

Empirical Stance on the Perceived English L2 Attrition among NSSCO Learners

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Abstract

As the proliferation of English usage engulfs the global village at the expense of indigenous languages, misinterpretation of phenomena may be resultant. With three hyperglossonyms that split into seven glossonyms to depict the multilingualism of Namibia, the want for enhanced academic performance in English as a second language undermines culprit factors that trigger poor performance among the NSSCO learners. Language attrition is a permanent or temporary gradual diminishing of ability to use L1 due to continuous exposure to L2 or another L2. This article aims to explain that attrition in English as a second language is not prevalent among NSSCO learners and is never among the chief causes of low proficiency and poor performance. To address the question of the study, a quantitative method was used to investigate the empirical stance on ESL attrition among senior secondary learners in Namibia. A questionnaire was administered to collect the data that was analysed using content analysis. The article is based on sociocultural theory (SCT) of Vygotsky to explain the context underlying L2 attrition. Sociocultural theory is a mode of learning that is effected when the learner interacts with the environment. The article discovered that attrition is not the cause of poor academic performance among the NSSCO learners in English as a second language. All NSSCO English second language learners speak a minimum of three local languages due to constant exposure to indigenous and regional languages at school, in the community and at home. That poor performance is caused by ESL attrition, a serious violation of the law of attrition, which stipulates that L1 is lost to L2, another L1 or L2 to L2 due to uninterrupted exposure. In Namibia, L1, L2, and even L3, to which the learners are continually exposed on a daily basis, are indigenous languages other than English.

Keywords

Attrition, English L2, Multilingual Country, Glossonyms, Hyperglossonym, Poor Academic Performance in English Second Language, NSSCO Learners

1. Introduction

Namibia gained her political independence on March 21, 1990 (Oberortner, 2020). As deduced from Chataa & Nkengbeza, (2019) and Norro (2023), and according to Benjamin & Hashimy (2022), the term independence could be defined as self-rule or self-determination. Although those born in an independent Namibia may have a different opinion, survivors of colonialism will most likely and more strongly attest that independence brought relief in various aspects. In terms of education, for instance, while Afrikaans were confined to primary education in the colonial era, citizens now have a non-prohibitive education system. Central to the implementation of the curriculum in the independent Namibia is the issue concerning glossonyms and hyperglossonym, which made the determination of a national language (the lingua franca) difficult. In terms of Article 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia Stiftung (2018), English is the official language (Stiftung & The Namibian Scientific, 2018; Norro, 2022; Stell, 2021). Historically, Stell (2021) and Norro (2022) recall that such a national decision was taken on the grounds that English satisfied criteria such as unity, acceptability, familiarity, feasibility, science and technology, Pan-Africanism, wider communication and the United Nations. The decision was not based on proficiency at all, nor was the enrolment of the learners even to date, but rather on socio-political issues. Consequently, English became the dominant official language across Namibia and the dominant medium of instruction (MOI) in schools, including tertiary institutions. It becomes and subsists as an intra- and inter-cultural lingua franca to date.

However, data reveals that poor academic performance in English as a Second Language (ESL) is prevalent among learners in Namibian schools. The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture: Education Statistics (2021) and Namibia Media Holdings: NSSCO Exam Results (2022) show that a considerable number of pupils obtained E, G and U symbols nationally. Muyoyeta (2018) and Verner (2019) point out that E, G and U are insignificant grades because they have less value to get students into universities. In order to gain admission to an undergraduate course as prospective students, the University of Namibia expects the NSSCO learners to obtain a requisite C grade and the International University of Management requires a mandatory D symbol (University of Namibia: prospective, 2022; University of Namibia: prospective, 2025; The International University of Management: Undergraduate prospective, 2024). Aspirants may share the view of Ashikuti (2019), who stressed that the failure rate is very high in Namibia, particularly in NSSCO English as a second language. They could also agree with Tanga et al. (2019), Ithindi et al. (2022), and Kadodo & Muzira (2019), who asserted that learners' performance in English as a second language countrywide is worrisome. From the point of view of Omare (2020), poor academic performance in English is a world phenomenon.

The concept of academic performance is complex to define and does not have a universal definition currently (Amponsah et al., 2018). It is composed of various facets, such as the skills, manners, and behaviours of the learners; end-term re-

sults, such as symbols; among others, which could be determinant variables (Amponsah et al., 2018). Scholars such as Derakhshan et al. (2024) assert that what is also integral to academic performance is the classroom social climate/culture which constitutes symbiotic determinant components like teacher emotional support, academic support, and classroom mutual respect, more specifically in an English foreign language class. Phrases such as learners' performance standard (Shikalepo, 2020), learner performance Chang et al. (2020) and terms such as better, superior and satisfactory academic performance (Amponsah et al., 2018), to cite a few of them, compete for recognition space in the definition, signalling an array of all sorts of definitions of the concept of academic performance. Thus, in their view, Alalwan et al. (2019) said academic performance refers to an attained ambition by all involved, insinuating that preceding phrases render the definition incomplete and senseless when used alone. Having investigated a number of variables that may influence what may be perceived as academic performance, at least for the purpose of this study, the researcher refers to any academic attainment by the NSSCO English second language learners as perceived from the standpoint of the National Curriculum for Basic Education, where A* is the highest and U is the lowest (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture: *The National Curriculum for Basic Education*, 2018a).

Uma et al. (2022) alleged that attrition in ESL is prevalent among senior secondary school in Namibia and is among the chief causes of low proficiency and poor performance. They used a mixed-methods design to carry out their study in Northern Namibia, and their participants were only teachers. Is poor performance in ESL the result of attrition amongst learners? A quantitative method was used to investigate the empirical stance on ESL attrition among senior secondary learners in Namibia.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Africa has a rich language diversity. According to Segerer & Vanhove (2022), Africa has an estimate of 2400 languages. Lusakalalu (2007), Sabao & Nauyoma, (2020) and Norro (2022), enlighten that Namibia, as part of Africa, is a multilingual country. Lusakalalu (2007) has discovered that Namibia accommodates more than three hyperglossonyms (collective names for a bunch of languages) and seven (names of individual languages) glossonyms, irrespective of the relatively small population. Oshiwambo (as a hyperglossonym) houses Oshindonga, Oshikwanyama, Oshikwambi, Oshimbanhu, Oshikolonkadi, Oshikwaludhi and Oshiunda (Lusakalalu, 2007) as quoted by Norro, 2022. Another hyperglossonym/glossonym is Nama, also called Damara or Kokhoekhoegowab. Other glossonyms such as Rumanyo [Rugciriku and Rushambyu], Rukwangali [Kwangali] and Thimbukushu [Mbukushu] are embedded in RuKavango. The fourth hyperglossonym is Herero, which consists of Otjihimba, Otjherero, Otjimanderu and Otjizemba. The second last hyperglossonym is Caprivian, which binds together languages such as Silozi, Chifwe, Chitotela, Shiyeyi and Cisubiya. The last hyperglossonym is

Khoesaaan languages with !Kung as a hyperglossonym and includes !'O-!Khung, Xung, Ju/'hoan and ≠Kx'au//ein (Lusakalalu, 2007).

The population is composed of (50%) Ovambo, (9%) Kavango, (7%) White Namibians, (7%) Herero, (7%) Damara, (5%) Nama, (4%) Caprivian, (3%) Bushman, Tswana (1%) Tswana and others (less than 1%) (Gibson et al., 2022). Data indicates that more than 90% of the Namibian population is Black. Reasonably, Norro (2022) points out that an average African can speak three to seven languages due to exposure to indigenous languages, regional languages and the national language. Therefore, English is contextually not a “second language” to Northern Namibian citizens or the majority of Namibians, although it constitutionally is. Realistically, all English “second language” classes are composed of learners of divergent vernaculars who employ their mother tongue at school and home (Ahsan et al., 2020; Iimene, 2018; Martins, 2018). Therefore, background impedes the acquisition of English as a second language in Namibia, not attrition, as it may be perceived. Schmid & Köpke (2017), quoted by Baladzhaeva (2021), stress that language two (L2) is more susceptible to attrition than language one (L1).

The Sociocultural Theory (SCT) emerged between 1896 and 1934. Ameri (2020) and was crafted by Vygotsky (Ameri, 2020; Rahmatirad, 2020). All authors Ameri (2020), Rahmatirad (2020) and Alkhudiry (2022) indicate that sociocultural theory is used to explain the language two (L2) learning process. It is a mode of learning that is effected when the learner interacts with the environment (Ameri, 2020; Rahmatirad, 2020), which Alkhudiry (2022) describes as effective interaction. Rahmatirad (2020) elaborates further that the environment is made up of social, cultural and historical artefacts. He continues that the environment attracts the child's attention and sustains the child's attention, while the child, in turn, adapts to the exposure and practises a friendly method within the zone of proximal development to succeed (Ameri, 2020; Rahmatirad, 2020). This means social interaction shapes learners' thinking more than self-exploration. Adults, teachers and peers are regarded as external targeted language assistance because they offer help, and the process is called scaffolding (Ameri, 2020). As a result, a link with role players is established, and the ability to meaningfully communicate is attained (Alkhudiry, 2022). Therefore, in terms of languages, the zone of proximal development for the majority of learners in Namibia, particularly in Northern Namibia, will be indigenous language speakers and the entire indigenous community since literature indicates that more than 90% of the Namibian population speaks their vernacular. This denotes that English, which is shared by 7% of the general Namibian white community, is not within the zone of proximal development of the Namibian child except for quite a few of them (Ameri, 2020).

According to Park (2018) and Al-azzawi (2023) language attrition refers to the slow but progressive diminishing of a language ability in an individual. Schmid & Köpke (2017) as quoted by Baladzhaeva (2021) defines attrition as a process resulting in decreased accessibility of the attriter's language knowledge resulting in difficulties of comprehension or production of such language by the attriter. It

can further be defined as the lessening or loss of a language (Hicks & Domínguez, 2020). Kupske (2019) and Park (2018) explain that attrition can be a permanent or partial phenomenon at times. Park (2018) and Kupske (2019) go on to explain that victims are usually bilingual or multilingual, but not monolingual as according to Park (2018) language attrition is characterised by the increase of fluency in one of the languages.

Park (2018) and Kupske (2019) as well as Schmid & Köpke (2017) as quoted by Baladzhaeva (2021) reveal that attrition occurs in the following three folds, which also depict victims. 1) Language one (L1) proficiency diminishes or permanently declines due to continuous contact with L2 by the attriter. 2) L1 proficiency diminishes or permanently declines due to continuous contact with another L1 at the expense of L2. 3) L2 proficiency diminishes or permanently declines due to continuous contact with another L2. Yu & Chan (2009), quoted by Uma et al. (2022), confirm that attrition is a normal experience that can happen to both L1 and L2 at any given time depending on the environment in which the attriters find themselves. Schmid & Köpke (2017), quoted by Baladzhaeva (2021), stated that L2 is more susceptible to attrition than L1.

Attrition is brought about by many factors. Amongst others are changes in environmental setup, age, attitude and motivation, literacy, typological proximity between languages and manners of instructions (Park, 2018; Uma et al., 2022; Schmid & Köpke, 2017 quoted by Baladzhaeva, 2021). A change in environmental setup might be caused by numerous compelling and deterring factors that expose the attriter to intense L2, resulting in L1 loss. Additionally, the younger the attriter, the more severe the degree of attrition (as L1 has not reached a threshold) compared to adults and those in the puberty stage when exposed to another language continuously, mostly due to incomplete acquisition of L1 in younger attriters (Baladzhaeva, 2021). Attitude and motivation are further factors causing attrition. A learner's negative attitude and lack of motivation towards an L2 means poor search and usage or exploitation of opportunities to use the new language, resulting in attrition (Baladzhaeva, 2021). Just as in the case of adults, well-literate learners attain a threshold resistant to attrition because of continuous prevalence of opportunities to use L1 in the form of writing and reading (Baladzhaeva, 2021). Conversely, a learner that has not attained a threshold will be susceptible to attrition (Baladzhaeva, 2021).

Typological proximity between languages is yet another factor. Related languages such as Afrikaans and German (Raidt, 1997) quoted by Baladzhaeva (2021), Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama as well as Rukwangali and Rugciriku will be retained better because of lexical similarities than a non-cognate such as English. Cognate languages or words are those that share an origin or are related or similar to each other in certain ways (Meelen et al., 2023; Tribushinina et al., 2023). Lastly, the manner of instruction influences attrition as well. The pedagogy promoting explicit L2 knowledge lays good ground for language acquisition to withstand attrition, while implicit methodology produces learners who are prone to attrition

(Park, 2018) and Schmid & Köpke (2017) as quoted by Baladzhaeva (2021).

Many models and hypotheses apply to L2 acquisition. There is a regression hypothesis which also means last in, first out, which entails that the language learnt earlier on by learners gives no room to the language learnt later (L2), and it suffers attrition (Baladzhaeva, 2021; Mickan et al., 2023; Schmid & Köpke (2017)). Schmid & Köpke (2017) quoted by Baladzhaeva (2021), Mickan et al. (2023) and Schmid & Köpke (2017) inform that Roman Jakobson (1968) the proponent of the regression model. Another hypothesis is the critical threshold based on Neisser's (1984) opinion of critical threshold, which is also known as best learnt (Baladzhaeva, 2021; Ma & Vanek, 2024). This hypothesis suggests that learning a language well (attaining proficiency) establishes a threshold resistant to attrition, and a language learnt poorly will be susceptible to attrition because a reliable threshold is not established (Baladzhaeva, 2021; Ma & Vanek, 2024). On top of that, there are cross-linguistic influences, also referred to as the interference hypothesis or the inter-language hypothesis. This model hypothesizes that a dominating language replaces the less prevalent one (Baladzhaeva, 2021) as alluded to by Kopečková et al. (2023) and Kuiken (2023). The last model is the enactive or dormant language hypothesis, which questions what happens to the victim's language knowledge once affected by attrition, whether the language is lost or some parts are saved (Park, 2018; Schmid & Köpke (2017) quoted by Baladzhaeva (2021). Park (2018) explains that reading and listening, which are skills regarded as receptive, are resistant to attrition compared to writing and speaking, which are categorised as skills that are productive.

The preceding discussion explains that the multilingualism of Namibia has created no context for attrition to occur in English as a second language, and therefore is not the cause for poor academic performance in English as a second language. Certainly, there is an array of factors perpetuating poor academic performance, including but not limited to incongruent teaching methodologies and scarcity of pedagogical resources (Ithindi et al., 2022; Nashuuta, 2024; Beukes, 2024; Ramzan et al., 2021). large classes, attachment to teacher-centred methodology (Constantino, 2021) and poor-quality teachers (Nashuuta, 2024; Ideh, 2021). Additionally, literature reports that poor academic foundations, unsuitable teaching and learning environments, automatic promotion policies that transfer failed grade 10s to grade 11 (Matthys, 2024; Ideh, 2021); and compromised socioeconomic backgrounds of the learners (Ramzan et al., 2021).

With the exception of the 7% non-Black Namibians, 93% depicts Native language speakers (Gibson et al., 2022), which suggests that schools across Namibia are multilingual communities (Sabao & Nauyoma, 2020; Norro, 2022). On top of that, as enshrined in the language policy, the learners who undergo mother tongue medium of instruction in the four lower grades eventually fill up secondary schools, creating a native language-dominated environment at the expense of English as the medium of instruction (Norro, 2021). Although on the bright side such context is helpful in preserving the local cultures embedded in those lan-

guages (Siregar, 2023), the surroundings make English learning difficult because English culture, word orders (Gulyamova, 2024) and the system of language differ (Gao, 2023), defeating the objectives of the NSSCO syllabus.

The NSSCO syllabus is complex as it lays expectations in language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing as well as grammar skills (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture: Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate English, Second Language Syllabus Ordinary Level Grades 10 - 11, 2018b). However, the NSSCO learners are not capable of demonstrating expected competencies in the English language skills, including grammar, resulting in the persistent poor performance phenomena (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture: NSSCO Examiners Report 2023, 2023). Scholars such as Ithindi et al. (2022), Beukes (2024) and Matthys (2024) confirm and bemoan the poor performance in English as a second language.

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To pass English second language, the NSSCO learners ought to demonstrate the ability or skills to decode the heard verbal communication and instructions and be able to encode (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture: Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate English Second Language Syllabus Ordinary Level Grades 10 - 11, 2018b; Maitlo et al., 2022). Possessing a reservoir of vocabulary ensures performance in all language skills, including grammar (Maitlo et al., 2022), and ultimately passes the examination well. Additionally, in order for the NSSCO English second language learners to pass, they ought to be fluent at reading strategies such as skimming and scanning by employing stages of reading such as the pre-reading stage, during reading activities and post-reading activities (Mutaliani et al., 2023; Istiqomah et al., 2023; Ismatilloeyvna, 2024; Madolimovich, 2022). With grammar, learners could only pass if they were well acquainted with the form: morphology, syntax, the grapheme and phonetic patterns. Pawlak (2021), Raipovna (2021), Tarigan & Stevani (2022); meaning: lexical knowledge or the meaning of words and notions (Pawlak, 2021; Tarigan & Stevani, 2022), and the use includes the register and formality of grammar as required by the context (Pawlak, 2021). Despite the fact that English is the medium of instruction at NSSCO level (Norro, 2021), which could be deduced to mean that the school/class social climate/culture (SSC/CSC) (Derakhshan et al., 2024) is expected to be an English-only academic environment, this situation of poor performance makes stakeholders doubt the quality of Namibian English teachers (Junias et al., 2022).

Therefore, literature advises that while at universities, student teachers ought

to be assisted to learn and possess a comprehensive understanding of various teaching methodologies, English subject matters and appropriate behaviour fitting an exemplary teacher who is able to facilitate quality teaching to effect quality learning (Ankonga, 2018; Usanov & Burkhanovich, 2020.). The foregoing will equip the English second language teachers to strategise and adopt integrated pedagogical methodologies to preserve the local languages while enhancing the learning and proficiency of English, such as code-switching, translating and translanguaging. Code switching refers to briefly switching to the mother tongue or any of the predominant local languages of the catchment area to scaffold the understanding of the learners (Bolkvadze, 2023; Liando et al., 2023; Albahoth et al., 2024; Azyizah & Nuryanti, 2023) because learners think in the mother tongue and inherently translate into English (Bolkvadze, 2023). Translating, on the other hand, means completely transferring the content, in this case from English into the mother tongue of the learners, while maintaining the essence of the content (Iordan, 2021; Liando et al., 2023). Translation is flexible and appropriate for bilingual, multilingual and multicultural school/classroom social climates (Bolkvadze, 2023), such as in Namibian schools (Uugwanga, 2023; Vatilifa et al., 2022; Pun et al., 2022). Translanguaging makes communication easy in a multilingual classroom social environment in both vernacular and target languages (English), and participation in the teaching and learning process is improved (Liando et al., 2023; Nursanti, 2021).

3. Methodology

Quantitative research was used in this study. Quantitative research is numerical data orientated, as it purposes to quantify the phenomenon under investigation (Kandel, 2020; Schoonenboom, 2023; Mohajan, 2020). It is a convenient research methodology for quantifying defined variables such as opinions, behaviour and attitude numerically, which is a quality that attracts a lot of researchers (Mohajan, 2020). Quantitative research is controlled, submits to no influence, accurate, covers large scale, verifiable and deductive in nature (Kandel, 2020). Therefore, this study used questionnaires to gather data. Lester et al. (2020) indicate that there exists no universal method of data analysis in research. This means that the nature of the study compels us to determine a suitable method of data analysis. Content analysis was used to analyse the collected data. It is an objective design which uses various communication media to extract data, establish patterns, themes and even biases, etc. (Shikalepo, 2021; Kassim, 2023; McCashin & Murphy, 2023). Content analysis is compatible with quantitative research. The data collected will be studied, entered into a table, described, interpreted and discussed. (Shikalepo, 2021). It is an objective design used to establish patterns, themes and even biases, etc., and has a rich source of data such as books, humans, music, etc. (Shikalepo, 2021). It is an approach that is compatible with qualitative research and quantitative research. The data collected will be studied, tabulated, described, interpreted and discussed (Shikalepo, 2021).

According to Asante (2020), a population of the study is a group of people who

are considered to be possessors of research data. It is a structure from which a sample is extracted (Sang, 2021). It could also be viewed as a group of things or humans from which a required sample is sourced. Kinya & Were (2019). The target population of this study will be all state secondary schools offering NSSCO in Namibia. The study population will consist of 206,893 learners from 206 senior secondary schools across Namibia, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The study population across Namibia.

	Name of the Region	Total schools	Total learners
1	Kharas	11	6416
2	Erongo	16	13,109
3	Hardap	10	6931
4	Kavango East	9	17,477
5	Kavango West	3	9415
6	Khomas	29	24,325
7	Kunene	6	7070
8	Ohangwena	19	29,287
9	Omaheke	8	6161
10	Omusati	30	26,955
11	Oshana	22	16,211
12	Oshikoto	17	20,021
13	Otjozondjupa	17	11,460
14	Zambezi	9	12,055
	Total	206	206,893

A sample, on the other hand, is a small group taken from the population as its representative to extract information from (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Divakar, 2021). The process of taking a sample from the population is called sampling (Shikalepo, 2021; Nanjundeswaraswamy & Divakar, 2021). The sampling process could be viewed as discriminatory as it separates the individuals of the population on the basis of required data (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020). In scientific studies, there is probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Shikalepo, 2021; Nanjundeswaraswamy & Divakar, 2021; Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020). This study used a purposive sampling technique, which is an element of a non-probability sampling method. The researcher is expected to choose the individuals considered convenient as a source of information from the population (Shikalepo, 2021). Purposive sampling is an intentional, decisive method fitting for constructing a sample. Pietilä et al. (2020), because the researcher picks persons or organisations

from the population to address the questions. Therefore, the non-probability sampling is less complicated and much more convenient (Johnson et al., 2020 & Shikalepo, 2021). A sample of 172 learners from four regions across Namibia, with 28.6% area coverage as indicated in Table 2, completed the questionnaire in order to collect the required data.

Table 2. A sample of 172 learners from four regions across Namibia.

Region	School	Total learners
A	1	65
B	2	33
C	3	50
D	4	24
Total		172

4. Findings

Below is Figure 1 that shows the result of the administered questionnaire. The questionnaire sought to find out the language of birth of the NSSCO learners, the language they use daily in the house, the language they speak with their friends and the language they speak with their classmates. It also sought to gather data regarding the language their neighbours speak, the language their neighbours speak with them, the language in which they dream and their motivation towards learning English as a second language, as well as whether they learn English at school.

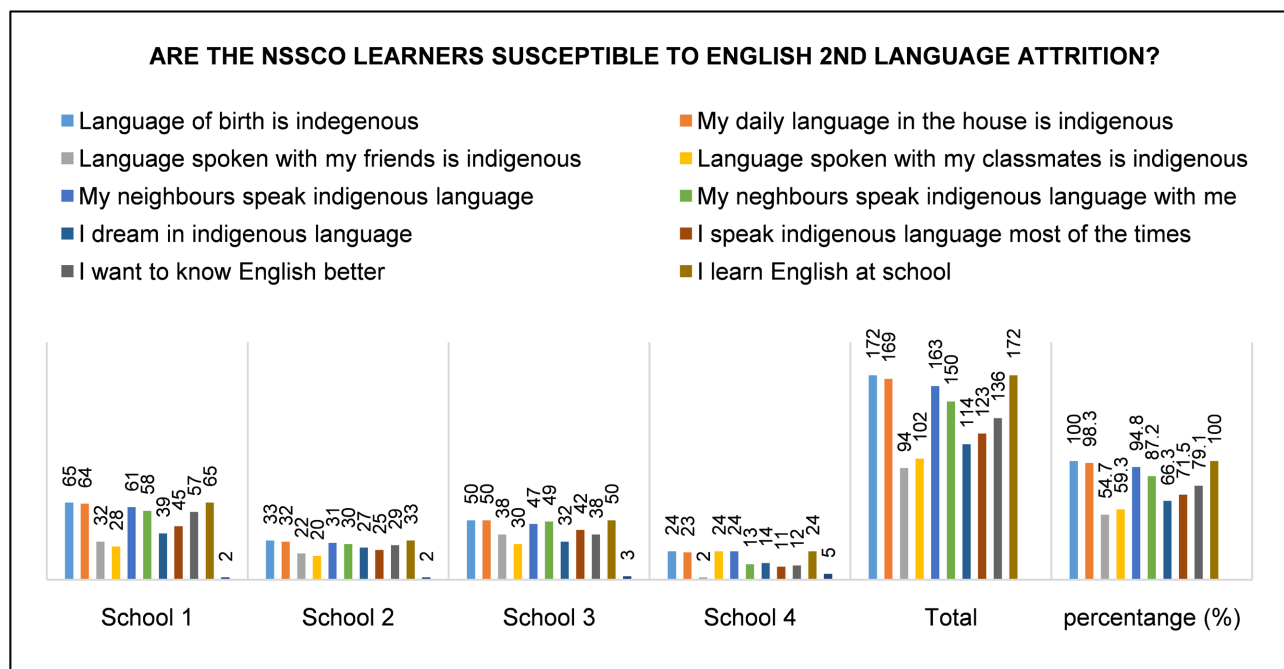


Figure 1. The result of the administered questionnaire.

5. Discussion

The results tabulated in **Figure 1** show that the home language of all the NSSCO second language learners in the four schools which were recruited in this study are indigenous, and at least 98.3% of the NSSCO second language learners use their indigenous languages daily in their homes with the family. Additionally, the findings indicate that close to 54.7% of their peers speak indigenous languages when they are with them, and almost 59.3% of them speak indigenous languages when they are in the class or at school, although all of them study and learn English at school. On top of that, 94.8% of the NSSCO English second language learners' neighbors speak indigenous languages, of which close to 87.2% of them speak to them in indigenous languages. Furthermore, 66.3% of them dream in their indigenous languages, 71.5% of the NSSCO English second language speakers speak indigenous languages all the time, and almost 79.1% of the NSSCO English second language learners want to know English second language better. Lastly, all of them are learning English as a second language with intentions to master it and pass examinations.

The 98.3% of those that employ indigenous languages daily in the house show that the languages which the NSSCO English second language learners know better, which they speak better and to which they have continuous exposure are their indigenous languages. Therefore, the study suspects that the unvoiced remaining 1.7% represents speakers of the minority native/local languages who are uncertain as to whether the predominant local languages they study in schools at the expense of their marginalised natal languages (Rehan, 2023), which are not mentioned in the curriculum of the Basic Education of Namibia school (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture: *The National Curriculum for Basic Education*, 2018a), are their mother tongue. The term predominant languages could be perceived as generally and largely or commonly and widely spoken as compared to the other languages which are minimally spoken in the catchment or surrounding area due to fewer speakers of such a language, as deduced from Norro (2023), Set (2023), Norro (2021), the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture: *The National Curriculum for Basic Education, Arts and Culture*, 2018a, and Uugwanga (2023). Minority local languages, on the other hand, are those languages not included in the curriculum of the Basic Education System of Namibia, which are collectively termed as "other languages", which amount to 45,279 learners, of which 5535 are the NSSCO learners (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture: *Education Management Information System (EMIS)*, 2021: p. 24). Their exclusion is brought about as the result of the scarcity of both human and material resources, whose only solution is cautious forethought (Norro, 2023). The term minority denotes less recognised or marginalised nationally. Based on the above findings, Baladzhaeva (2021) highlights that according to Neisser's (1984) hypothesis of critical threshold, it suggests that a language learnt best is more resistant to attrition than the one learnt less. As the result shows, the NSSCO learners have established a good threshold of proficiency in their indigenous languages and are therefore not susceptible to attrition

in English as a second language, which makes it no factor, reason or cause for poor academic performance in NSSCO English as a second language.

The 54.3% of them who speak indigenous languages with their friends and 59.3% of them who speak indigenous languages with their classmates is a sign that the school environment and peer pressure maintain the home environment where they speak indigenous languages throughout. If a change in the environment is one of the factors that cause attrition (Park, 2018), this means that their indigenous languages have a maintained environment that gives no room for attrition to take place and where English should not be learnt at all.

The 100% that indicates that all the NSSCO learners are of indigenous languages from birth, the 98.3% that use indigenous languages in the house, and the 94.4% of neighbours who use indigenous languages show that the three hyper-glossonyms and seven glossonyms in Norro (2022) are well established in Namibia. Additionally, the study is empirically compelled to believe that the remaining 5.2% from the neighbours who speak indigenous languages with the NSSCO learners depicts the minority (7%) of White Namibians who are not in close proximity, which correlates with literature (Gibson et al., 2022), whose context does not establish the zone of proximal development (Ameri, 2020) in order to pose attrition. This means that learners have a very slim chance to attain the English second language proficiency threshold; thus, more than the indigenous languages, English is a distance away from suffering attrition in Namibia.

The 59.3% of learners who speak their indigenous languages with their classmates, added to the 98.3% of learners' who speak their indigenous languages daily in the house and the 94.8% who indicated that their neighbours use indigenous languages with them, paint a regression scenario. The regression hypothesis means that the last language to get in will be the first one to go out (Baladzhaeva, 2021). In terms of these results, this model signifies that the language which the NSSCO English second language learners learnt earlier on (in this case, the native language) gives no room to English second language; that is why at least 79.1% of them indicated their motivation to learn and know English second language better.

The figure also shows that at least 66.3% of the NSSCO learners who participated in this study dream in their vernacular and native language, indicating that at least 33.7% of them experience dreams in English, as a second language. A dream may be defined as a mysterious involuntary sequence of images and events that take place in the brain of a dreamer while sleeping (Burke & Stets, 2022; Brekke et al., 2023). The concept of a dream is also synonymous with a nightmare (Brekke et al., 2023). However, the dream called nightmare is longer and usually negative, causing uneasiness to the dreamer (Brekke et al., 2023; Ollila et al., 2024). Although 33.7% indicated that they dream in English, chances are minimal that it is the case based on the following basis:

First, from the psychological point of consideration, people, in this case, the NSSCO English second language learners, subconsciously think in natal tongue into which they transfer foreign language messages/content/instructions to estab-

lish meaning (Bolkvadze, 2023). The preceding denotes that the mother tongue is the foundation on which comprehension of the second/foreign language is based, without which no second language can be learnt or understood and the meaning of which cannot exist (Avezmurodovich & Bakhriddinova, 2024; Norro, 2021). This marks the philosophical stance for having the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in Namibia (Ugwanga, 2023; Vatilifa et al., 2022; Pun et al., 2022). Thus, it is extremely unlikely that the NSSCO learners experience dreams in a foreign language if 98.3% speak their mother tongue and 94.8% of their neighbours speak to them in their indigenous languages daily. Language acquisition, which is the natural process of mastering a language, is strongly associated with the natal language Abdullaev (2021), which occurs inherently in the inner layer (Bolkvadze, 2023), the mastery of which is as reliable as any other subsequent language learning based on it (Avezmurodovich & Bakhriddinova, 2024; Norro, 2021). Thus, if Freud is correct that dreams are a composite of manifest content (dream content) and latent thoughts (dream thoughts) and that dream content is a depiction of a transcript, the translation, of the dream thoughts (original) (Basu Thakur, 2024), then there is no doubt that dreaming occurs in the mother tongue because thinking takes place in L1 (Bolkvadze, 2023). Therefore, since literature refutes the notion that 33.7% of the NSSCO English second language learners dream in English, it is only irrefutable that all of them experience dreams or nightmares in their vernacular, which proves that attrition is not a factor causing poor academic performance in English second language. This scholarly evidence further vindicates that 98.3% of them who use indigenous languages in their houses and 94.8% of their neighbours who speak to them in their own indigenous languages increase the gap between English dwindling any little exposure that could have been there, making it not only difficult to master but also to dream in English. This is yet another proof that there is no English second language attrition among the NSSCO learners, and therefore it is not a cause for a high failure rate in English second language.

The second reason is based on proximal distances between languages, such as English as a second language compared to the native language, which dictates that local languages are attained better (Baladzhaeva, 2021) and utilised more often, which means that the majority of the NSSCO learners will most likely dream in their mother tongue. For example, at least 59.3% of the learners speak their vernacular in class and at school, in addition to 98.3% who use their indigenous languages in their houses, 94.4% of the neighbours who speak their indigenous languages and 87.2% of the neighbours use indigenous languages when talking to the NSSCO English second language learners. These facts show that the proximal distance between English as a second language is wider with much preference for indigenous languages; therefore, it is baseless that the learners dream in English while they hardly speak English at school, at play when with friends and at home as well as in the neighborhood. This is an additional fact that English second language attrition among the NSSCO is nonexistent and is not a cause for the high

failure rate.

The third reason is that the typological proximity between languages is yet another factor. Related languages such as Afrikaans and German, Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama, as well as Rukwangali and Rucgiriku (for example), will be retained better because of lexical similarities than a non-cognate such as English (Baladzhaeva, 2021). In light of the preceding fact, it is less likely that the NSSCO English second language learners dream in English, as it is not a cognate. The lack of cognate similarities means a lack of vocabulary in the language a few learners claim to dream in, and without vocabulary there will be no dream because meaning has to be attached to a dream, and languaging cannot occur without vocabulary (Rhule, 2023).

6. Conclusion

Therefore, the empirical stance of this study on the perception that the high failure rate among the NSSCO learners in English second is due to attrition is baseless. Empirically, the high failure rate among the NSSCO learners in English second language is caused by extended exposure to their indigenous languages at school, at home and in the neighbourhood to an extent that they even dream in their indigenous language. This is a sign that English as a second language is learnt minimally and given a slim chance to establish while considering the fact that mid-June to mid-July is school holiday. Final examinations run from October through November Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture: Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment (2023). As a result, the learners perform poorly in English as a second language due to lack of time to learn and master English as a second language to the extent they could be ready to take an examination and perform well. At this moment, the empirical evidence shows that almost all NSSCO English second language learners have not attained a threshold, thus have not attained proficiency, a situation that makes them susceptible to poor performance. The empirical discovery of this study shows evidence that attrition is non-existent amongst the NSSCO English second language learners; thus, it is not the cause of poor academic performance among the NSSCO learners in English as a second language. The law of attrition stipulates that L1 is lost to L2, or another L1 and L2 could be lost to another L2 due to uninterrupted exposure. In Namibia, L1, L2, and even L3, to which the learners are continually exposed on a daily basis, are indigenous languages other than English, which are not in danger of attrition, because data shows that NSSCO English second language learners sustain their exposure to their indigenous languages at home, at school, in class, in the neighbourhood and even during playing with peers.

7. Recommendation

1) Although it is a proven fact that attrition in English as a second language is not prevalent among the NSSCO learners and is not the cause of the failure rate, a study should be conducted to investigate the possibility of attrition in languages

not used as a mother tongue or first language in schools since only predominant languages are used.

2) Common-sense conclusions on academic matters are hardly signs of sustainability. The study recommends that scientific studies be conducted using well-informed persons as participants to reach academic and reliable conclusions.

3) Conduct a longitudinal study to track how exposure to English over time might affect learners' academic performance.

8. Area of Further Research

1) Prevalence of L1 attrition due to using predominant indigenous languages among the NSSCO to whom the schools' L1 is not their vernacular.

2) Strategies to reverse and prevent attrition among the NSSCO learners whose mother tongue is marginalised at the expense of other indigenous languages used in schools as L1.

3) Longitudinal study to track how exposure to English over time might affect learners' academic performance.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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