The Role of Role Play as a Teaching Method on Social Skills Through the Development of English Language of Children at Junior Primary School Level:

*A Study of The Perception of the Namibian English Language Teachers.*

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Child’s language development is very important as it influences how the child is likely to contribute to society. Language makes it easy for children to communicate and interact with other people and a well-developed language eliminates any chance of psychosocial problems. It is always best to come up with approaches that would engage the child and improve his or her social skills. This thesis looks at what educators think about role play as a teaching method and how the method would help with language development and therefore social growth of learners. Variety of literature have been identified to support the phenomenon of language influence of social relations of children at the early age as junior primary school level. The discussion within this thesis would by no means establish that at the junior primary school level is where language acquisition. The thesis would not make any presumptions about language acquisition or anything that is related to it. The thesis discusses the phenomenon of language development, which is entirely different from acquisition. It is important to focus on two factors that are influenced by different teaching methods, based on the teachers’ preference. The language and the social factors. This thesis however choses to focus on role play as one of the teaching methods that teachers uses to improve language and social skills of children at this age.

As it would be established within this writing, role play is seen to be a very effective teaching method to deal with issues regarding social communication. This is because, as it would be proven within the thesis literature reviews, the strategy involves communication practices that involves real life situations that the learners at the junior primary level would be more likely to identify with and benefit from. The authors of this thesis recognizes the relationship between role play as a teaching strategy and social interaction of learners in and outside the classroom. However, the thesis is established to find out what the perceptions of teachers in Namibia at the junior primary school level are regarding the phenomenon of role play and social skills of learners. The relationship of the phenomenon is clarified vividly by the literature that are provided within this thesis. However, another relationship should be found to satisfy the burden of the thesis topic. The relationship between role play and the language development of learners. Does role play have any influence on the language development that would consequently result in the improvement social skills of learners. Therefore, this thesis seeks to answer on the perception of Namibian English language teachers on the role of role play as a teaching method to develop language for improvement in social skills of learners.

The teachers that were studies are English teachers from Namibia, a small country south west of Africa, which is bordered by south Africa at the south, Botswana and Zambia at the east and Angola at the north border. The teachers studied were 21 from different schools with English as a medium of instruction, as well as a subject in schools. The Namibian curriculum suggests the utilization of different teaching methods across
disciplines, specifying and emphasizing on certain methods in certain disciplines according to their needs and expectations.

The thesis contemplates on the theory of Psychosocial Development of Erik Erikson of Childhood and society phenomenon which is explicit on how the child interacts with the social environment and the child employs language to get by. This theory touches on child development on the grounds of emotional development of a child to be able to understand social cues where factors such as empathy and sympathy of a child is elaborated within the social setting. The thesis also investigates the Social Constructivist Development Theory of Lev Vygotsky where he emphasis on how the child learns from doing and how social interaction encourages learners to learn more. Our thesis also touches on the Vygotsky’s theory of Zone of Proximal Development, which he used to describe how a child learns and develops at an early age. Another theory that can be identified or linked with our thesis is the theory of Cognitive Development Piaget where he focused on the theory of behaviourism.

It is not to say that the theories of the above mentioned theorists would be explicitly discussed within this thesis but the mention of these theories is of paramount importance to be able to reference the problem that is investigated by this thesis and relate to the aforementioned theories.

The thesis followed the quantitative research method which was thought to be significant in completing the thesis. With the aid of this research strategy, a questionnaire was used as the data collection method to obtain the responses on the perspective of the Namibian teachers about the role of role play on language development to improve social skills of children at the junior primary school level. The thesis made use of the quantitative method to attain clarity of the influence of language on social development and it is very important to take note of the theories of prominent theorists mentioned above, who did extensive research on the phenomenon of language development and social development of children. All the other literatures that are used within this thesis support the foundation of the theories that this thesis stand on.

The results of the thesis proofed the presumption of the research topic. Role play has a significant influence on language development, which has direct impact on social skills of children at the age of the junior primary school level. The respondents’ perspectives coincide with the literatures that contributed to this thesis as the results proves. The results were analysed with the descriptive analysis method. This method used the frequency and percentage test generated from the SPSS programme to analyse the results.

The thesis in general will paint the significance of role play as a teaching method that teachers ought to use in Namibian schools. It is believed that this method helps to improve social skills of learners as it places them in real life scenarios and equips learners with problem solving skills. Learners get the opportunity to face challenges learn to solve them. As they do this, they also get the chance to learn to relate to other people. In so doing they learn to identify and practice empathy and this of course helps them create relationships with other people. However, before all these can be achieved, they have to learn how to communicate using the only thing that makes us human. Language. One can never communicate effectively with other people unless you know what is what and how to say what. Developing language therefore becomes the most important task to surpass before one can successfully fit in the society. This is why this thesis focused on language development with the use of role play and how social skills can improve from language development and role play at large.

Avainsanat – Keywords

Role Play; Teaching Method/Strategy; Language Development (English); Social Skills and Development
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1. Introduction and Background

First of all, it is of grave significance to put out there the topic of this thesis. The thesis seeks to find the perception of English language teacher on role of role play as a teaching strategy on the development of social skills through language development at the junior secondary school level in Namibia. The thesis examines the influence of role play on social skills of students through developing language with roleplay as well. It answers the main question: Does role play play a significant role in the development of learners’ social skills and does language competence have any influence on how well the students succeed in the social interaction of students.

On general background, language learning has become the central focus of many scholars and researchers since it is the major contributor to the social interaction amongst many species, humans being the central focus. For centuries, linguists and medical scholars have invested countless resources of research to trying to find out the best ways to make language easier for children to learn in the attempt to succeed in the social interactional process. Many teaching strategies have been identified within the teaching pedagogy phenomenon to help navigate the language learning process and put under scrutiny to best capture the best strategy. Many of these strategies have been proven to deal with some of the language impairment that distorts social interactional abilities. This explains the findings that have proven that social skills development depends greatly on the development of language skills and that the ability to attain and use vocabulary and language aspects is of utmost significance. Language and communication are very important as they act as tools for learners to not only learn but also engage in social relationships and to manage and regulate their behaviour and emotions from being as little as 2 years of age onwards (Cohen, 2010). This notion is also noteworthy to mention since in the process of language development, the acquisition of vocabulary becomes very important. It becomes very difficult for children to be linguistically competent and
therefore socially interactive if they lack the proper language vocabulary. It is therefore very important to conceive that vocabulary becomes the key element for students to understand and successfully communicate in either the first language or second language. Understanding is not possible in either one of the languages without understanding vocabulary. (Laufer, 1997). However, knowing the language vocabulary is not good enough. Children need to understand the vocabulary and be able to determine the correct social context to use the acquired vocabulary (Lajooee & Barimani, 2013). It is for this reason that many teachers, especially in Namibia try their hardest to familiarize learners with different words and their meanings, patterns deriving from some other language, grammar usage and social usage of the language, through using many different methods, activities, and perhaps other drills to enable the learners to use vocabulary very well, and it appropriate contexts and coherently in real situations.

At this stage it is important to point out the highlight of the above-mentioned phenomenon. The real-life situation. Vocabulary is purposed for language communication and there is an assumption that language communication is primarily for communication and interaction in real life. Everything that we do with family and friends is directed by the competency in language and communication. It is why this thesis identifies role play as the best teaching strategy to teach students in schools communication and vocabulary to be used in real life situation. Role play is a very well-known teaching method that helps students to become familiar with their natural environment where society dwells. This is because role play that is introduced at the beginning of the course can prepare learners to deal with situations that they would come across in their future endeavors. (Shankar et al, 2012). In pointing this out, we can already establish the biggest relationship between role play and the use of language and communication. This thesis seeks to establish what the teachers in Namibia think and perceive role play and its importance to language development and therefore to social skills.
Role play has been proven to improve learners’ self-confidence and enthusiasm as well as their empathy and encourages deeper scale of thinking and this is why it is proven to be the most effective strategy. This would also go without mentioning that role play helps to model vocabulary learning in a controlled, cost-effective and most importantly fun way for both the learners and the teachers. (Kuipers & Clemens, 1998; Huang and Shan, 2008; Altun, 2015).

In this description, we can identify a few social skills characteristics that can be explained as important when it comes to social interaction. These are self-confidence, enthusiasm and empathy and critical thinking. By improving vocabulary and communication by placing learners in a pretend situation similar to what they are likely to experience outside of class, we would be able to prepare these learners for that very social situation when it really occurs. Enthusiasm, self-confidence, empathy and critical thinking I problem solving would have already been put to the test and based on the play, they learners would be able to succeed in the reality. This thesis assumes this to be case based on the little supportive literature established, but it would seek the answer to this assumption based on what the Namibia teachers really think about the whole phenomenon.

1.1 Research Concepts

In order to understand the entire thesis, it is very important to grab the understanding of the concept that drives the general topic of the thesis. The main notable key concepts of the thesis are:

1.1.1 Role play

According to Webster's New World College Dictionary, (2014) role play is described as a way of acting of a specified part of a person or a character as a way of therapy or psychotherapy. In this thesis the intention of the use of role play is not far fetch from the dictionary definition. In the use of role play, students are expected to act out a part of a story
or a certain scenario, usually based on the real-life issue. This is attested by Altun (2015) who defined role play as a method or strategy in which students are expected to act out a specific role through saying, doing and sharing. With the use of role play in accordance to language, the students are introduced to different vocabulary, and then they are given the opportunity to use these vocabularies in role plays so that they gain the familiarity with the vocabulary. Through the process of role play, the students also gain competence in the social skills characteristics such as *enthusiasm, self-confidence, empathy and critical thinking*. It is impossible to have meaningful communication within social settings without these social indicators. Finally, Alabsi (2016) emphasizes that role play is used to encourage learners to make interpretive connections between vocabulary and experiences with what is being taught or studied. This way, students are made familiar with new vocabulary and then given the opportunity to use them in context through role play. This helps the students to understand the words and be able to use them in real life situations.

The biggest reason for choosing role play as a strategy of focus is because we wanted to focus on the approach that would help very much with the English language communication. Our thesis focuses on the ability to communicate for social success. Role play is the major strategy in the communication approach of language teaching and it involves social interactions. In the communicative approach, role play is the biggest teaching method and has various benefits and good sides, as it gives learners the opportunity to social interaction that stimulates the use language outside of the classroom, at the same time challenging learners' existing beliefs. Many researcher concluded that effective learning takes place when students are challenged with problems by the teachers and the very teachers help in the process of solution finding. (Vincent & Shepherd, 1998; Piaget, 1972)
1.1.2 Teaching method or strategy

Westwood (2008) emphasised that Teaching Methods' explains the different theories of teaching and learning, of course with their underlying methods and principles. It looks at the role of a teacher in the learning process and what contributes to effective practice according to new research. It gives the chance to look for further expertise as it deals with key issues and provides more references to explore the subject. This is to mean that every approach that a teacher in the classroom uses to convey content to his students would be considered as a teaching method or strategy.

In this thesis the main teaching strategy under scrutiny is the role play and the scrutiny is on the role it has on the social skills development, which is of course inevitably through language development. This phenomenon becomes a conceptual consideration because role play which is the issue under investigation can also be used in any other cases which is not entirely educational. For example, we find sexual role play which is also a thing between lovers and in order to eliminate the confusion and bring the attention to the use of role play as an educational focus, we retain it with the concept of teaching method.

1.1.3 Language development

McCarthy (1933) defines language as a medium to show the level of intelligence. In this regard, we can ascertain that language has to do with the cognitive level of development because language shows just how cognitively developed a child is. The pattern here is the development of the cognitive ability that establishes how linguistically developed the child or student, which concludes on the language development. The thesis investigates what influence language has on social skills and what results are possible with language impairment on social skills.
1.1.4 Social skills and development

These concepts would be explained in this thesis within the process of social development by the influence of roleplay. During the introductory part of the thesis, we have mentioned some characteristics that entails social skills such as enthusiasm, self-confidence, empathy and critical thinking. These are just a few characteristics or social indicators that can be broken down in order to be able to understand social skills as a phenomenon. Leary (1957) identified and explained social skills as the ability to help with interaction and communication with other people. According to him, these interactions create social rules and relations which are communicated after being created and are ever changing as they are translated in verbal or in non-verbal cues. Leary refers to the learning process of these skills socialization. For this process to be effective, interpersonal skills become very important in order to be able to relate to other people. These skills involve actions that a person uses to communicate with other people which according to him results in dominance vs. submission, control vs. autonomy, love vs. hate and affiliation vs. aggression categories (Leary, 1957). Leary’s definition establishes exactly what the thesis would entails in its entire form. The mention of extra concepts such as interpersonal skills, social rules, and socialization suggest how big this phenomenon of social skills really is.

Another aspect that is of grave importance to take note of is the mention of emotional prospect within the definition of social skills. These socio-emotional aspects include dominance vs submission, love vs hate, affiliation vs aggression and control vs autonomy categorization. Mentioning these socio-emotional categories is very important because it would help the thesis dig deeper than the superficial social deficits such as lack of confidence, low self-esteem to other profound social deficits that today are regarded as special educational needs such as Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorders, Autism Syndrome and other language and communication deficits such as stuttering. All these deficits affect
social skills tremendously and although they are catered for separately outside the mainstream school in Namibia, there are those students suffering from mild effect and teachers have to come up with ways to deal with them. Role play becomes one communication practice to evoke confidence and esteem in some of the students and this thesis looks at how role play plays the role on such social skills. Cohen (2010) ascertains that it can be difficult to separate problems with emotions and social deficits from problems with language and communication.

We can identify here that role play does not just include the surface of socialization. It has to do with other factors that are more profound. The development of the other profound factors would be well classified as the social cognition of students. Social cognition is the ability to recognize or identify and being able to understand other people’s perspectives as well as emotions according to their believes and thoughts and being able to find solutions to conflicts (Sharp, Fonagy & Goodyer, 2008). Identification and understanding of other people’s emotions helps tremendously with social skills and it is thanks to these understanding that children as well as adults are able to resolve societal conflicts. It is because of this social cognition.

1.2 Motivation for the Research

Special educational needs are some of those aspects about the education that are given little regards, especially in the mainstream. We bring special educational needs into this thesis because most social problems that would be identified in this thesis that learners in schools experience would be deemed as special needs, although not as mild that would hinder children from partaking in the real-life issue. This is to mean that role play having been identified as the appropriate strategy to improve vocabulary and improve practice for learners to be able to take part in social interaction would be ideal in solving although not completely some of these special needs. The government has made considerable provision for support to
children with special need. The policy of inclusive education in Namibia has led to the establishment of different schools to support learners with special needs. But by observation, this can only go as far as the schools to support severe educational needs such as Tourette’s syndrome, autism, hearing and vision impaired. However, there are a lot of cases within the mainstream education that go unreported. Although some of these issues would be classified as extremely mild, the mainstream teachers are not as qualified enough as they should be to handle even the mild educational needs such as social problems. This very fact provides the primary reason why this research is of vital importance. It has come to our attention that while it becomes of utmost importance to refer help to where it is really needed, like the special needs schools, the same attention should be provided in mainstream education to help the ‘mild’ needs so as to not let them become severe. This could be done by providing the necessary help to the mainstream teachers to be able to provide support to learners within the mainstream education, even if it means creating a little bit of awareness.

To proof the above-mentioned notion, we could perhaps describe one experience that the co-author, Drusilla had within the teaching profession. She is an English teacher and there was a case where she would constantly pose a question to a certain pupil in her class based on the lesson that she was busy with. She found that this particular pupil, after so many attempts would not respond to her questions. Since she is not well trained as a teacher to identify any learning disability with the child, it became easy for her to rule the child as stubborn and perhaps tough to deal with. After so many attempts, professionals were called in to identify the issue. The results were surprising. It turned out that the pupil had no way of communicating with the teacher because he was not very well confident with the language used to communicate with him, which has been English all along. Even though he wanted so much to respond to the questions, there was a language impairment issue that prevented adequate communication with the child. Communication and interaction was very difficult.
for him as he found it very uneasy to use the language to express his ideas. In the process, this leaner lost so much, not just the content taught but also the possibility of creating meaningful friendship. This problem is identified as psychosocial problems that leads to further emotional problems.

This thesis becomes very important to coin out some of the possible ways to deal with learners who are experiencing social problems and to see how teacher deal with role play as one of the identified solutions to deal with this issue. On overall, this provides the entire need for this research within the Namibian educational system.

1.3 Objectives of Research

Our topic relates very much to the theory of Vygotsky on child development and language learning. In his Dutch translated book, Das Spiel und sein Rolle für die psychische Entwicklung des Kindes. In H. Röhrs (ED), Das Spiel-ein Urphänomen des Lebens (pp. 129-146), Vygotsky gave a clear explanation of how role play improves the language ability children at early years of language learning and how it helps with children’s social interaction. Supported widely by other theorists such as Bruner with his book Child’s talk: Learning to use language, where getting the child to talk contribute to better language learning and language use.

The aim of the study would also be to test how role play influence language learning and how evidence from this test is likely to affect the social interaction and development of the child. The study would also compare how different language teachers in Namibia use role play to improve language learning and development. The study would only further aim to deepen the acknowledgement on how significant role play really is in language learning and considering the perspective of social development of children. The main objective of this research it to find out how role play can be a significant factor to help to develop learners’ language with
the aim of eliminating the learners’ anti-social problems. Our thesis would also seek to determine the relationship between language impairment and psychosocial or social problems in young children. With these questions, we would be able to find out more about other language problems and the disorders associated with language impairment. As language teachers, the answers to these questions would help us grow in the competence of helping children who might otherwise be prejudiced due to language impairment and their social behaviour thereof.

1.4 Research Questions

This study seeks to obtain answers to the following research questions:

(1) The teachers’ perception on the overall learners’ language usage in light of social skills?

(2) The teachers’ perception on the influence does English language have on social development

(3) The teachers’ perception on the influence role play on language and social problems?

These questions would be thoroughly discussed within the literature framework to get the view of what other studies are saying about the use of roleplay as a strategy in improving social skills through language development. It was important to establish a hypothesis to the study to see if there would be a conclusive and decisive evidence to the whole phenomenon under scrutiny.

1.5 Research Structure

As the structure of the thesis have already been described and laid out earlier on, most importance would be emphasised on the literature review part of the thesis as it advocates greatly to satisfy the burden of our thesis. Therefore, is was of grave importance to establish
what would be discussed in the review according to sub-section so as to lay out the grounds very clearly. The literature review will discuss the following sub-topics:

A) Language Development on Social Skills  
B) Role Play and Language Development  
C) Effects of role play on social skills development

In the discussion section, which is also deemed to be the very important section in the thesis writing, the thesis will elaborate on the finding of the results in accordance to the sub/sections laid in the literature review or framework.

2. Literature Review

This section is laid out to review the literature related to role play as a teaching strategy on language development for social skills development. The literature that will be reviewed under this section will follow a certain order according to how it was laid out on the structure sub/topic under the introduction.

A) Language Development on Social Skills  
B) Role Play and Language Development  
C) Effects of role play on social skills development

The first part of the review will focus on the influence of language development on social skills. It will elaborate what impact does the weakness or impairment of language have on how students interact with other people within their societal setting. This will path way to discuss underlying social cognition factors that are caused by the richness or the lack of vocabulary and communication abilities such as emotions and psychosocial problems.
The second part of the review will focus on the influence of roleplay on language development. This section will discuss how role play influences language development when used as a teaching strategy. The reason for creating this section is to link it with social skills as discussed in the first part of the literature review because roleplay in essence is a kind of strategy that encompasses the characteristics of social phenomenon as it involves interaction and high consideration to social cognition such as the comprehension of emotional and psychological aspects of social interaction. Language is a medium through which social communication is passed and this section assumes that role play as a strategy helps with language development in order to improve social skills.

The third and the last part of the literature review is the influence of role play on social skills development. As social skills phenomenon on social skills development.

2.1 Language Development and Social Skills

This thesis does not necessarily focus on language development as a lead of the thesis more than it focuses on role of role play on social skills development. However, it is argued vehemently that language becomes the inevitable factor when it comes to social communication and impairment on language causes major stress when it comes to social interaction. This thesis talks about language impairment in every sense of the term, from severe language impairment caused by autism and Asperger syndrome, to mild language impairment caused by mere mispronunciation of words, stuttering and other aspects that causes hindrance in proper social interaction.

Language impairment, severe or mild has a great consequence on a child’s social skills. Aram, Ekelman, & Nation (1984); and Bryan (1986) in their literatures brought evidence about the documentation of children with range of disabilities which involves language deficits and discussed how they cause significant social difficulties. Although clinical language deficits
would not be the grounds of this thesis as opposed to natural class observation language difficulties, the evidence produced by these authors would help establish the significance of language competence in improving the social skills of learners at junior primary level. This would be added as proof that language has direct impact on how successful a child would be in his or her social relations. Further discussions were brought forth claiming the importance of language skills in maintaining successful social relationships. (Dodge, Pettit, McClaskey, & Brown, 1986; Levenson & Gottman, 1983). From these reviews, there can be established that language is very important in creating and maintaining social relationships. Children with language impairment or language difficulties do not create these relationships well compared to their counterparts, the children without language impairment. This becomes an absolute reason as to why developing language first becomes of utmost significance if we want learners to associate well with other learners or other people as a whole in social settings.

The classroom is the first and foremost social context a lot children. There are studies performed at Language Acquisition Preschool (LAP) of the University of Kansas, Rice, which suggest that a lot of children with speech deficiency and poor language skills do not interact the same as the counterparts developing normally Gertner, Rice, & Hadley, 1994; Rice, Sell, & Hadley, 1991).

The learning of words and vocabulary is of utmost significance because the entire language development depends on vocabulary. There is a strong relationship there. Numerous studies have indicated that vocabulary size in people who speak more than one language is a very reliable predictor for future success because these people have the potential to access to participate in events of communication in bilingual communities. (Fernandez et al. 1992).
This is another aspect about language. The importance of vocabulary size. Children with richer vocabulary tend to associate themselves more in social interaction. There can be an observation how the richness of vocabulary, which entails language development is a massive contributor to successful social integration and how the vice versa can be concluded on as well. It is important to recognise that language deficits entails a variety of factors that makes children unable to use language properly. A wide variety of aspects, from low self-esteem and confidence to severe speech disability like stuttering prevents children from acquiring vocabulary and language properly to communicate better. When children realise that their vocabulary is enhanced and developed, they begin to grow confidence to use them in communication situation. Role play becomes a platform for speech therapy as it becomes a platform to practice language that children would use in social situations.

To expand our understanding of the influence of language on social development of learners or children, we need to glance the effect of language on the cognitive development of these children. It is viewed that our understanding of the natural environment is made possible by how the language is connected or intersected to it. This is to mean that we only make sense, entailing the cognitive interpretation and understanding of nature because of the language that we attach to the natural environment. Therefore, it is important to realise that our interaction with each other is connected entirely by our understanding of the natural environment, which includes the other people and this understanding is our cognitive development which according to Homer & Tamis-LeMonda (2005), our cognition is depended entirely on language. This notion is taken in highest regard when Homer & Tamis-LeMonda (2005) established that Cognition is completely molded by language, and that we understand the world based on the way in which our culture's language dissects nature. This establishes why social skills development is governed by language development and without language, we
would not be able to understand the world around and therefore it would be impossible to understand other people as well. Without understanding other people, we would be able to socially interact with them properly.

Having established this notion, there have been however increasing body of research that terminates the influence of language. This termination should not be viewed in the sense that language has absolutely no influence of social interactional skills of children, because it all around does, the issue is on the level of language that really has the influence. Research states that it is not entirely the knowledge of the structure of language that has the influence, although this is very important to regulate the growth in language for better understanding, but it the socio-cultural usage of the language. Homer & Tamis-LeMonda (2005) emphasized that the focus is not so much on the structure of language but on the socio-cultural uses of language. It is why any of the researchers and theorists who adopt this view have been influenced by Vygotsky's notion that language is a cultural tool that mediates human action, including thought.

Now, if this phenomenon can be imagined, we can clearly imagine how improving and developing language itself would mean for socialization of learners at large, especially when it comes to the confidence in communicating using rich and improved vocabulary. The results would be the socially competent learners of course.

Furthermore, when we speak of the relationship between language and social development, Homer & Tamis-LeMonda (2005) outline three main functions of language. Language provides new "objects of contemplation"; it provides a means of making cognitive processes social; and it provides children with access to knowledge accumulated by their culture.
To bring closure to this sub-section, it becomes very important to point out the overall functions of languages. Establishing the functions of language would conclusively elaboration on the relationship between language development and social growth of learners.

To discuss this phenomenon, we took hold of contributory work of Catherine Nelson to Homer & Tamis-LeMonda (2005), who discussed about the functions of language on a child. Nelson argues that language provides three main advantages for children. First, language creates a new set of "objects to contemplate," which includes abstract or imaginary concepts that cannot be derived solely from observation of the physical world. (Homer & Tamis-LeMonda, 2005). This is to mean that language helps establish meaning that is coined by the physical world. Without language, children would only be observing the physical world and not know what to do with this observation. Language comes in to create meaning of the observation. The cognitive understanding of the physical world is made elaborate by the language that is attached to it. A second function of language is to allow thoughts and ideas to be expressed and contemplated by more than one person: By being able to express and debate ideas, cognition is no longer a solitary experience, but instead becomes a social activity. (Homer & Tamis-LeMonda, 2005). This function can be closely linked to the first function.

After having established the cognitive understanding of the physical world, now it boils down to producing the understanding of the world through expression of ideas and thoughts between people. This entails social interaction with other people. This can be done in language form only. This very idea alone can establish the relationship between language development and social growth of learners. This is because understanding does not stand in isolation anymore, it becomes part of the social stature of learners. Last but not least, exchange of communication enabled by language gives children the chance to access vast store of knowledge that has been accumulated by other cultures (Homer & Tamis-LeMonda, 2005).
This is the last function of language according to the author Catherine Nelson as discussed in Homer & Tamis-LeMonda (2005). Language is used as a communication tool that can help the learners to access more knowledge within their culture. Evidently, this has to be done through social interaction of learners with each other and other people within their communities. Because of language, we do not have to learn everything on our own, but instead we can take advantage of the experiences of others. (Homer & Tamis-LeMonda, 2005)

On these grounds, we can clearly continue to lay the foundation of our thesis topic, in that particular order, role play influences language development which influences social development. In this case, how exactly does role play help to develop the language. Our next sub-section discusses this phenomenon in clear details.

2.2 Role Play and Language Development

One of the prominent theories that went deep about the significance of play on children is the theory of child development of Lev Vygotsky. According to Mooney (2013), Lev came up with various practical methods on how play can be used to develop children’s language skills and in the end the children’s social skills. Mooney (2013) made record on how the theory of child development of Vygotsky contributed to this phenomenon in his book Theories of childhood: An introduction to Dewey, Montessori, Erikson, Piaget, and Vygotsky.

Much learning take place when children play. According to Mooney (2013), this idea is considered by Vygotsky, agreeing with Piaget. He believed that language builds on development and development builds on language. This is because when children take part in play, they are in constant use of words and therefore the use of language. (Mooney, 2013). Just considering this paraphrase from Mooney, we can already create an idea that through
play, children use language more often than not and through this, language develops as the child develops. If we put this notion into organized pretend play (roleplay), language is practiced as it would be used in real-life situations. In so doing, roleplaying then helps develop a language that would make it easier for social interaction. Constant use of language in play or roleplay means constant practice of language. As the children’s language develops, so does their cognition and so their ability to take part in society becomes heightened.

Furthermore, Mooney (2013) establishes that the world that the learners live in is shaped by the communities, families, socioeconomic statuses, their education and their entire culture. Their understanding of this world partly comes from the values and beliefs of the adults around them and other children as well. This would highlight how role play would impact learners how they are more likely to interact with the environment around them, outside of school. As learners speak and listen to one another, they obtain new concepts. Mooney (2013) also stressed out what Piaget said when he stressed out the importance of play being the best platform for learning. As children take part in pretend play, they begin to take full understanding of the environment and activities around them. We can clearly understand what Mooney meant when he tried to analyze what Piaget was emphasizing. To make sense of the objects and activities simply mean that the child is developing cognitive understanding of the world around him. Language development becomes part of this cognitive development and it is through this play and roleplay that would determine how

Sadeghi & Sharifi (2013) investigate four after-teaching activities and their effects, namely narrative writing, games, role-play, and tasks on speaking and vocabulary gain of one hundred and eleven Iranian elementary EFL learners across gender. The results indicated main effects for vocabulary learning through the different activity types, and role-play being
the leading cause for high vocabulary compared to the others. It was also proven that the effect was more favoring the female learners compared to their counterparts.

2.3 Effects of role play on social skills development

By discussing the reasons for using role play would establish the effects of role play on social development of children. There are many reasons for using the method of role play in learning vocabulary. Role play is the major method in the approach of communication and has proven to have tremendous benefits, as it provokes social interaction that stimulates the use of language outside of classroom and has the potential to challenge the learners’ believes. Also, as suggested by research, when teachers approach students with problems and control the process of finding solutions, this strategy is proven to be very effective. (Vincent & Shepherd, 1998; Piaget. 1972). This can mean that instead of letting learners go out and face challenges in real life, practice should be made in the classroom in order to prepare the learners for the outside real-life social challenges. The teacher in this case becomes the important factor on choosing the best strategy that would get the learners ready for such challenges. When we talk about communication and vocabulary usage, role play becomes the best strategy to establish scenarios that entails a social problem and finding a solution to it. In so doing, as the learner solves these problems in an interactive way in the class as the strategy of role play dictates, so would the learner solve the same problem in real life with appropriate communication and social interaction.

Reasons for choosing role play as the central focus for this thesis go beyond the scope and we cannot establish all the reasons in this thesis. However, the best reason is the idea that role play forms part of a teaching and learning approach that has been supported by research to be of utmost significant when it comes to teaching and learning processes. The learner centered approach. Role play is about creating a problematic scenario and let the learners take up roles
to find a solution to that very problem. The learners become active and interactive as the approach of learner centered approach suggests. John Dewey was the biggest supporter of the learners centered education. “As a progressive educator, John Dewey shared the sentiments of Lev Vygotsky, Montessori, and Piaget about the central ideas of that of the ability to move, that the entire education system should be learner-centered in the sense that it must be both interactive and active and that it must encompass the natural world of the learners and the where the learners live (Mooney, 2013).

By reviewing all these literatures, we could understand why role play might be the best teaching method to employ when helping to develop children’s language competence and therefore help to improve the learners’ social skills.

3. Methodology

Research was carried out through using quantitative method. The reason for doing this is to be able to identify views and perceptions of language teachers who are currently in practice of how often they make use of role play as the teaching method to improve language development and how it has affected social skills development of the child, on the side of quantitative methods, while also bringing out the grounded research on the topic of child language development and social skill development and how role play has played its role in the matter, which is tested out through quantitative research method. The decision to make use of quantitative method approach is so we could provide more accurate data and a clear picture of the topic under scrutiny. Since the thesis will be about the use of role play by teachers to develop children’s language use with the aim to eliminate social skills impairments, and the role of role play within the language practice of children our study would be valid and reliable within the education sector. The decision to utilize quantitative methods is also important as it
would provide a numerical, quantifiable and calculable perception of teacher’s perceptions, ideas, views and opinions on role play as a language teaching method as well as to get the accurate and factual conclusion on the topic by reviewing the surveys done on the topic. Moreover, to navigate our study on the grounds of the quantitative data collection to improve the interpretive validity to accurately portray the viewpoints, thoughts and experience of the participants that we to, and we use questionnaire. This approach is best to enhance and strengthen the quantitative methods as a methodological approach.

3.1 Research Strategy

From a variety of strategies of research, we employed the description research strategy as a quantitative research methodology. The main of using this strategy was to investigates the quantitatively different ways in which people experience something or think about something and in our case, we investigated whether the teachers in Namibia use role play as a teaching method to improve language use, how they actually make use of the role play method and what impact it has on social skills and language development of learners in Namibian schools. The use of this strategy would be a good one because as a quantitative method, it enabled us as researchers and got direct perception of teachers and their ground experience. The results from this strategy came as close as possible and we are having factual findings as student’s feelings and thoughts about the aspect under scrutiny is primal.

3.2 Population and sampling

We have decided to make use of the criterion sampling method. We thought it necessary that to collect certain information from the participants. We targeted the Junior Primary English teachers in two different Regions. Khomas and Hardap region, and three teachers per school. This further cause us to come up with the best strategic method to choose the best candidates who provided quantitative results to our research and we selected teachers who deal with
English language and the teaching methods involved. All of the twenty candidates that we have considered for questionnaire are the Junior primary school English teachers who are currently working, and they provided us with some background knowledge of role play as a teaching method to improve language development and deal with social issue that we experience today. The most important reasons why we target this group is all because, at this phase, it is where psychosocial issues are likely to be identified and language acquisition can be observed. Lastly it is the transitional stage from pre-school to senior Primary school. This we believed would provide us with concrete background experience of teaching methods that have been used, which role play is one of them and how this method would help to influence the language development and social growth of the learners’ at this level.

Furthermore, we employed another sampling method to filter out teachers so we come directly to the number of teachers that we wanted. This sample was the stratified sampling method. The teachers we gathered initially were more than we needed. We also found that some of these teachers ability to teach English, which was the primary criteria, was distorted by the fact they were influenced by the first languages that were taught at the schools. This was bound to influence how the teachers would respond to the questionnaire. The stratified sampling was employed to filter out the teachers that were more likely to be influenced by first language. With this sampling method, we had to select the teachers that we believed would not be influenced by the first language.

3.3 Data Collection Method

Having used the quantitative method of research, the methods of data collection, the questionnaire indeed supported the study. In the data collection method, we made use of structured questionnaires and surveys from the quantitative methodology. This process from criterion sampling methods extended to stratified sampling method.
3.4 Questionnaire

We came up with twenty-two item questionnaire that we distributed to English teachers from different schools in Namibia. Under this method, it was safe to highlight department of work be a supervised self-completion where the link of questionnaires was sent out and connection of internet of language teachers in different areas of Namibia schools. Ethical issues are some of the things that we as researchers had to carefully take into consideration. One of the biggest challenges that we anticipated with this method of data collection was getting the respondents to partake in this process since they are all teachers and was ever busy with teaching and extra moral activities. With this challenge, we also anticipated problems with the internet connection in most of the areas. We made prearrangement and they spared time for our introduction session. After the proper last session, we distributed our questionnaire to them online.

The online questionnaire distribution created a great opportunity and we managed to able to get as much respondents that took part simultaneously without to fret. The questionnaire method was the best we believed as it enabled us to reach the interviewees from the distance that we were.

It is important to point out that the questionnaire format that was used to carry out the research was adopted from the Five-To-Fifteen-Revised (5-15R) This thesis’ questionnaire also made use of Some of the questions used in the language section of the questionnaire by (Kadesjö et al., 2017). Kadesjö et al. (2017) established a section where they investigated the phenomenon of language development and these questions were very useful to this thesis in finding out how the teachers developed the language for social skills in Namibia.
3.5 Data analysis methods

The questionnaires and the electronic surveys provided the quantitative data which analyzed vividly in Microsoft excel and spreadsheet software. We then made use of these applications to generate the results on SPSS application. We continued using the SPSS to generate the descriptive analysis results which made it very easy for us to interpret and conclude on the results. We carried out the percentage and frequency tests within the descriptive analysis method and then used the graphing from the word processing to report our results.

3.6 Division of labor

We set out target dates and for our thesis to be completed on time, we divided work in the following way. Drusilla Mbaukua was responsible for ten participants for meeting up with them on session appointments as well as to handle the questionnaires of the data collection process, also responsible to analyze the data from questionnaire of data collection. On the other hand, Nelson Kaovere was responsible for other ten participants in the same way. This was basically the part that needed much attention to on splitting the work. The rest of the work, we decided that we just work together.

3.7 Limitations

Like everything else, progress has its own limitation. As researchers, we had our own share of limitations. For starters, we believe that we could have obtained more results from our candidates if we had used the mixed research method. Since we have only used the quantitative research method, perhaps if we had added the qualitative, our research would have had more reliability to it. So much perception would have been obtained with the mixed method and even if it could have constituted a lot of work, it would have as well constituted more reliable results. Apart from the method that could have been used, we could have opted for a more larger interview sample population. This would have given us a larger perspective
about the phenomenon under research. The results therefore would have been more reliable than they are now. This would have obviously required more time to complete the entire process of interviewing and results generation. Another factor that could have validated our research was the physical attendance of the interview process. Our interview was conducted via social network platforms such as Whatsapp and Skype. Although they proofed to have been effective, we reckon that if we had been present during the questionnaire completion, we would have gotten all the respondents to answer all the questions accordingly to avoid any omission of the response, which we believed caused much of our research to not be as reliable as it would have been. The last factor that we believed have hindered the reliability of our research is the number of respondents that we had at the end of the day. For this reason, we as researcher could not do the factor analysis to validify our results as doing the factor analysis would have required us to have respondents more 200.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

It was important to establish the reliability of our research which established the ethicality as well as the authenticity of our research. Therefore, the Cronbach’s Alpha test was done for this purpose as a results it was done as overall variable test as well as the variables to test the reliability for each and every construct of the research.

According to the figure above, the Cronbach’s Alpha indicates a .829 on the test that was done on all the 21 variables or the items that were used for the entire research.

The Cronbach’s Alpha test was also done to show reliability of each construct, which is the single research questions. For the first to the third constructs (the first to the third research questions), the Cronbach’s test was as follows:

(1) *What is the perception of the teachers on the overall learners’ language usage in light of social responses?*
According to the figure above, the Cronbach’s Alpha indicates a 0.825 on the test that was done on only the variables that answers the first research question, which were only 8.

For the second construct, the Cronbach’s Alpha was indicated as follows:

(2) **What influence does English language have on social development**

According to the figure above, the Cronbach’s Alpha indicates a 0.835 on the test that was done on only the variables that answers the second research question, which were only 2.

For the third construct, the Cronbach’s Alpha was indicated as follows:

(3) **How would role play be the best way of treating language problems and social problems?**

According to the figure above, the Cronbach’s Alpha indicates a 0.709 on the test that was done on only the variables that answers the third research question, which were only 11.

From the explanation above, we can conclude on the validity and the reliability of our research based on the questionnaire that we have used.

So far, this thesis has attempted to conclude on the notion that language development helps the process of social growth of learners at the junior primary school level. At the same time, role play has been identified a teaching method, amongst others well suited to navigate the process of language development especially where language and communication is concerned. This section will discuss and break down the perception of the teachers that were studied and how the literature eliminates or concur with the findings. The findings were illuminated to satisfy the burden of the topic *The Role of Role Play as a Teaching Method on Social Skills Through Development of English Language of Children at Junior Primary School Level: A Study on the Perception of Junior Primary School Teachers in Namibia.*

Since the thesis was sub-sectioned in the literature review to provide answers to the topic, by
answering the research questions according, so would the discussion of the results would flow. The findings were able to answer the following research questions:

1) **The teachers’ perception on the overall learners’ language usage in light of social skills?**

2) **The teachers’ perception on the influence does English language have on social development**

3) **The teachers’ perception on the influence role play on language and social problems?**

First and foremost, it was important to do the reliability test of the research. Although this test can be considered as compulsory to do as part of the validity and ethical issues, it was important to establish as part of the tests to indicate why the results from this thesis can be deemed as admissible and can be used to substantiate any other research on the same discipline.

According to figure 1 under the results and interpretation, calculating the reliability of the results, four Cronbach’s Alpha had to be tested. The first Cronbach’s Alpha tested the reliability of the results provided by all the variables that were used in the whole research. This method tested the reliability of the thesis as a body and according to the results, the Cronbach’s Alpha for the entire thesis results was found to be .829 for all the 21 items all together. According to Muijs (2004), Chronbach’s Alpha is reliable when it is above .7. The results from this reliability tests proved to be more than the established minimum establishment by Muijs (2004) and so, according to the attained Cronbach’s Alpha, it is safe to say that it was more reliable.

The rest of the Cronbach’s Alpha were attained to test the reliability of the research questions or constructs. It was important to establish the Cronbach’s Alpha for each construct because it ensured the path at proving that the research questions properly satisfied the burden of the
research topic. The Cronbach’s Alphas for each research questions were discussed each separately according to how the research questions appear.

(1) The teachers’ perception on the overall learners’ language usage in light of social skills?

According to figure 2 under the results and interpretation, this research question attempted to find out what the teachers thought about the strength of the language use of the learners and how this enabled them to successfully engage in social interactions with other people. To test the reliability of this constructs, only the items or variables that answered this research questions were considered. And they were only 8 of them. The cronbach’s Alpha for this construct was found to be .825 and again, we consider what Muijs (2004, p.73) established, that for a Cronbach’s Alpha to be reliable, it must be above .7. Again, this Cronbach’s Alpha was found to be more than reliable. It is right to say that the variables considered under this construct were reliable to answer this research question.

(2) The teachers’ perception on the influence does English language have on social development

According to figure 3 under the results and interpretation, the second construct attempted to find out the influence of language on the social growth of learners. This construct assumes that without language, social relationships would be hard for learners to successfully create. Only 2 variables were considered to determine the Cronbach’s Alpha for this construct and it provided a good .835 reliability. It is very important again to consider the statement of Muijs (2004), Cronbach’s Alha is reliable when it’s above .7 and again this Cronbach’s Alpha proved to be more reliable when considering the only variables that answers this research question.
(3) The teachers’ perception on the influence role play on language and social problems?

According to figure 4 under the results and interpretation, the third construct attempted to find the perception teacher on whether or not role play is the best teaching method to improve language and therefore improve social skills. Under this construct, 11 variables were tested for reliability.

4. Results

To further satisfy the burden of our topic, we did the descriptive analysis where we established the frequency test with the percentage. In order to paint a clear picture of the descriptive analysis, we tested the frequency and percentage of the participants’ responses for each construct (research question) and we reported the results for each construct and we did the test and displayed them graphically.

(A)

(B)
Figures 1 The teachers’ perception on the overall learners’ language usage in light of social skills?

The graph on figure 1 A and B show what the teachers think about language ability of learners. They test the overall leaners’ language usage for the purpose of social responses. Observing from the figures, the teachers indicate that learners do have language problems when it comes language ability and social response. It is just not as often as expected. Most of the respondents indicated sometimes as their answer, with often response taking second popularity. This further shows that students do have problems with social response due to poor language competence. These results conclude on the first research construct or question.
Figure 2 The teachers’ perception on the influence does English language have on social development

The graph of figure 2 shows the results for the second research construct. It shows a positive response to the question of the influence of language on social growth. According to the graph, the teachers perceive that language plays an important role when it comes to how the learners interact with other learners or people within their society. With the options of yes, no maybe, the yes option shows the most popularity, while maybe was indicated by few teachers. There was no response for the no response option. So, out of 21 teachers, on the question of language improving social skills, about 18 teachers responded positively while around 3 teachers indicated uncertainty with a maybe option. And on the question of influence of language on social skills, 16 teachers indicated a yes positive response while only 5 indicated uncertainty with a maybe option. No teachers responded on the no options.

(3) The teachers’ perception on the influence role play on language and social problems?

Figure 3 The teachers’ perspectives on the contribution of role play to language development

The graph on figure 3 answers the question about role play being the best method to develop language and improve social skills of learners. The variable question for this construct on this
graph asks teacher if role play helps learners to express ideas well and lead to language development. (Social and language). Out of 21 teachers, around 9 teachers agreed to the variable question, while only 4 strongly agreed showing adamants on the variable. 2 teachers shows uncertainty when they responded with neutrality and 3 teacher disagreed with the variable question. 3 teachers chose not to respond to the question.

The graph (and the ones following here) shows only the responded results. The indication of teachers who have not responded to the variable question is omitted from this graph and therefore would only be assumed as such. As unresponsive.

**Figure 4 The teachers’ perspectives on the impact of role play on language and social skills of learners and their evaluation**

Still under the same construct to find out if role play is the best method to develop language and improve social skills, most teachers responded positively. On the variable question if learners expressed themselves well in the English language (language development) after series of role play, about 11 teachers said yes while only 5 indicated a sometimes response. As few as 3 teachers said no and 3 decided not to respond. On the question if there was any improvement on social engagement (social growth) after series of role play, around 10
teachers responded positively with yes, while only 5 responded with sometimes. Only 3 teachers said no. 3 teachers did not respond to the question.

The other variable questions were on the teachers’ evaluation of the language growth and social growth. If they evaluated social growth, 11 teachers said that they do evaluate social growth after using role play as a teaching method and only 7 teachers indicated sometimes. 3 teachers did not respond to the variable. On the variable of evaluating language growth after using role play as teaching method, 14 teachers responded with a yes, while only 4 said sometimes. 3 teacher did not respond to that variable.

Figure 5 The teacher’s perspectives on the contribution of role play on social skills of learners

Figure 5 still offers the results for the third construct that asks how role play can be a great teaching method to improve social skills. The variable question asked for the overall impression of role play as remedy to social skills problems of learners and about 8 teachers
said that role play is very helpful in solving problems with social skills. 9 teachers said that role play is helpful to remedy social problems that learners experience in regard to communication. However, only 1 person expressed negative overall impression of role play on social growth with a useless response. 3 teachers did not respond to the question.

**Role play as a teaching method and student participation**

This section will describe the teachers’ perspective about the use of role play and how they encourage learners to participate in role play activities. This perspective becomes contributory to the thesis as it helps navigate through Namibia’s typical classroom and how teachers choose to use role play and getting the learners involved. The rest of the graphs explains this phenomenon.

![Graph](image)

**Figure 6 The teachers’ perspectives on the use of role play as a teaching method and the possible alternatives**

The graph 6 still answers on the third construct if role play is the best method to improve language and social skills. Two variable questions were used here. The first one asked if the teachers used role play as a teaching method at all. 15 teachers said that they did while only 6 said that they didn’t use role play as a method. This question would go to illustrate the teachers perception on the use of role play as a method and if there is any need at all. The
other variable question asked if there was any other social oriented method that teachers use for the purpose of improving language and social skills of learners. The same way, 15 teachers said yes and only 6 disagreed with a no response.

![Figure 7 The teachers’ perspectives on use of role play and the learners’ participation](image_url)

![Figure 8 The teacher’s perspectives on the learners’ participation in role play activities](image_url)
Still responding to the third construct, the variable questions asked about the frequent use of role play as a method and the frequent encouragement of learners to take part in role play. On the frequent use, 4 teachers said they *always* use role play and 5 said they *often* use it. 5 others said *sometimes*, while only 2 said that they *rarely* use role play as teaching method. Only 1 teacher said that he/she never used role play. On the frequent encouragement, 9 teachers said that they *always* encourage learners to participate in role plays, while only 5 said that they encourage only *often*. 2 teachers said that they encourage only *sometimes* and 1 said *rarely* and another one said *never*. These variables would lay down the perception of teachers on the importance of role play as a method to improve language for social skills of learners.

5. Discussion

The descriptive analysis was done to obtain the frequency of the respondents. This test illuminated the direct describable results to see exactly what the respondents have said under this topic. This test was also done for each construct just as the Cronbach’s were. The variables that were used for each construct to attain the Cronbach’s Alpha were the ones used attain the results for each construct. And so they will be discussed accordingly.

For clear understanding of the discussion, we have decided to discuss the first construct together with the second construct. This is because as can be observed from the discussion, as we discuss the results of the first construct of identifying the learners’ language problems for social response, construct 2 already begins its part of the discussion by creating the relationship between language and social growth. This was done to avoid repetition of the same discussion when discussing the second construct. This would only be done on the discussion of the descriptive results. It is important to understand that the research questions still remain 3 as they have been from the beginning of the study.
(1) The teachers’ perception on the overall learners’ language usage in light of social skills? (2) The teachers’ perception on the influence does English language have on social development

Constructing this question 1 was very important for the research because since the research attempted to find out if role play plays a role in developing language for social growth of learners, we had to find out if there were any language problems amongst the learners that role play might have eliminated at all. When testing the perception of teachers, it is paramount to establish a scenario that would surface positive response from the respondents. The research must involve something that the teacher might have had any direct dealing with, even if it is a presumption. This research question established possible scenarios that teachers might have had experience with when it comes to learners’ language ability for the use of role play. We found that by identifying the language problems that the learners have and testing the descriptive analysis, we also identified the influence that language has on social growth of the learners. The identifying of the language problems of the learners also identified the social problems of the learners at the same time and therefore the concurrence with determination of the influence of language on social growth of learners was inevitable and prompted us to discuss the two constructs concurrently.

According to the results, these Namibian teachers faced numerous language problems with the learners and some of them thought that using role play is good to curb some of these language problems so that learners successfully engage in social interaction.

According to figure 1 A and B, teachers identified that children have language problems. Some of the language difficulties that were pointed out were Difficulty expressing him/herself in whole sentences, in grammatically correct sentences, or inflecting words;
problems with understanding of language, use of language, or verbal communication interfere with your child’s daily function; Pronounces specific sounds incorrectly (has a lisp, difficulty pronouncing the sound of ”r”, nasal voice etc). With these difficulties pointed, it is crucial to point out that these are language problems. From these problems, the teachers again pointed out the other problems such as Difficulty taking part in a conversation, e.g., problems shifting from listening to talking; Difficulty perceiving what other people say (often says “what?”, ”what do you mean?”); Difficulty understanding explanations and instructions, which are identified to be social problems. From this, it is easy to see the trend between language problems and social problems becoming concurrent. The teachers in a lot of ways pointed out that language difficulties cause learners to disengage from social interaction because they would not know to successfully communicate ideas and express themselves to the fullest about what they want. This phenomenon illuminates the tight relationship between language and the growth in social growth.

**The Influence according to research question 2:**

According to figure 2 under the results and interpretation section, the two variable questions that were used to determine the influence of language on social growth were answered positively by the teachers to also highlight the reason why the teachers also pointed out that the language problems that learners have also caused difficulties in integrating themselves successfully in social relationships. For research question 2, the two variable questions that were used to find the influence of language on social skills were: **Do you think that language has any influence on social skills?** And **Do you think improvement on language skills also improves social skills?** According to the results shown on figure 2 (see results) most teachers responded **yes** to both questions. This typically concludes that the teachers
agree completely that language development would improve social interaction of learners and that there is a huge relationship between language development and social growth.

The literature supported the above phenomenon wholly. Cohen (2010) emphasised greatly the above elaboration of the relationship between language development and social skills improvement. She adds that language and communicative competence are very important in learning as well as engaging in social relationships, and to regulate behaviour and emotions form as little as infancy onwards (Cohen, 2010). Cohen here established clearly the relationship between language and social growth. It is of utmost significance that learners gain language competence before they engage in social relationships and be able to regulate their own behaviour and emotions. Moreover, having said this point, it would be appropriate to link the functionality of the mind when it comes to language development and the relation to the natural environment, which constitute the society in which the learners roam. This means that by cognitively understanding the language, the mind can easily relate the environment to this understanding. This notion is supported by Homer & Tamis-LeMonda (2005) who stated that cognition is encompassed by language, and our understanding of the world is based on the way in which our culture's language dissects nature. This is to mean that we only make sense, entailing the cognitive interpretation and understanding of nature because of the language that we attach to the natural environment. Therefore, it is important to realise that our interaction with each other is connected entirely by our understanding of the natural environment, which includes the other people and this understanding is our cognitive development.

Furthermore, Laufer (1997) continue to support the above discussion of research question 1 and 2 by establishing that in order for students to understand each other and other people, whether in first or second language, vocabulary becomes the key element. He states that no understanding is possible either in the first language or foreign language without a complete
and overall understanding of the vocabulary. Vocabulary here becomes the element of language, and without appropriate vocabulary, learners would find it hard to take part in conversations or explain what they want or follow instructions. These problems are some of the problems that were pointed out by the teachers that were studied. Laufer (1997) tried to make it clear that vocabulary, in either languages be it first or second, enables learners to understand what is said and successfully communicate with other people. The Namibian teachers pointed out one of the problem **Difficulty perceiving what other people say (often says “what?”; ”what do you mean?”)**. This problem can be caused by the use of vocabulary that other people are using with the learners, which of course would be minimised if the vocabulary of the learners had been properly developed. As this problem progresses, it could result in the learner completely withdrawing and not take part in conversation as it was one of the problem that the teachers pointed out, **Difficulty taking part in a conversation, e.g., problems shifting from listening to talking.** This entire notion was cleared by Lajooee & Barimani (2013) when they added that although learning vocabulary is very important in English First Language, knowing just the words and meaning is not enough. What matters the most is being able to use them in various situational context. Situational contexts here refer to social integration of the learners. this is to say that if learners know vocabulary and not know how to execute them is situational contexts, they will find it difficult to take part in conversations. The literature here affirms not only the importance of vocabulary but the importance of being able to use them. This will have to do with confidence which can be harnessed by the use of role play as a teaching method. Kuipers & Clemens, (1998); Huang and Shan (2008) and Altun (2015) support this notion by agreeing that role-play methods have given clear their potential to effectively teach English to learners, as this method can increase learners' self-confidence, enthusiasm and empathy, and encourage deep order of
thinking. Role-play is a teaching method that shapes vocabulary attaining in a cheap, more
controlled, and exciting ways the teachers and learners.

Catherine Nelson, an author who contributed to the works of Homer & Tamis-LeMonda
(2005) established the relationship between language and social growth, in support of the
cognitive consideration of language by pointing out three functions of language. “Nelson
argues that language provides three main advantages for children. First, language creates a
new set of "objects to contemplate," which includes abstract or imaginary concepts that
cannot be derived solely from observation of the physical world.” (Homer & Tamis-LeMonda,
2005, p.1). Object of contemplation and abstract or imaginary concepts would
constitute the cognitive ability and the understanding of these concepts, linguistically would
establish the link with the natural environment. This added to the rest of the discussion
creates the influence that language has on social growth of the learners.

So, to conclude this part, because of language, we can take advantage of the experience of
other people. This means that we do not need to learn everything on our own (Homer &
Tamis-LeMonda, 2005), because language is the medium by which higher intellectual
processes are revealed (McCarthy 1933). This is because to establish successful social
relationships and maintaining them, language skills are very importance (Dodge, Pettit,
McClaskey, & Brown, 1986; Levenson & Gottman, 1983).

(3) The teachers’ perception on the influence role play on language and social problems?

This construct attempted to find if English language teachers in Namibia thought that role
play has direct impact to improve language and social weaknesses. To answer this construct,
11 variables were considered as they were on the Cronbach’s results and analysed in the
descriptive test analysis. And they are discussed as follows.
Firstly, it was important to test the variables that answered the core of the research question. This meant taking the variables that asked if the role play was best to improve language and social skills. One of the best variables to test the significance of role play as remedy to language problems and social weakness is the variable **Role play helps students to express ideas well and contribute to language development.** According to *figure 3* (see figure on results and interpretation section), out of 21 teachers, about 13 teachers agreed to this variable question, while only 2 were a little uncertain and showed neutrality. 3 disagreed and 3 didn’t answer. This is enough to point out the overall perception of teacher that they do agree that role play would help learners express ideas well and language is developed through the process. To still establish the teachers’ perception on the role of role play on language development and social growth of learners, we still consider other variable questions such as:

**Do you evaluate language growth from the use of role play?**

**Do you evaluate social growth from the use of role play?**

The above two questions were necessary because we thought that their response would give us an idea of their perception of role play. Teachers would not employ certain method if they didn’t think that it would benefit learners in a certain way, let alone go as far as evaluate progress. From the results on *figure 4* (see figure in results), most teachers evaluate social growth and the rest do it only sometimes. It is safe to conclude that teachers in Namibia, after finding it necessary employing roleplay to improve language and social skills, they do evaluate the growth on language and social skills, even if *figure 4* shows that the teachers evaluate the language development from the use of role play than they do the social growth. This was enough to establish that the teachers that thought that role play is very important a tool to help with language development for the purpose of social growth.
The rest of the variable questions used under this specific test figure were rather straightforward in finding out what the teachers thought about role play being the best tool to develop language for social skills growth. These questions were:

- **Do/did all your students express themselves well in the English language?**

- **Has there been any improvement on the learners’ social engagement after series of role plays?**

According to figure 4 (see results), the teachers indicated that learners would express themselves very well in the English language after employing series of role play, with 11 teachers indicating a yes to the question and only 3 said no. the rest however indicated that it was only sometimes. This would fuel the positive responses making them enough to further conclude on the perception of teachers on the importance of role play as a method to improve language and social skills. On the question if there has been improvement on learners social behaviour after employing role play, there was a significant responses with 14 teachers indicating yes and only 3 said no. like the previous question, this one fuelled in favour of role play being the best method to improve language for social growth.

Another variable question that set the record straight to illuminate the idea that role play is the best method to improve language and social skills is the variable **What is your overall impression/perception of role play as remedy to social problems?** We considered this variable question as the deal breaker because it is the only questions that came close to answering the entire topic as a whole and the perception of teachers that we obtained from the responses to this question was enough to paint the clear picture. According to figure 5 (see figure in results), about 17 teachers indicated that role play is a **helpful** method when it comes to improving language competence of learners and therefore social skills of the learners. Only 1 teacher expressed a negative attitude towards role play being helpful in language
development and social growth, indicating it as useless. However, the responses to this question substantiated the notion and idea that role play helps with language development and social growth of learners at junior primary school level.

*Figure 6 and 7* (see results) involved responses that added weight on the benefits of role play on language development and social development of learners at junior primary school level. Figure 3.4 indicated that most teachers use role play in their classes because they know it to be the best to teach learners about communication skills. Being this as it is, most teacher turned to indicate that they also make use of other social oriented teaching methods in their attempts to improve language for social development purpose. You would expect to find that the teachers who did not use role play would be the ones to use other methods, but this provides the notion that even though teachers think that role play is the best in developing language for communication purpose, but they are also flexible to use other teaching methods for the very same purpose. Which does not at all distort anything from the ventral focus, which is role play. If anything, it still adds to the perception of teachers on the role and use of role play as a teaching method for language and social improvement. Another idea on the perception of teacher on role play is proved by *figure 7* which asked about how frequently teachers encourage learners to partake in role plays. Only one teacher, presumably the one who indicated uselessness of role play on language development and social skills growth. The rest of the teachers indicated that they do encourage learners to participate in role plays, with 14 of them indicating the highest frequency of encouragement with *always* and *often*, while 2 teachers indicated that they do that *sometimes* and 1 saying *rarely*. *Figure 8* proves the notion provided in *figure 7* just right. Learners participate more in role play because not only do the teachers think that role play helps with language development and social skills improvement, but the teacher also highly encourage learners to take part in role plays.
From discussing the results under this construct, we can positively conclude that teacher
definitely think that role play is the best teaching method to help the learners develop in their
language competence and therefore improve in their social interaction with other people. To
validate this conclusion, we linked the teachers perception with what there authors say about
this perception. From the different literatures that we concluded, the authors consulted had
the very same perception as these teachers did. Sadeghi & Sharifi (2013) investigated the
effect of four post-teaching activities that involved role play as one of the activities that helps
learners with vocabulary gaining.

Furthermore, role-play methods have given clear their potential to effectively teach English
to learners, as this method can increase learners’ self-confidence, enthusiasm and empathy,
and encourage deep order of thinking. Role-play is a teaching method that shapes vocabulary
attaining in a cheap, more controlled, and exciting ways the teachers and learners (Kuipers &
Clemens, 1998; Huang and Shan, 2008; Altun, 2015). These authors claim here that role play
in its own increase young children’s enthusiasm and confidence. These two are very critical
elements when it comes to successfully engaging in social interactions. This statement would
also speak volume to the encouraging of learners to participate in role play in class as it.
However, the most notable part of their statement is pointing out that role play models
vocabulary learning in a cost effective, controlled and fun way for both the learners and the
teachers. This part of the statement proves the perception of the Namibian teachers that role
plays helps with language development since vocabulary would constitute a language
element. This it to mean that once we have curbed language barriers, children would be able
interact successfully with other learners. This is perhaps the reason why, according to figure 3
(see results), the teachers evaluated more the language growth than the social growth of the
learners. Not only because it is the central focus of the language class but also because these
two variables have the dependency relationship. Social growth depends on the development of language.

To extent on the perception of the teachers about the importance of role play on language and social growth, Mooney (2013) summarised on the works of Piaget and Vygotsky by agreeing that through play, children learn more and they build on each other by noting that as children play, they constantly use language. Role play can be seen as a great platform to play since it is considered a play activity that encourages social interaction. Mooney (2013) establishes that the world that the learners inhabit is shaped by the communities, their families, their socioeconomic statuses, their education and their culture. Their understanding of this world partly comes from the values and beliefs of the adults around them and other children as well. This would highlight how role play would impact learners how they are more likely to interact with the environment around them, outside of school. By speaking to each other, they acquire new concepts. Speaking and listening activities are proved to be very important in the learning of new concepts (vocabulary) and these activities can be arranged in form of role plays. Further more, Mooney (2013) also stressed out what Piaget said when he stressed out the importance of play being the best platform for learning. As children take part in pretend play, they begin to take full understanding of the environment and activities around them. Another way to express the notion that role play can be of great value in the learning of new things, starting from language that would enable the learners to integrate well in social situations.

In conclusions of this link, we can say that role play is proven now to be very important in learning not only the new words and language itself but also learning about other people. Empathy and emotions are learned from other people. And when the teachers put these elements in role play in classrooms, the leaners would learn to recognize them outside of
class and would be able to react accordingly. This points out the importance of classroom activities and learners centered education phenomenon.

Gertner, Rice, & Hadley (1994); Rice, Sell, & Hadley (1991) agree that the classroom the first and foremost social context a lot children. There are studies performed at Language Acquisition Preschool (LAP) of the University of Kansas, Rice, which suggest that a lot of children with speech deficiency and poor language skills do not interact the same as the counterparts developing normally. And learners centered education phenomenon. As a progressive educator, John Dewey shared the sentiments of Lev Vygotsky, Montessori, and Piaget about the central ideas of that of the ability to move, that the entire education system should be learner-centered in the sense that it must be both interactive and active and that it must encompass the natural world of the learners and the where the learners live (Mooney, 2013).

6. Conclusions

Role play plays a significant role in developing students’ language and improving social skills of learners. In its independence, it involves interaction with other people, as well as the environment. It is for this reason that for developing social skills, it becomes a very important element used to bring situational contexts to live. The thesis explored the influence that role play has on developing language how this development influence social interaction of learners at a junior primary school level. Extensive literatures have been developed to explore the phenomenon of role play and its influence of language development. The same, more literatures can be found discussing how role play helps to fix social skills problems experienced by children. Since role play can be seen as a form of play, it is very important method to use for children at an early age. Play in its essence has been proven by theorists such as Vygotsky to be very effecting in learning. Theories such as constructivism theory of
Vygotsky suggest play as a very important method to be used in class as it supports the concept of learners centred education, which suggest that learners learn best when they become the centre of their own learning. Role play is proofed by literature to be effective in this sense. This thesis explored this play and surfaced its essence in language development and social skills building.

The thesis made use of a quantitative research method to research the topic, which sought to obtain the perspective of English language teachers in Namibia on the role of role play as a teaching method to improve language and social development. Within the quantitative research method, a questionnaire as a data collection method was used to gather data from the chosen sample population. To sample the population, a criterion sampling method was used to get the suitable candidates for the research. The questionnaire was generated online and distributed to respondents through social media such as facebook and whatsapp. This was the only way to reach the targeted respondents. To analyse the data collected from the targeted population, a descriptive analysis method was thought to be the best method for that purpose. With the descriptive analysis, the frequency and percentage test were used to obtain results and they were graphed on word processing document. Validity and reliability test was used to confirm the reliability of the research as well as to establish how valid the research was.

The research found that teachers make use of role play as a teaching method in Namibian schools. The research also discovered that teachers experience difficulties with learners who have language problems in their classrooms. It was important to find this out as it formed the basis of the research. In order to develop language to improve social skills of learners, problems with language that negatively influence social skills have to be identified. A pattern was discovered that the reason why children lack confidence to interact with other people is because their language was poor to carry out the social interaction. Poor language means a lot of things. It’s either that children do not have sufficient vocabulary to use to convey what
they want to convey. The research sensitised the fact that improving the vocabulary improves confidence. This begged the question: could role play help to develop language? And the research answered that role play does indeed help learners to develop on language for social interaction. Social interaction would not be successful without language, and competence in language improves confidence to take part in social relationships. Role play become fundamental in placing the learners in a situation where the learned vocabulary might be used. For this purpose, role play becomes very important to improving language for social development. This was and has been the basis of the research topic and the entire research proofed it right.

This research would improve language teaching in Namibia. When language teachers, more specifically English language teachers realise the significant of role play as a teaching method and its influence on language development, they would improve on their teaching. It is not to say that role play is the only best teaching method available, but this research have established that for language development for social interaction, it might actually be the only best teaching method available. It is important to note that social interaction in this research would be the central focus. Language is about being able to relate to other people and how to make sense of the environment in the interaction process. This thesis basically request that in order properly train our children and learners successfully engage in social interaction and create and maintain social relationships, it is best to place the students in the pretend situation as it would be in real life and make the child use his/her imagination o solve that pretend problem. This would equip the learners with problems solving skills to solve the problem should it occur in real life. During the process, the learner also learns to regulate emotions and behaviour, through the building of the character of empathy and sympathy. These are very important characters when it comes to creating relationships with other people in every dimension.
All these are exactly what this research proofed. Supported heavily by the literature obtained, the thesis explored the relationship of language and social development. And it made use of role play as a method to improve these two phenomena.
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