the language. According to Simanjalam (2008), participation in the classroom can enable students to develop social skills, increase recall of information,

improve presentation skills and increase their scope for improving the quality of work. Thus, it can be helpful for students to learn English language to be used in their daily life. Besides that, Zolten and Long (2006) posit that participating in classroom activities provides a critical opportunity for learning new skills. Participation helps students to make deep, meaningful connections in the mind that are important in learning. According to constructivism learning theory, learning is a social activity. That is, our learning is intimately associated with our connection with other human beings, our teachers, our peers, our family as well as casual acquaintances.

4.4.3 Effectiveness of storytelling technique

Storytelling teaching technique has a huge impact on the learning of students. As long as the story is suitable for the level of the students and it is interesting, students become attentive and eager to learn throughout the lesson. Through storytelling, students are able to accumulate new vocabulary as well as enhance their pronunciation of words. Another unique feature of the technique is the fact that the students are able to retell the same story in their own words. This shows that they have understood the story and that they were alert in the course of the lesson. Another factor that was sourced from one of the participants was learners' feedback. According to participants, learners' feedback showed that the students had understood the concepts or not. After the story is told, the students were asked some questions and they were able to answer them appropriately. This kind of feedback was a clear testimony that students followed and understood the entire lesson.

Participant B from CHING'O School had this to say:

Yes, explanation method, you do not have feedback from the learners because apart from giving learners exercises so that you have feedback to prove whether they have understood or haven't. These activities will also help a teacher to get feedback from learners because if learners discuss something either in groups or pairs, they are able to understand and internalise it.

The assertion above clear indicator that teachers should make sure that they engage students in various activities throughout the lesson as a way of probing them to provide feedback as a measure to ascertain whether learners understand the concepts of the lesson or not.

Participant B from MCHI School said:

They are effective of course, because they do help students to be fluent speakers and again, they help students not to forget easily whatever they have done in their groups.

The result is that students' retention of what they learnt is enhanced as they are able to recall and utilise the concepts grasped in class. In a scenario where students failed to grasp the concepts, teachers were also free to render the much needed support to students in a way of assisting them to learn better. This assured teachers if they are really achieving the goals and objectives of the lesson.

Participant A from MCHI School had this to share:

I think these active learning strategies are very effective in an English grammar lesson simply because it helps a teacher to know that he is achieving what he had set through the answers that the learners are giving.

Learners' responses are critical because they properly guide a teacher to take the necessary course of action. Through the responses from students, the teacher can choose to reteach the concepts that seemed difficult for students or else proceed to the next level.

Participant B from CHIG School shared this:

They are effective just because there is full involvement of these learners. So they are able, you are able as a teacher yourself to know that such a student has a problem in this area, or that area and individual assistance is easily rendered to them just because you follow whatever they are doing.

This had an implication that the involvement of the students in English grammar lessons has an impact on the part of the teacher as he or she is able to make an informed decision as to whether to proceed to the next concepts or reteach the concepts if students did not comprehend them. Kim (2004) states that feedback is the information about current performance that can be used to improve future performance. Feedback plays a crucial role in any educational process since it can significantly improve both learners' and teacher's performance, and indicate some key aspects of their performance that can be improved. Herra and Kulinska (2018) argue that feedback is the most important communication skill, both outside and inside the classroom. Herra and Kulinska (2018) remark that corrective feedback seemed inherent in the process of gaining linguistic accuracy in language learning; therefore, it is advisable for teachers to examine and reflect on their own instructional practices in order to find corrective moves that will be beneficial to students and suitable for teachers. The Constructivism Theory provides that learners have different interpretations about similar things based on their living environments and interactions with others (Biggie & Wilson, 2006).

On the contrary, as the researcher was observing the lessons, it was also noted that sixteen participants of English also used some strategies that were not actively engaging students by design. Strategies like lecturing and explaining were used by some teachers. Such teaching techniques were not giving students their freedom to be involved in the lesson throughout since teachers dominated the talk in the classroom. The development reduced students to mere passive listeners instead of being active in the learning process. This impacted negatively on learning English grammar because students were not given a chance to practise linguistic rules in the classroom. As such, they were also denied the chance to use the same outside the classroom setting. Teachers who used these teaching techniques had their own reasons for not using active learning strategies.

For instance, participant C from KAU School shared this:

We have to work hard so that we finish the work. Sometimes we sideline these not just because we want to sideline them, but because we want to catch up with the work that is there.

The evidence is clear from the above assertion that most teachers of English teach for the sake of examinations. That is, their main aim is to see students excel in their national examinations while they are denying their students to accumulate knowledge that can be used in real life situations. Such kind of delivery of lessons enhances rote learning in students, and after writing the examinations, students tend to forget everything they learnt at school. This makes them not to be productive in the outside world because they do not have the necessary skills that can assist them to become reliable in the society thereby failing to integrate well in the community. If students cannot use language effectively, then they will find it difficult to understand most things they learn

because they are taught in English. Kaur (2008) comments that one of the disadvantages of these strategies is that in the process of learning, students become more passive than being active in class. Constructivist Theory does not augur well with the theoretical framework that advocates that learning involves language use. That is, the language we use influences learning (Biggie & Wilson, 2006).

4.5 Challenges experienced when using active learning strategies during an English grammar lesson

Challenges in the education sector are inevitable. That is why the investigator went further to appreciate the various challenges being encountered by teachers of English when teaching English grammar in secondary schools. This was done in order to expose them and urge well-wishers to come in and assist alleviating some of them. These factors deterred teachers from using the active learning strategies effectively, thereby denying students an opportunity to practice language both in class and outside. The researcher also probed the participants to suggest solutions that can be put in place with an aim of mitigating them. Once these mitigating factors are put to full use, a change in the way English grammar is taught can be embraced.

4.5.1 Lack of interest in the way English grammar is taught using role playing

The findings reveal that some students were not eager to participate wholeheartedly in the classroom activities. The findings also reveal that some students still desired to be taught using traditional teaching strategies. These are the strategies that do not liberate students to actively own the learning process. Such students would rather want the teacher to deliver the entire lesson explaining concepts while they sit back and listen. They always feel like the teacher is not doing his or her job in the right way since they are at school to learn and not to be involved in the activities as the teacher wants.

Such developments have a negative impact on the learning process. This is the case because students are denying themselves an opportune time to practise language in the classroom, and such being the case, students cannot use English language effectively even in real life situations. The implication is that mastery of linguistic competence alone cannot have much impact on the way communicative competence can be enhanced.

Participant B from NKHO School shared this:

The challenges are that most students do not like such kind of learning. They find it very difficult for them to be in the fore front doing things because you know, when learning a language you need to have that passion to do that thing alone. Like learning grammar cannot be achieved in class. Grammar can, should be achieved by interacting with others, other students, reading a lot of books and newspapers.

The participant further lamented that:

So when they come to class, you are teaching them things for them to discover those things on their own, they become frustrated some of them. Sir, this teacher is giving us a lot of work. Okay, instead of him teaching us, he is telling us to do this, to do a, b, c, d. So, it becomes a challenge because more students do not have the passion.

The challenge outlined above can have an adverse impact on the activities a teacher prepared for his students, as the students cannot fully contribute because they have that old mentality that learning English grammar can be achieved only when the teacher of English is in front of the classroom, delivering the lesson, without involving them as students. Students of this nature tend to lose concentration when it comes to participation in classroom activities.

Participant B from CHING'O School said that:

And in other situations, if you as a teacher, if you are not careful, you might find groups playing. Instead of concentrating on whatever task they have been given, some find an opportunity to play.

These sentiments were concurred by participant B from MCHI School who shared that:

And again, when students are in groups, because we have those students who are lazy most of the times, they are noise makers there. So, when the teacher is helping, may be another group, those people are busy making noise, so thus the challenge.

This implied that when students are not actively engaged in English grammar learning process, they tend to disrupt the class because they lose focus. As a result, they usually resort to making noise in class as their colleagues were busy with the activities given by their teachers. This directly affected the lessons of English grammar and most students were put in an awkward position because they did not fully utilise the learning process to practice the language in class so that they could also do likewise in real life situations. Mahesar, Pathan and Qadeer (2020) argue that lacking interest in learning is reported to be a universal issue. It has become problematic when students do not develop due interest in the study. Students' lack of interest in the study hinders their academic progress. They do not get quality education, which is significant not in the realisation of the explicit purpose of education, but also in the student's personality development. The findings above are in sharp contrast with the constructivism learning theory, which emphasises on the need that learning is an active process that requires the learner to do something. Thus learning is not the passive acceptance of knowledge which exists out there (Biggie & Wilson, 2006).

4.5.2 Students' poor background knowledge

Students' poor background knowledge is another challenge being experienced in most schools which were visited by the investigator. Most students failed to contribute effectively towards learners' activities during the delivery of English grammar lessons. These students were not even ready to answer questions in the course of lesson delivery. Such being the case, they deny themselves a chance to practice language at classroom level, which cast doubts if the same could be done outside the school environment. This was witnessed in the way students responded to questions with poorly constructed English. That is, sometimes they could mix English with their mother tongue. Sometimes, such students could stop responding to the question even before they finished answering the same because they were being laughed at by fellow students in class. This had a bearing on the activities given to them by teachers because such students could not effectively participate in the lessons of English grammar.

Participant A from NKHO School shared this:

And then sometimes the background of the learners, for example, these are in Form 1. And then it depends on where they are coming from. The way they learnt from their background. So, it's like sometimes, they bring in just because, in the primary school, they were not handled seriously.

Students with poor background knowledge were mostly not willing to participate in classroom activities, more especially when it came to the presentation of findings of the groups. This could be the case because they were afraid of being laughed at by their fellow students.

Participant C from CHIG School had to say:

In fact the learners themselves are not willing to learn just because their background is bad.

Failure to show willingness to learn has a negative impact on the part of the use of active learning strategies because these strategies require that a student should be active and own the entire learning process. This was particularly important in the learning of English grammar because it required that students should participate in the class activities and be able to absorb the rules of grammar in the target language and apply them in various contexts.

Participant C from NKHO School shared this:

So, if we try may be to ask them or may be to construct a question, or let us now try to role play now in English language throughout, some of them say. I cannot handle that. I have a very poor background on language, so you have to try or may be to groom me so that in the near future, I can do that. Thus the major challenge.

Participation of students in the activities is to a large extent negatively affected by the reaction of students to the work at hand. Thus, students with poor background were not willing to participate in the activities because of failure to express their feelings in the target language. As such, the only option they had was to reduce themselves to mere passive listeners who waited for the teacher to do everything in class on their behalf, without them playing an active role. Fisher, Ross and Grant (2010) argue that lack of background information may cause individuals to be unable to ask questions and process information which is key for the learning process especially with inquiry based learning, which was seen more in classrooms. Lefrancois (2009) argues that constructivism

learning theory posits that learning involves language because the language we use influences learning.

4.5.3 Lack of understanding of the target language when using questioning technique

During classroom observation, the researcher noted that the smooth implementation of active learning strategies in the teaching of English grammar was also, to some extent affected, by students' poor understanding of the target language. Since the background was poor, most students did not understand what was expected of them in the learning of English. When they were given an activity to be done individually or at group level, most students failed to perform because they did not understand English.

These comments were also echoed by participant A from KAL School who said that:

The challenge is that most of the learners do not participate, maybe it's because this is not their language. It's like they are learning, so it's very difficult for them to understand it. Mostly, when they miss the tenses, it is very difficult for them may be, to get what a teacher is to teach them.

Students had the tendency to shy away from participating in the activities of the class because they were not able to comprehend the language being used in the learning process. This is detrimental to the acquisition of the target language as it required that students should participate actively in the learning process so that they acquire relevant skills of grammatical elements which can be used in the future.

Participant B from MWA School shared this:

You can give them a passage. You can give them for them to answer either orally or written, but the challenge is that they don't understand English, the majority. So we try to source the origin of how they are struggling to access language in so doing. But we have seen that the majority of them do not have good background.

Failure to participate in English grammar activities put students at a disadvantage in many ways. As such, students could not manage to be assessed by their teacher in terms of spoken language, if at all the sentences they are making are grammatical in nature or not. Newman, Kaefer and Pinkham (2014) posit that in order for a student to be considered an ELL, individuals may not be able to communicate fluently or effectively in English, and often come from non-English speaking homes or backgrounds. Constructivism theory promotes that language and learning are inextricably intertwined and that learners usually talk to themselves as they learn (McGonigal, 2005).

4.5.4 Shyness of the students when using role playing teaching technique

The other challenge that was cited by fourteen participants was shyness on the part of students. Most students were shy to the extent that they did not participate even in group activities that involved students only. That is to say, at least half of the students did not feel at ease to discuss the task at hand with their classmates in class. Such students were denying themselves the chance to share the much needed knowledge in English grammar.

Participant B from MCHI School shared this:

We have got challenges of course because most of the times, as I already said that others are shy. These shy students are not very active during group discussions. So, most of the times they are left behind, that's the challenge.

By virtue of not participating in the English grammar activities, these students are doing themselves more harm than good because English grammar lessons needed learners who were always active and own the learning process. The goal of learning a language is to communicate in that particular language.

Participant B from KAL School commented:

In most of the English grammar lessons, learners are supposed to speak English. So, forming groups is one of the challenges that these learners experience in classes. So shyness is one of the challenges that I face.

Shy students usually failed to participate in discussion activities, making it difficult for the teacher to track their record in terms of performance. As such, if the teachers of English were not vigilant enough, they could simply leave such students unattended thereby failing to assist them properly. Failing to participate in group activities was detrimental to the acquisition of the target language as a teacher found it difficult to assess them in terms of pronunciation and word articulation, which are practical in nature.

Participant C from CHIG School argued that:

They don't like to express their views. They feel like they will be laughed at by friends whenever they are talking. Now, that shyness is really a challenge to a teacher because you cannot easily know what this students in particular is good at or is having some shortfalls because, for one to know about pronunciations, even word articulation, thus his practical aspect.

The participant cited above acknowledged that English grammar lessons were to a larger extent dominated by the practical aspect which meant that students' involvement was of critical importance during the learning process.

Participant C from NKHO School shared the reason why some students were shy:

Some really know the stuff. They say if I participate, may be at the very end people, will be laughing at me. So I don't have to do that. Then they just stay away, they don't do that. But if you may ask them a question at the end of the lesson, they do answer. But now participating through that method, we have few who are benefitting, the active ones.

Shy students were difficult to handle in a class setting as they did not show their potential in an English lesson. The investigator spotted some students who could not contribute anything to the group. Such acts gave chance to some students to participate fully and dominate the discussions, while others sat idle. The researcher felt that such students were denying themselves the chance to practise language in a classroom setting, which meant that they would find it difficult to relate classroom activities with the outside world. Shy learners cannot make good public speakers as they failed to demonstrate the same in a class among their peers because practice makes perfect. Bashosh, Nejad, Rastegar and Marzban (2013) observe that shy students consider it a difficult task

to speak in front of others. They have a negative picture about themselves, which affects their motivation to speak. The same situation happens when they want to speak a foreign language or asked to answer a question in foreign language. A shy person may hesitate, make a lot of pauses or even escape from the situation. Farooqui (2007) posits that shy learners do better in reading and writing, but they do poorly in speaking. They feel shy and do not want to speak in front of the class. One of the constructs of constructivism learning theory stipulates that learning is a social activity. Progressive education is recognised as a social aspect of learning and uses conversation, interaction with others and the application of knowledge as an integral aspect of learning (Biggie & Wilson, 2006).

4.6 Suggested solutions to the challenges

The researcher sought to engage the participants to suggest some solutions to the challenges that participants experience when using active learning strategies in English lessons.

4.6.1 Solution to students' lack of interest

Lack of interest on the part of students is a cause for worry in the learning of English grammar as this directly affects the participation of the students in the activities of the classroom. If this issue remains unchecked and uncorrected, it might lead to collapse of the lesson because lesson objectives and goals cannot be fully achieved. When teachers of English were probed during the interview session, they had to suggest some solutions to the problem.

For instance, participant B from NKHO School suggested the following:

In terms of the passion of students, I think as teachers as well, we try as much as possible to talk to them that they should have that reading culture. They should go into the library, read. At the same time, interact in English because we normally encourage students to interact in English they are within the campus.

Students always need to be encouraged and motivated in order for them to concentrate on the learning process so that they can achieve their goals in life. Apart from that, as teachers, there is a need to conduct guidance to parents and students so that they do not lose focus. They should be briefed on what is expected of them in the learning of English grammar so that they can participate fully in the learning activities.

This augurs well with what participant C from CHIG School said:

Sometimes we talk to parents as you are aware that the education of a child is based on three angles. The parents have to be there and the child himself or herself has also to be there, and then we actually talk to parents, to the students themselves on how best we can actually do things together.

The statement above clearly indicates that for a child to learn best, there is a need for collaborative effort from various stakeholders to take a leading role in ensuring that the student is doing what is required of him or her. Such an effort is critical as it makes the student become a strategic learner or independent in the learning process because he or she knows what to do in a classroom setting. Mahesar, Pathan and Qadeer (2020) opine that students' active interest in their work is correlated with the characteristics, thus, enhanced concentration and significant willingness to learn. It is the interest that keeps alive the consistency and persistency of the student in the study. That is, the

essence of education is incomplete without having a sufficient level of interest. The theory of constructivism asserts that motivation is a key component in learning and it can be understood to include an understanding in which knowledge can be used (McGonigal, 2005).

4.6.2 Solution to poor background knowledge on the part of the students

Background knowledge is critical if learning is to take place effectively. Learners' previous experience for the subject matter plays an important role and teachers should appreciate and capitalise on it to shape the new stuff to be delivered. This was like that because students should be able to link information from the previous one. If students have a rich background knowledge, they will be able to ask questions and also participate effectively in the activities of the lesson. Teachers are doing tremendous work in order to make sure their students are owning the learning process.

For instance, participant C from NKHO School had this to share:

I meet the learners face to face and I even tell them to say that training makes perfect. Even myself, I have a lot of challenges, but if you are to perform better, you have to do the following. There are other things that in most cases, we do debate so that may be learners should be really used to speaking to groups. And I even, when may be in class, I do choose them randomly and speaking is a must here.

The implication was that students should be encouraged at all cost to ensure that they participate effectively in English grammar lessons. Acquisition of the target language requires that one should participate fully in the learning process. Therefore, devising ways that would help students have at least knowledge assists students to participate in English grammar lessons.

Furthermore, participant C from NKHO School commented:

I feel like may be, still continuing using group activities. For example, if we are talking about it is not easy to mark learners' work. Then we just encourage them to do the exercise in groups. And then, as for the influence of mother tongue, this is as I have already said that it's a process whereby you have to be teaching them, and then making corrections.

The participant above emphasised the need for teachers to ensure that there is social interaction among students and between the teacher and students. Once the teacher recognises that the students are making mistakes, the teacher should be able to assist students accordingly and ensure that students actively participate in English grammar lessons. Newman, Kaefer and Pinkham (2014) posit that background knowledge is an essential component for comprehension in many subject areas. The more information people know about a given subject from previous understandings, the easier it is for the individuals to retain information. Constructivists posited that one needs knowledge to learn. It is not possible to assimilate new knowledge without having some structures developed from previous knowledge to build on (Biggie & Wilson, 2006).

4.6.3 Solution to the lack of understanding of the target language

The process of learning a second language requires active participation of learners during the learning process. If learners are not playing an active role, then the acquisition of the target language becomes problematic. Lack of understanding concepts during English grammar lessons is one issue that requires a teacher to address promptly, because it might lead to lack of concentration on the part of students. When participants were interviewed on this issue, suggested solutions were sought.

For instance, participant B from MWA School had this to say:

The school can provide some rules, we can say this zone is for English speaking. In so doing, the learner will be learning English in class and also outside class.

The facts above have demonstrated that teachers were aware that students' capability to speak English required that students should socially interact with their classmates and teachers at school and outside the school setting. When students are outside the school environment, they should as well strive hard to interact with people around them in English in order for them to acquire necessary input that can assist them to interact with their fellow students without problems. Once students accumulate enough vocabulary of the target language, they will be able to participate effectively in the classroom activities of English grammar lessons.

Participant A from KAU School emphasised on the need to empower students to play an active role in the learning of English grammar in schools. As students, they should realise that playing an active role has its own advantages to them.

This is what she said:

Another one is, you try to empower the learners to take an active role in their learning because if they are not empowered, will not know the benefit of them taking an active role.

The statement cited above clearly shows that the responsibility to master linguistic competence in a particular language mostly rests in the hands of students themselves as they are the ones to apply linguistic rules in various contexts. Therefore, the teachers' role is to ensure that students are given that freedom of interacting with other students as well as the teacher in the target language so that students should have that opportune time to accumulate relevant rules of English grammar which can be applied in various contexts. Edmonds (2009) argues that if students understand the

concepts, it is easier for them to make a connection to their life. He further posits that students may find it beneficial for them to develop a definition within their own words, so it can be easily memorised. The theory of constructivism advocates that learning is a social activity. Our learning is intimately associated with our connection with other human beings, our teachers, our peers and our family. Progressive education recognises the social aspect of learning and uses conversation, interaction with others and the application of knowledge as an integral aspect of learning (McGonigal, 2005).

4.6.4 Solution to shyness of the students

Despite facing a number of challenges in the teaching of English grammar in secondary schools, teachers need to ensure that all students are accommodated in the learning process. For instance, teachers should ensure that when it is time for group discussions, group leaders should be able to track that everybody in the group is taking part in the activities at hand. Shy learners should be able to be nominated at group level to present their findings to the entire class.

These sentiments were also shared by participant B from MCHI School who said that:

The challenges can be addressed mainly when we have got group leaders who are very active. They can help when students are making noise so that they can manage other students, so that they can concentrate on whatever they are doing.

Therefore, it implies that students themselves have a great role to play in ensuring that the learning process is taking place smoothly. In so doing, there is sharing of language items which are essential for communication purposes. The primary aim of every English grammar lesson is to ensure that students achieve the goals of the lesson. Hence, teachers should ensure that each and every student practises language while in class.

Participant B from KAL School commented:

I mostly encourage students to be working hand in hand in groups, so that their goals are achieved.

Information sharing is essential during the learning process. Group activities have proved to be important in enhancing this. Therefore, teachers should encourage and monitor effectively that all students are actively participating in such activities, so that the shy students should benefit from such discussions.

Participant C from NKHO School shared this:

And I, when may be in class, I do choose them randomly and speaking language is a must here, so that may be these learners, may be two to three terms, actually about three quarters of them should at least make a sentence.

The teachers also make sure their students are always alert in class during the learning process. They tend to nominate any student to answer questions and comment on the topic being delivered at that particular time. The strategy puts students on high alert that they can be chosen to contribute to the lesson which is being facilitated by the teacher.

Participant A from CHI School had this to say:

For those that are shy, we need to at least remove that shyness so that they can get involved. We have to at least be a bit motivated. They should feel that they are really important. What they are talking is of value to the class.

The implication is that every student should be alert that he or she could be nominated by the teacher to answer any question. Shy students would also be having pressure of being nominated at

any time and this would compel them to be serious with whatever activity is being done at class level. Concentrating would mean practising language so that they grasp valuable concepts of English language. Namagui, Safaee and Sobhanifar (2015) argue that EFL teachers should first build the appropriate teaching conditions by giving students sufficient time to prepare for a conversational activity. Constructivism theory advocates that learning is a social activity which is intimately associated with our connection with other human beings, our teachers, our peers, our family as well as our casual acquaintances (Oliver, 2000).

4.7 Chapter summary

Overall, the study has found that the use of various active learning strategies is critical in ensuring that students are actively engaged in the learning process. These techniques are roleplaying, storytelling and questioning. The findings further reveal that active learning strategies are effective because students own the learning process, and this assists them to practise language and acquire the linguistic rules of English. However, there are some techniques that do not help in accommodating many students when used during the teaching and learning process. These techniques allow a teacher to dominate the talking and students are mostly passive. These are lecturing and explanation techniques. The study has also revealed that there are a number of challenges that are experienced in the process of using active learning strategies. Some of the challenges are lack of interest in the way English grammar is taught, students' poor background knowledge, lack of understanding of the target language and shyness of the students. Solutions to the challenges have been suggested like motivating students to remain focused, and schools should come up with strict school rules that would encourage students to speak English during school time.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Chapter overview

The chapter serves to summarise the research findings. It also presents implications of the findings to education. The chapter also sheds light on contributions of the study to the education field, recommendations, suggested areas for further research and conclusions of the research.

5.2. Summary of the findings

Summary of the findings is presented in this section using the research objectives as the organising framework. The purpose of the study was to examine the implementation of active learning strategies that enhance active learning of secondary school English grammar. The researcher aimed at unearthing the active learning strategies, establish their effectiveness, uncover the challenges and also provide solutions to the challenges so that students' participation during English grammar lessons can be enhanced.

5.2.1 Active learning strategies used in English grammar lessons

The study revealed that fourteen participants of English do not adequately prepare for English grammar lessons. Some teachers do not write lesson plans and they fail to fully accommodate students when delivering English grammar lessons. But the seven participants who were fully prepared delivered their lessons by following the steps as required. They involved students quite a lot and used resources timely.

The research also reported that most participants were not able to choose authentic tasks for their students. This was revealed during the official document examination and lesson observations. Such being the case, students were denied the chance to be fully involved in English grammar lessons and consequently failed to expose them to real life situations. Some of the strategies

teachers used during lesson delivery are questioning, lecture, explanation, roleplaying and storytelling. However, it was reported that most participants used strategies that do not fully involve learners during the learning process.

5.2.2 Effectiveness of active learning strategies

The study revealed that active learning strategies are ideal in English grammar lessons because they enable students to participate fully in English grammar lessons. In the process, they acquire linguistic competence and they are able to use language in various contexts. Learners are also able to give feedback instantly. This is an indicator that students were owning the learning process and also guided the teacher to make the necessary decisions in the course of the lesson. The strategies are also interesting to students and they give them the desire to learn more.

5.2.3 Challenges experienced when using active learning strategies

Through this study, a number of challenges were unearthed. Some of the challenges were lack of interest in the way English grammar is taught using role playing, students' poor background knowledge, lack of understanding of the target language when using questioning technique and shyness of the students when using role playing technique. These challenges have a bearing on the acquisition of English grammar because most of the students do not participate fully in English grammar lessons. Therefore, this results in poor use of language outside the classroom as teachers are not able to track the performance of students.

5.2.4 Suggested solutions to the challenges

The participants were also asked to suggest mitigating factors to the challenges. The study established that students need to be encouraged and motivated in order for them to remain focused. Students should also be urged to indulge in social interactions among students themselves and their teachers. Furthermore, schools should promote English speaking policy so that students interact in

English which is the target language. Random nomination of students to answer questions and comment on the lessons make every student active during the learning process.

5.3 Implications of the study

The study findings have revealed that there is a gap between well prepared lessons and lessons not well prepared. Teachers of English who were prepared used strategies that accommodated students throughout the lesson. However, this was not the case with teachers who were not adequately prepared for their lessons. This implied that more than three quarters of the students did not practice language in a classroom setting. Consequently, they were not able to practice the same outside the school setting. According to MOEST (2013), the current curriculum demands that teachers should employ learner centred methods which keep students busy in a lesson.

Teachers' lack of engaging and meaningful learning opportunity during English language lessons is worrisome. Classroom interaction has proved to be an essential element for language learning. This provides students chances to share knowledge and to acquire the target language. The findings of the study act as clear indicators that the strategies which are used by the teachers may impinge on the students' learning of a language. Some strategies utilised by the teachers were not able to bring out students' autonomy. The preference for teacher centred methods was detrimental to students' language learning. Such strategies are not auguring well with the literature which support the use of active learning strategies.

A lot of challenges are being experienced by both, teachers and students as established by the study. If these challenges are not addressed, they will have far reaching consequences not only on the education system, but also for the type of students produced, and this would affect the general economic growth of the country.

5.4 Contributions of the study to the education field

The study has contributed knowledge about the need for thorough preparation of the teachers of English. The need for teachers to carefully select and use active learning strategies that would bring out students' autonomy. Adequate provision of the necessary support in terms of CPDs to act as refresher courses for teachers to provide relevant support to all the students during the learning process. Failure to satisfy the above, results to the poor implementation of active learning strategies in the teaching of secondary school English grammar.

5.5 Recommendations

The study has reported teacher's awareness about the importance of using active learning strategies that achieve the participation of learners in secondary school English grammar lessons. Such being the case, the government through the ministry of education, should organise Continuous Professional Development (CPDs) courses for the teachers of English. Such a development will enable teachers to acquire the best knowledge on how such learning strategies can be used to achieve active participation of learners in English grammar lessons. In addition to that, head teachers should intensify In-Service Trainings (INSETs) at school level so that teachers should have adequate knowledge on how to assist learners to participate fully in the teaching of secondary school English grammar.

Furthermore, the teachers themselves should also be enthusiastic on the acquisition of knowledge on the best practices that are currently in use. They should research and read about these best learning strategies and also apply them in their English grammar lessons. This will help them cater for the various needs of learners. Finally, the teachers' mindset should be changed from teaching for examination to teaching for knowledge. Most teachers are busy dishing out information through lecturing method in order to make students pass the national examinations without

considering how the students are coping up with language skills. This makes students not practise language extensively in a classroom setting, which also makes them feel difficult to use the language appropriately outside the classroom situation.

5.6 Suggested areas for further research

There is need to conduct further studies regarding the use of instructional strategies in the teaching of secondary school English grammar in a different setting:

1. Investigate the role of key stakeholders in the examination of the implementation of instructional strategies that enhance active participation of learners in the teaching of secondary school English grammar.
2. Examine the effectiveness of supervision and inspection in the course of implementing active learning strategies that enhance active participation of learners in the teaching of English grammar in secondary schools.
3. Investigate the effectiveness of the CPDs as regards the examination of the implementation of active learning strategies that enhance the active learning of secondary school English grammar.

The same study can be conducted in a different setting to appreciate if teachers of English are using the active learning strategies when teaching English lessons.

5.7 Conclusion

The use of learning strategies in teaching and learning secondary school English grammar is of critical importance. Learning strategies like question and answer, role play and storytelling, just to mention a few, are very important when properly implemented during the delivery of English grammar lessons. They are there to make learners busy throughout the lesson. These strategies

particularly expose students to real life situations hence, if teachers do not engage learners adequately in a lesson, they deny students the chance to relate school life and life in the world of work. The strategies usually inform the world of work. Therefore, teachers should be exposed to the current teaching practices that are intended to engage all learners in a classroom situation.

This study has revealed that most teachers in secondary schools do not use active learning strategies. The development affects students as they are not given ample time to practise the target language in the classroom. The students find it difficult to practise the same in the world of work.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Timeline

MONTH	ACTIVITY
September to November, 2021	Research proposal writing
December, 2021	Research proposal presentation
December, 2021	Research proposal submission to MZUNIREC
January to May, 2022	Data collection and analysis
June to August, 2022	Thesis writing
September to October, 2022	Colloquium on thesis report
November, 2022	Submission for examination

Appendix 2: Document analysis guide

DOCUMENT	AVAILABILITY	APPROVED/NOT APPROVED	ADEQUACY TO NUMBER OF STUDENTS	CONDITION GOOD/POOR
Syllabus				
Teacher's guide				
Schemes of work				
Lesson plans				
Learner's books				

Appendix 3: Interview guide for teachers

INTERVIEW GUIDE ON AN EXAMINATION OF THE ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES THAT ENHANCE THE ACTIVE LEARNING OF SECONDARY SCHOOL ENGLISH GRAMMAR

Section A: Biographic data

District:

School:

Pseudonym of teacher interviewed:

Sex:

Age of teacher:

Academic qualifications of the teacher:

Date:

Section B: Questions for the interview

What are some of the learning strategies you know?

Which of the learning strategies do you use most?

Which ones help to cater for the diverse learning styles of the students?

Why do you use them frequently?

How can the learning strategies help to achieve the learning goals and objectives?

Do you think these active learning objectives are effective? Explain your answer.

What challenges do you experience when using active learning strategies?

How can these challenges be addressed?

Appendix 4: Classroom observation checklist

Section A: Particulars

District:

School:

Teacher:

Subject:

Lesson topic:

Date:

Form:

Duration: (From.....To.....)

Name of the observer: Mathews M. Manda

Section B: Table showing pre-lesson observation analysis

Documents	Document Availability	Document Preparedness	Document approved by head teacher	Document Updated	Teacher's self- evaluation of the previous lesson
Schemes of work					

Lesson plan					
-------------	--	--	--	--	--

Section C: Lesson observation protocol

LESSON PRESENTATION	YES	NO	COMMENTS
Introduction			
Was the lesson well introduced?			
Did the introduction incorporate active learning strategies?			
Was the lesson introduced from known to unknown/simple to complex tasks?			
During lesson delivery			
Is the teacher able to use varied active learning strategies?			
Are the active learning strategies being used appropriately by the teacher?			
Do the learning strategies cater for all the students in the classroom?			
Do the learners interact well with one another during lesson presentation?			
Are learners participating effectively during lesson delivery?			
Do the learning strategies assist in the construction of concrete ideas from abstract ones?			

Do the learning strategies help in achieving lesson objectives?			
Are there challenges being experienced when using active learning strategies?			

Appendix 5: Approval letter from MZUNIREC



MZUZU UNIVERSITY

DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH

Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
Luwinga
Mzuzu 2
MALAWI
TEL: 01 320 722
FAX: 01 320 648

MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (MZUNIREC)

Ref No: MZUNIREC/DOR/22/12

20/03/22

Mr. Mathews Manda,
Mzuzu University,
P/Bag 201,
Mzuzu.
Email:

mathewsmmanda24@gmail.com
[m](mailto:mathewsmmanda24@gmail.com)

Dear Mr. Manda,

**RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATORY APPROVAL AND PERMIT FOR
PROTOCOL REF NO: MZUNIREC/DOR/22/12: AN EXAMINATION OF THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES THAT ENHANCE ACTIVE LEARNING OF
SECONDARY SCHOOL ENGLISH GRAMMAR**

Having satisfied all the relevant ethical and regulatory requirements, I am pleased to inform you that the above referred research protocol has officially been approved. You are now permitted to proceed with its implementation. Should there be any amendments to the approved protocol in the course of implementing it, you shall be required to seek approval of such amendments before implementation of the same.

This approval is valid for one year from the date of issuance of this approval. If the study goes beyond one year, an annual approval for continuation shall be required to be sought from the Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) in a format that is available at the Secretariat. Once the study is finalised, you are required to furnish the Committee with a final report of the study. The Committee reserves the right to carry out compliance inspection of this

Committee Address:

Secretariat, Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee, P/Bag 201, Luwinga, Mzuzu 2; E-mail address: mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw

approved protocol at any time as may be deemed by it. As such, you are expected to properly maintain all study documents including consent forms.

Wishing you a successful implementation of your study.

Yours Sincerely,



Gift Mbwele

MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATOR

For: CHAIRMAN OF MZUNIREC

Committee Address:

Secretariat, Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee, P/Bag 201, Luwinga, Mzuzu 2; E-mail address: mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw

Appendix 6: Letter from the Department of Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Studies



MZUZU UNIVERSITY

**Department of Teaching, Learning and
Curriculum Studies**

Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
L u w i n g a
M z u z u 2
M A L A W I

Tel: (265) 01 320 575/722
Fax: (265) 01 320 568
mdolo.mm@mzuni.ac.mw

23rd March 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MR MATHEWS M. MANDA

Mr Mathews Manda is a registered Master of Education (Teacher Education) Program student at Mzuzu University. He has been cleared by the Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) to collect data for the research study he is conducting as a requirement for the program.

Kindly assist him accordingly.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Margaret M. Mdolo
Program Coordinator

Appendix 7: Letter of introduction

Mzuzu University

Private Bag 201

Luwinga

Mzuzu

Cell: 0993439608/0881167254

Email: mathewsmmanda24@gmail.com

The Education Division Manager

Central West Education Division

Post Office Box 98

Lilongwe

Dear Sir

REQUEST TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN CENTRAL WEST EDUCATION DIVISION

I am a postgraduate student at Mzuzu University pursuing a Master of Education in Teacher Education. I am carrying out a study on an examination of the implementation of active learning strategies that enhance active learning of secondary school English grammar as a partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of the Masters Degree. I am therefore writing to request for permission to carry out this study in some of the schools within your division.

Attached is an introduction letter from Mzuzu University.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mathews M. Manda'. The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized script.

Mathews M. Manda

Appendix 8: Letter from Central West Education Division (CWED)

REF. NO. CWED.ACADRESEARCH/02/2022

DATE: 28/3/2022

FROM: THE EDUCATION DIVISION MANAGER
CENTRAL WEST EDUCATION DIVISION
P.O. BOX 98
LILONGWE

TO: THE HEADTEACHERS,
CWED SECONDARY SCHOOLS

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN CWED SECONDARY SCHOOLS

I write to advise that Mathews M. Manda has been granted permission to conduct an academic research to collect data for his Master of Education in Teacher Education degree. His study is on **'Examination of the Implementation of Active Learning Strategies that Enhance Active Learning of Secondary School English Grammar.'**

However, the researcher will have to seek individual consent from the participants and also ensure that normal classes are not disrupted.

You are therefore requested to render to the researcher the assistance required.



Towera Kafunda Msukwa



FOR: EDUCATION DIVISION MANAGER (CWED)

Appendix 9: Letter of introduction to Headteachers

Mzuzu University

Private Bag 201, Luwingu, Mzuzu

The Headteacher

_____ Secondary School

Dear Sir

REQUEST TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

I am a postgraduate student at Mzuzu University pursuing a Master of Education in Teacher Education. I am carrying out a study which examines the implementation of active learning strategies that enhance active learning of secondary school English grammar. During my study I would like to work with teachers of English.

Not all teachers will be involved in the study. I therefore request you to assist me in identifying three teachers who have been working for a number of years and can voluntarily participate in this study.

It is my hope that my request will be considered positively.

Yours faithfully



MATHEWS M. MANDA

Appendix 10: Consent form



CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH

I am Mathews M. Manda, a postgraduate student at Mzuzu University pursuing Master of Education in Teacher Education. I am embarking on a study which examines the implementation of active learning strategies that enhance active learning of secondary school English grammar as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Masters Degree.

I intend to observe your English lesson and will be taking down some notes in the course of the lesson presentation. I also intend to interview you on the active learning strategies that enhance active learning of English grammar, their effectiveness and the challenges teachers encounter in the process of implementing them.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and negative consequences will not result from this study because the information you will provide will be treated with confidentiality. You are free to decline to answer any question and you can withdraw from the study at any time. Your real names will not be used in order to protect your confidentiality. I would like to provide you with a summary of my research results on completion of this study.

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 11: Information sheet for participants



I agree to participate in a study which examines the implementation of active learning strategies that enhance active learning of secondary school English grammar. I am aware that the research is academic and my participation is voluntary and negative consequences will not result from my participation and that all the information will be treated with confidentiality. I am entitled not to respond to any question and I may withdraw from the study at any time.

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____