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## REMEDIES FOR ENGLISH INVERSION DIFFICULTIES AMONG GRADE TWELVE PUPILS

By

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**Abstract:** This study explores effective remedies for enhancing the teaching and learning of English Inversion structures among Grade Twelve pupils at selected secondary schools in Luanshya District, Zambia. The study aims to explore the pedagogical approaches that can be used to mitigate the challenges associated with teaching inversion. Utilizing a qualitative research approach, the study purposively selected 30 participants, including 15 pupils from each school and 6 teachers, 3 from each school. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and comprehensive questionnaires. It was foregrounded in the theoretical frameworks of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Generative Grammar. The study established several pedagogical approaches as remedies for inversion challenges. Error analysis and correction can be used to systematically identify and rectify errors in students' use of inversion to enhance their understanding. Explicit instruction can help to teach inversion rules and their application, thereby, reinforcing grammatical structures. Guided practice through structured activities allows students to practice inversion under teacher supervision, facilitating immediate feedback and correction. The use of visual aids and resource are useful when illustrating inversion concepts and they support diverse learning styles. Contextualized practice, integrating inversion exercises within meaningful context improves relevance and application. Lastly, reinforcement and feedback are emphasized to help students internalize and effectively apply inversion rules. These remedies aim to enhance instructional effectiveness and improve student performance in English Inversion and subsequently lead to better academic outcomes in language studies.

**Keywords:** Challenges, English Inversion, Grade Twelve, Pedagogies, Remedies, Zambia.

### INTRODUCTION

English inversion, a critical aspect of English syntax, involves altering the conventional word order in sentences to form questions, conditional clauses, or emphatic statements. This syntactic structure is essential for mastering advanced English grammar and plays a significant role in

both written and spoken communication. However, many Grade Twelve pupils in Luanshya District in Zambia, struggle with English inversion, which adversely impacts their overall language proficiency and academic performance (cf. Examinations Council of Zambia, 2021).

The study was conducted at Nkulumashiba and Mikomfwa Secondary Schools. Common difficulties related to inversion were observed among students. These challenges are often attributed to ineffective teaching methods employed by educators. The complexity of inversion requires a nuanced understanding of grammatical rules, and without effective pedagogical strategies, students are likely to struggle with its application. The observed lack of progress in mastering inversion suggests that current instructional approaches may be insufficient or misaligned with the specific needs of learners.

Pedagogical approaches refer to the methods and strategies used in teaching (Shahzab & Muhammad, 2023). An effective pedagogical approach to teaching English inversion should involve clear, direct instruction, opportunities for guided practice, and feedback mechanisms to help students grasp and apply the rules of inversion. Despite the importance of these methods, data collected from both teachers and students indicate that traditional teaching practices are failing to address the intricacies of inversion.

The issues identified are compounded by a broader context where instructional practices do not align with best practices for teaching complex grammatical structures. Teachers' responses have highlighted a lack of effective teaching methods, suggesting that their strategies may not sufficiently be informed by contemporary pedagogical research. Similarly, students have reported inadequate preparation and understanding of inversion, underscoring the need for improved instructional approaches.

This study aims to explore remedies for these challenges by evaluating current teaching methods and proposing effective pedagogical strategies. By focusing on the specific difficulties encountered by Grade Twelve pupils in mastering English inversion, the study seeks to identify practical solutions to enhance both teaching effectiveness and student performance.

## **2. Literature Review**

The literature review provides an overview of relevant scholarly work and research findings related to English inversion and second language acquisition. The review explores existing studies, theories, and pedagogical approaches that shed

light on the challenges faced by Grade Twelve pupils in mastering inversion in English. This literature review serves as a foundation for the present study, highlighting the knowledge gaps and providing insights for further investigation.

A pedagogical approach refers to the method and practice of teaching, encompassing the strategies and techniques used to impart knowledge effectively (Shahzab & Muhammad, 2023). English inversion, a crucial aspect of syntax, often poses significant challenges for learners, influencing their proficiency in both written and spoken communication. A major contributing factor to these difficulties is the lack of effective teaching methods employed by many teachers when instructing on inversion. This study, therefore, explores various pedagogical approaches for teaching English inversion, to identify common errors and implement targeted strategies to enhance students' understanding and correct usage, ultimately improving their overall language competence.

Govindasamy & David (2010) in second language acquisition (SLA) explored the acquisition and development of syntactic structures in non-native English speakers. Scholars have indicated that learners face challenges in acquiring the syntax of a second language, including inversion. Factors such as the learners' first language transfer, age, language aptitude, and exposure to input play crucial roles in determining the level of difficulty and accuracy in mastering inversion. Literature highlights issues such as subject-verb agreement, word order, and the comprehension of inverted sentence structures as key areas of difficulty (Fahad, 2020). Based on studies on error analysis and inversion difficulties, error analysis studies have examined the specific types of errors made by second language learners in various aspects of English grammar, including inversion. Closing the information gap requires conducting comprehensive research that specifically explores the inversion challenges faced by Grade Twelve pupils in Zambia, providing detailed analysis, and offering insights into effective pedagogical strategies to address these difficulties. By filling this gap, researchers, educators, and policymakers can gain a better understanding of the specific issues faced by Grade Twelve pupils in Zambia and make informed decisions to enhance English

language instruction concerning inversion structures.

Furthermore, from a pedagogical approaches and interventions perspective, it appears many Scholars and educators have proposed various pedagogical approaches and instructional strategies to address the challenges faced by English language learners in mastering inversion. These approaches include explicit grammar instruction, communicative language teaching, interactive activities, and form-focused instruction. Therefore, the integration of technology, multimedia resources, and authentic materials is a means to enhance students' understanding and application of inversion rules (Govindasamy & David, 2010).

Shahzab & Muhammad (2023) posit that the teacher assumes responsibility for setting the learning objectives, determining the content, and selecting the delivery methods. Their study concluded that students who are not actively involved in the learning process may need help to retain the information being presented and may even develop feelings of disinterest, leading to underperformance academically. Sequero (2015) further suggested that the use of educational resources goes hand in hand with the learning method used. Each didactic approach used to teach English must specifically include a combination of new technological measures. Hence, there is a need to conduct a study to explore the pedagogical strategies that can help learners improve their performance in English Inversion.

The reviewed literature shows that there is limited research specific to English language education in Zambia, particularly focusing on inversion difficulties (Bwalya, et al, 2024). However, studies have highlighted contextual factors such as language policy, curriculum design, teacher qualifications, and resources as influential elements in the effectiveness of English language instruction. Understanding the specific challenges faced by Grade Twelve pupils in Luanshya District can provide insights into the local context and contribute to more targeted pedagogical interventions.

Therefore, the reviewed literature shows the significance of investigating the syntactic difficulties related to English inversion faced by

Grade Twelve pupils in Luanshya District. Existing studies highlight the complex nature of inversion, the challenges encountered by second language learners, and various pedagogical approaches for addressing these difficulties. By examining the specific challenges faced by Grade Twelve pupils in Luanshya district, the study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge, inform pedagogical practices, and enhance English language education in Zambia.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

This study on remedies for improving the teaching and learning of English inversion structures among Grade Twelve pupils at Nkulumashiba Secondary School and Mikomfwa Secondary School is grounded in two key theoretical frameworks: Generative Grammar and Second Language Acquisition (SLA). These theories provide a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved in language learning and the specific challenges associated with teaching grammatical structures like inversion.

Generative Grammar, as proposed by Chomsky (1970), focuses on the innate structures of language and the rules governing sentence formation. This theory posits that humans possess an inherent grammatical knowledge that allows them to generate and understand sentences in their native language. In the context of teaching English inversion, Generative Grammar offers insights into the syntactic structures that underlie inversion patterns, such as question formation, conditional clauses, and emphasis. The theory highlights the importance of understanding these underlying grammatical rules to teach inversion. By providing a framework for analyzing sentence structures, Generative Grammar helps educators identify common errors and misconceptions related to inversion, allowing for more targeted instructional strategies (Krashen, 1987).

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory, which encompasses various models and approaches, examines how individuals acquire a second language (Abrahamsson&Hyldenstam, 2009). Key concepts within SLA include the role of input, interaction, and feedback in language learning. According to SLA theory, effective language instruction involves providing learners with ample exposure to the target language, opportunities for meaningful interaction, and



constructive feedback. In the case of English inversion, SLA theory emphasizes the need for explicit instruction and practice opportunities that enable learners to internalize and apply inversion rules. It also underscores the importance of understanding learners' current proficiency levels and adapting teaching methods to meet their specific needs (Krashen, 1976)

In applying these theoretical frameworks to the study, Generative Grammar provides a basis for understanding the structural complexities of English inversion and identifying effective teaching methods. By analyzing the grammatical rules and structures that govern inversion, educators can develop targeted instructional strategies that address common errors and enhance students' understanding.

SLA theory, on the other hand, informs the approach to instructional design and practice. It emphasizes the need for explicit teaching, contextualized practice, and feedback mechanisms to support learners in acquiring and mastering inversion structures. The integration of SLA principles into teaching practices can help address the challenges identified in the study and improve overall instructional effectiveness (Birdsong, 1999).

Together, Generative Grammar and SLA provide a robust framework for examining the challenges and remedies associated with teaching English inversion. By leveraging insights from both theories, educators can develop effective pedagogical approaches that address the specific needs of learners and enhance their proficiency in English inversion.

#### **4. Methodology**

The study used qualitative research approach whose results are normally holistic, non-numerical, inductive, subjective, and process-oriented methods used to understand, describe, interpret, and develop a theory on a particular phenomenon (cf. Brink & Wood, 1998; Siame, 2022a; Siame et al, 2023; Siame & Banda, 2024). The results of the present study were obtained using the qualitative design and reported using words and sentential expressions (Siame, 2022b). The study was conducted at Nkulumashiba and Mikomfwa Secondary Schools in Luanshya district in the Copperbelt Province of Zambia. The study population included teachers of English and

Grade Twelve learners. Purposive sampling was employed to select 6 teachers of English and 30 learners of English who were the respondents during the study.

Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The data collection instruments used in the study were the interview guides, the questionnaire, and the pre-test which was administered to learners. Empirical primary data were collected through interviews and language proficiency assessments whose aim was to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing learners' proficiency in auxiliary inversion. The pre-test on subject-auxiliary inversion in English was administered to 15 learners and thereafter the questionnaire was administered to 10 learners of English selected randomly to supplement data generated from both test results and the questionnaire. The six teachers who participated in the interviews were selected purposively.

Data collection went hand in hand with data analysis (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). The collected data were read through and interpreted before a detailed analysis was conducted (Bwalya, et al, 2024a). The study employed a descriptive thematic analysis to make interpretations or meanings of the data (Siame & Lubungu, 2023; Bwalya, et al, 2024b). The data were analyzed inductively (Creswell, 2009).

#### **5. Results and Discussion**

Inversion difficulties, particularly in the context of conditional sentences, auxiliary inversion, and subject-verb inversion, present significant challenges for pupils. These difficulties can stem from a variety of factors, including lack of exposure, inadequate practice, and cognitive overload. To address these issues effectively, teachers can employ several pedagogical strategies tailored to the specific needs of their students.

By implementing these strategies, teachers can create a more conducive learning environment that addresses the concerns raised in this study ultimately leading to improved English proficiency among pupils. To address these concerns, teachers can adopt various pedagogical strategies as shown below:

##### **5.1 Error Analysis and Correction**

Error analysis and correction involve teaching pupils to identify and rectify inversion errors

independently. Through activities like error identification exercises, students learn to distinguish between correct and incorrect inversion usage. To improve pupils' performance on inversion difficulties, a comprehensive strategy centered on Error Analysis and Correction can be highly effective. This strategy involves a multifaceted approach beginning with the identification of errors. Teachers should carefully analyze students' work to pinpoint specific areas where inversion errors occur. Once these errors are identified, pupils can engage in peer review sessions where they assess each other's work, providing constructive feedback. This peer review process not only helps students recognize their mistakes but also fosters a collaborative learning environment.

Following peer review, pupils should maintain a reflective journal. In their journals, they can document the errors they identified, the feedback they received, and the corrections they made. This reflective practice encourages pupils to think critically about their learning processes and understand the underlying concepts better. By regularly reflecting on their mistakes and the steps taken to correct them, students can develop deeper comprehension and improve their overall performance on inversion tasks. This holistic approach, integrating error analysis, peer review, and reflective journaling, creates a supportive and introspective learning environment conducive to mastering inversion concepts.

## **5.2 Explicit Instruction**

To help Grade Twelve pupils in Luanshya District improve their performance on English inversion difficulties, the strategy of Explicit Instruction can be highly beneficial. Explicit instruction involves systematically teaching the rules and structures of inversion. Teachers begin by breaking down the components of sentences and demonstrating how inversion functions in different contexts. This approach begins with a clear and direct rule explanation. Teachers should explicitly explain the rules governing inversion. For example, the requirement to invert the subject and auxiliary verb in questions for instance, "Is she coming?" instead of "She is coming?" and in conditional sentences starting with negative adverbs for example, "Never have I seen such beauty".

Providing both examples and non-examples can further solidify understanding. For instance, teachers might illustrate the correct inversion in questions ("Are you ready?") and incorrect versions to highlight common mistakes ("You are ready?"). Similarly, in conditional sentences, demonstrating correct usage ("Had I known, I would have called") alongside incorrect forms ("I had known, I would have called") helps pupils recognize the proper structure.

To enhance comprehension, teachers can also incorporate conditional sentences that require inversion. By practicing sentences like, "Were I to leave now, I would miss the train," students can better understand the nuanced use of inversion in hypothetical scenarios.

This explicit and structured approach addresses factors contributing to poor performance, such as a lack of clear rules and insufficient practice with varied sentence structures. By systematically breaking down the rules, providing ample examples and non-examples, and practicing conditional sentences, students can gain confidence and improve their mastery of English inversion.

## **5.3 Guided Practice**

Guided Practice is another effective pedagogical strategy to help pupils overcome English inversion difficulties. This strategy involves a structured approach where the teacher provides support and gradually releases responsibility to the students (Govindasamy & David, 2010).

In the application of guided practice, sentence writing is a key component. Teachers begin by modeling correct sentence structures that involve inversion. For example, they might write sentences on the board, such as "Not only did she sing, but she also danced," and explain the inversion rules applied. This teacher modeling serves as a concrete example for students to follow.

Following this, students engage in group work where they collaboratively construct sentences using inversion. Working in groups allows students to discuss and reinforce their understanding, correct each other's errors, and learn from peer explanations. This collaborative effort can demystify the rules of inversion and make the learning process more interactive and less intimidating.

As pupils become more confident, they can move on to independent sentence writing, applying the inversion rules on their own. Throughout this process, the teacher provides feedback and additional guidance as needed, ensuring that students are on the right track and gradually building their independence.

This guided practice strategy addresses factors contributing to poor performance, such as insufficient practice, lack of confidence, and difficulty in understanding abstract grammar rules. By providing a supportive learning environment where students can observe, practice collaboratively, and receive continuous feedback, guided practice helps solidify students' grasp of English inversion, leading to improved performance and confidence in their language skills.

#### **5.4 Visual Aids and Resources**

Visual Aids and Resources are invaluable pedagogical strategies for helping pupils in Luanshya District improve their English inversion difficulties. This approach leverages visual tools to enhance understanding and retention of inversion rules.

In the application of visual aids, inversion charts play a crucial role. Teachers can create charts that clearly outline the rules and structures for inversion, such as in questions, for example, "Is she...?" and negative adverbial phrases, for example, "Never have I..." These charts serve as quick reference guides that pupils can easily consult, reinforcing their learning through repeated exposure.

Sentence diagrams are another effective visual tool. By diagramming sentences, teachers can visually break down the components of a sentence, illustrating how inversion alters the usual subject-verb order. For example, a sentence like "She is coming" can be diagrammed alongside its inverted form "Is she coming?" This visual representation helps pupils grasp the structural changes required by inversion, making abstract grammatical concepts more concrete.

Using an interactive whiteboard, teachers can further enhance this visual learning experience. Interactive whiteboards allow for dynamic and engaging presentations where teachers can manipulate sentence structures in real time, highlight key inversion points, and involve

students in interactive exercises. For instance, students can come up to the board to correct sentences or participate in games and activities that reinforce their understanding of inversion.

This strategy addresses several factors contributing to poor performance, such as difficulties in visualizing grammatical structures and a lack of engaging, hands-on learning materials (Bwalya, et al, 2024a). By incorporating visual aids and interactive resources, teachers can create a more stimulating and effective learning environment. This not only aids in comprehension but also makes learning more enjoyable, helping students to better retain and apply the rules of English inversion.

#### **5.5 Contextualized Practice**

Contextualized Practice is a crucial pedagogical strategy to help pupils in Luanshya District overcome English inversion difficulties. This strategy emphasizes learning language in meaningful, real-life contexts, making the practice more relevant and engaging for students.

In the application of contextualized practice, creating language-learning applications can be highly effective. These applications can offer interactive exercises that require students to apply inversion rules in various scenarios, such as forming questions or constructing sentences with negative adverbials. By practicing within the applications, students receive immediate feedback and can progress at their own pace, reinforcing their understanding through repetition and practical application.

Educational games are another valuable tool. Games that incorporate inversion challenges, such as sentence-building activities or grammar quizzes, make learning fun and engaging. These games can be designed to gradually increase in difficulty, providing students with a sense of accomplishment as they master each level. The competitive and interactive nature of games can motivate students to practice more frequently, leading to better retention of inversion rules.

Virtual tutoring offers a personalized approach to contextualized practice. Tutors can provide tailored instruction and feedback, addressing individual students' specific difficulties with inversion. Through virtual sessions, pupils can engage in conversational practice, receive real-time corrections, and discuss the contexts in which

inversion is used. This one-on-one support ensures that students receive the guidance they need to improve their skills effectively.

This contextualized practice strategy helps pupils avoid access to unguided information by providing structured and relevant learning experiences. By using language learning applications, educational games, and virtual tutoring, students are exposed to accurate and consistent information in a controlled environment. This minimizes the risk of learning incorrect usage and helps students develop a solid foundation in English inversion. The meaningful context and interactive nature of these tools make learning more engaging and effective, leading to improved performance in English.

### **5.6 Technological Integration**

Technological Integration is a transformative pedagogical strategy that can significantly help pupils overcome English inversion difficulties. This approach leverages modern technology to create dynamic and interactive learning experiences that cater to the diverse needs of students (Ratna, 2023).

In the application of technological integration, language-learning applications are a powerful tool. These apps offer interactive exercises specifically designed to practice inversion rules in various contexts. By engaging with these applications, students can receive immediate feedback on their performance, allowing them to quickly identify and correct mistakes. The applications often include gamified elements that make learning more engaging and enjoyable, encouraging consistent practice. This correlates with Sequero (2015) who said that the use of education resources goes hand in hand with the learning methods and also each didactic approach used to teach English must specifically include a combination of new technological measures.

Educational games are another effective component of this strategy. These games can be designed to incorporate challenges that require the use of inversion rules, such as sentence construction or grammar puzzles. The interactive and competitive nature of these games motivates students to participate actively, reinforcing their understanding of inversion in a fun and engaging manner. Games also provide a safe environment for trial and error, where students can learn from

their mistakes without the pressure of formal assessments.

Virtual tutoring offers a personalized approach to technological integration. Through virtual tutoring sessions, students can receive individualized instruction and feedback from experienced tutors. This one-on-one support allows for targeted practice and clarification of specific difficulties with inversion. Virtual tutors can also create customized learning plans that cater to the unique needs of each student, ensuring that they receive the guidance and reinforcement necessary to master inversion rules.

Technological integration addresses several factors contributing to poor performance, such as a lack of engaging materials, inconsistent practice, and limited access to personalized instruction. By incorporating language learning applications, educational games, and virtual tutoring into the learning process, pupils can be provided with diverse and effective resources that enhance their understanding and application of English inversion. This strategy not only makes learning more accessible and engaging but also ensures that pupils receive the support they need to succeed.

### **5.7 Reinforcement and Feedback**

Reinforcement and Feedback are essential pedagogical strategies to help pupils in Luanshya District improve their English inversion difficulties. This approach emphasizes the consistent application of reinforcement techniques and the provision of timely feedback to enhance learning outcomes.

In the application of this strategy, regular quizzes play a vital role. By administering frequent quizzes that specifically target inversion rules, teachers can assess students' understanding and identify areas needing improvement. These quizzes provide students with ongoing opportunities to practice and apply what they have learned, reinforcing their knowledge through repetition.

Immediate feedback is essential in this process. After each quiz, teachers should provide prompt and specific feedback on students' performance, highlighting both correct and incorrect answers. This immediate feedback helps students understand their mistakes and learn the correct inversion rules while the material is still fresh in



their minds. It also allows teachers to address any misconceptions or difficulties on the spot, preventing the reinforcement of incorrect usage.

Positive reinforcement further supports this strategy. Recognizing and praising students for their correct use of inversion rules boosts their confidence and motivation. Positive reinforcement can take various forms, such as verbal praise, rewards, or displaying excellent work. Celebrating students' successes encourages them to continue practicing and applying inversion rules, fostering a positive learning environment.

This strategy addresses several factors contributing to poor performance, such as a lack of consistent practice, delayed correction of errors, and insufficient motivation. By incorporating regular quizzes, immediate feedback, and positive reinforcement, teachers can create a supportive and structured learning environment. This not only helps pupils to master English inversion but also builds their confidence and encourages a positive attitude towards learning.

By implementing these pedagogical strategies effectively, teachers can address inversion difficulties comprehensively, ensuring that pupils not only understand the rules but also gain proficiency in applying inversion in diverse linguistic contexts. Each strategy contributes uniquely to a holistic learning environment that supports pupils' development of language skills and confidence in using complex grammatical structures like inversion proficiently

## 6. Conclusion

This study has explored the remedies for teaching English inversion to Grade Twelve pupils. It is evident that the current pedagogical methods for teaching inversion are insufficient and in need of significant improvement. The ineffective strategies employed by educators, coupled with the students' struggles to grasp inversion concepts, highlight a critical gap in instructional practices. The findings of this study underscore the necessity for adopting more targeted and effective teaching methods to address the specific difficulties associated with English inversion. The study proposes several remedies to enhance teaching effectiveness and student performance. Key proposed remedies include the use of error analysis and correction to address specific mistakes in students' use of inversion, explicit

instruction to clarify grammatical rules, and guided practice to provide structured opportunities for application. Additionally, the incorporation of visual aids and resources can help illustrate inversion concepts more clearly, while contextualized practice ensures that exercises are relevant and meaningful. Technological integration offers interactive learning experiences, and consistent reinforcement and feedback are essential for helping students internalize and apply inversion rules effectively. Implementing these strategies can significantly improve instructional quality and student outcomes. Effective teaching of English inversion will not only enhance students' grammatical skills but also contribute to their overall language proficiency and academic success. By addressing the identified shortcomings in current teaching practices and embracing these recommended approaches, educators can better support students in mastering complex grammatical structures and achieving higher levels of language competence. This study highlights the urgent need for pedagogical reform in the teaching of English inversion. By adopting evidence-based strategies and focusing on the specific needs of learners, teachers can overcome existing challenges and foster a more effective learning environment. Continued research and professional development are crucial for sustaining improvements and ensuring that students receive the high-quality instruction necessary for their academic and linguistic development.

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