

**The use of rubrics and correction codes in the  
marking of Grade 10 Sesotho home language  
creative writing essays**

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Submitted: 2 December 2015

## Statement of authorship

I, **JOHANNES SIBEKO** (full names) declare that:

- The content of this dissertation is my own unaided work.
- This dissertation has not been submitted elsewhere for degree or non-degree purposes.
- That all the resources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference.
- I also confirm that I have submitted the Turnitin report for this dissertation to my supervisor.

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Date: 02 December 2015

## Acknowledgements

Greatest gratitude goes to the Lord my God who made it all possible for me. Father, I do not know how to thank you for your grace in seeing this study through. But I know it could not have happened without you.

I then dedicate this to:

- Betty Hadebe, mommy dearest, you have stood by me through thick and thin. There is no one as important as you in my life and I thank God you are my mom. Thank you for all your financial and emotional support, and most importantly; your prayers. They sustain me in my weakest moments.
- My siblings, Emmah, Elizabeth, Ntombi and Doctor Hadebe. Thank you for your support of my studies with finances and Samuel with all the tasks you helped me complete.
- Seun Mpetjekana. You crossed nights with me on campus and at home. We journeyed together to different schools, sometimes even hiking and most of the time walking long distances. Dude, you are awesome.

I acknowledge academic supervision and support of:

- Prof Anna Susanna Coetzee van Rooy. Thank you very much, I vote you for the best supervisor ever. Your faith in me scared me sometimes. But I knew that you would never steer me wrong.
- Dr Wena Coetzee, working with you was a real honour. You developed my self-confidence in unimaginable ways.
- Mr Johannes Mahlasela, thank you for your persistence in ensuring that I receive permission from the DBE, I do not know what I would have done without you.

I appreciate:

- The teachers who were keen to work with me. I am proud of you all, I have no complaint whatsoever about any of you, your co-operation was beyond belief. Unfortunately, although I wished to name each of you here, it would render me unethical. I need to protect your identities at all costs. I hope you forgive me.
- The principals of the schools who participated in this study.
- The anonymous examiners of whose recommendations improved the quality of my study.

## Summary and keywords

This study investigates the assessment of creative essays in grade 10 Sesotho home language. Nine participants from a total of six schools took part in the research. For the purpose of this study, no literature was found on the assessment of Sesotho essays (or essay writing in any other African language) in general or specific to creative writing in high schools in South Africa. The literature on English first language teaching and English second language teaching were then used to theoretically contextualise the writing and assessment of creative writing essays in Sesotho home language in South African high schools.

Data were collected through questionnaires completed by teachers, an analysis of a sample of marked scripts (representing above average, average and below average grades) and interviews with teachers (tailored to investigate the asset of creativity and the aspect of style in Sesotho creative writing essays). The researcher manually coded open-ended responses in the questionnaires. Interview responses were coded with Atlas.ti version 7. Frequencies were calculated for the close-ended questions in the questionnaire.

Participating teachers perceived their assessment of essays with the use of the rubric and the correction to be standardised. This was evident in their awarding of marks. It was found in this study that teachers generally award marks around 60%. However, their report that they use comments as per their responses in the questionnaire was disproven by the lack of comments in the scripts analysed in this study. There was also no relationship observed between the correction code frequencies observed in the marked essays that were analysed and the marks granted for specific sections of the rubric.

This study recommends use of the rubric in earlier drafts of the writing process. In addition, it proposes an expansion of the marking grid used to provide clearer feedback via the revised rubric to the learners.

Due to the participating teachers' evident lack of clarity on what style in Sesotho home language essays entail, it was inferred that teachers are not clear on the distinctions between different essay assessment criteria in the rubric. A recommendation was the development of a rubric guide, which would clearly indicate to teachers what each criterion of the rubric assesses.

### **Keywords:**

Creative writing; Sesotho home language; Assessment; Marking, Rubrics; Correction codes.

## **Kgutsufatso le mantswe a sehlooho**

Thuto ena e batlisa tekanyetso ya meqoqo ya boiqapelo ya Kereiti ya 10 ya Sesotho Puo ya Lapeng (PL). Bathusi ba robong ho tswa dikolong tse tsheletseng ba nkile karolo patlisisong ena. Bakeng sa sepheo sa boithuto bona, ha ho a ka ha fumanwa dingolwa ka tekanyetso ya meqoqo ya Sesotho (kapa ya puo enngwe ya Aforika) ka kakaretso le ka meqoqo e ikgethileng ya Sesotho e shebaneng le mongolo wa bonono dikolong tse phahameng. Dingolwa tsa thuto ya Sekgowa (English) e le puo ya lapeng le puo ya tlatsetso di ile tsa sebediswa ho hlomamisa ho ngola le ho lekanyetsa meqoqo ya boiqapelo ya Sesotho puo ya lapeng..

Dintlha tsa tlhahisoleding di ile tsa bokellwa ka (i) dipotso tsa patlisiso tse ileng tsa tlatswa ke bathusi, (ii) tekolo ya mehlala e kgethilweng ya meqoqo e tshwailweng (e emetseng matshwao a ka hodimo ho palohare, a palohare le a ka tlase ho a palohare), le (iii) diinthaviu (tse etseditsweng ho batlisa ntlha ya boiqapelo le ntlha ya setaele ho bongodi ba meqoqo ya boiqapelo Sesothong). Mofuputsi o entse metwa ho dikarabo tse neng di hloka tlhaloso ho dipotso tsa patlisiso ka boyena. Ho dikarabo tsa diinthaviu, metwa e entswe ka tshebediso ya Atlas.ti version 7. Phethaphetho di ile tsa balwa bakeng sa dipotso tse sa hlokanang ho hlalosa ho dipotso tsa patlisiso.

Mesuwe le mesuwetsana e nkileng karolo thutong ena, e bona e tshwaya ka ho tshwana ka tshebediso ya ruburiki le senotlolo sa ho tshwaya. Hona ho ile ha iponahatsa kabong ya matshwao. Patlisisong ena, ho fumanwe hore matitjhere ha a aba matshwao, a aba matshwao a potolohang ho 60%. Le ha ho le jwalo, tlaleho ya bona ntlheng ya tshebediso ya ditlhakiso jwalo ka ha ba boletse ho dipotso tsa patlisiso, e ile ya hloka bopaki ka lebaka la bosio ba ditlhaloso tjehebisong ya meqoqo e tshwailweng thutong ena. Ho boetse ha fumanwa hore ha ho kamano pakeng tsa bongata ba tshebediso ya dikhoutu e iponahaditseng meqoqong le matshwao a fumantshitsweng ka tshebediso ya ruburiki.

Thuto ena e buella tshebediso ya ruburiki mekgwaritsong e qalang ya tshebetso ya ho ngola, ho feta moo; e sisinya keketso ya setlankana sa matshwao se sebediswang ho hlahisa tlaleho ya matshwao a ruburiki ho baithuti.

Matitjhere a nkileng karolo thutong ena a bontshitse ho hloka tsebo ya hore setaele se bolela eng ho meqoqo ya Sesotho PL, ka lebaka leo, ho ile ha nkuwa hore matitjhere a hloka tlhakisetsa ya phapang pakeng tsa makgetha a tekanyetso a fapaneng a ruburiki. Puella e bile hore ho ralwe “motataisi wa ruburiki” eo a tlang ho hlakisetsa matitjhere hore makgetha a ruburiki ka bonngwe a lekanyetsa eng.

**Mantswe a sehlooho:**

Bongodi ba boiqapelo; Sesotho puo ya lapeng (PL); tekanyetso; ruburiki tsa ho tshwaya; dikhoutu tsa ho tshwaya.

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Assessment is the single most powerful influence on learning in formal courses and, if not designed well, can easily undermine the positive features of an important strategy in the repertoire of teaching and learning approaches  
(Boud *et al*, 1999:413).

## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction and contextualisation

According to the Subject Assessment Guidelines (SAGs) that are compiled by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in South Africa, “[a]ssessment should be part of every lesson and teachers should plan assessment activities to complement learning activities” (DBE, 2008b:01). Essay writing is one of the learning aspects to be assessed. However, as will be evidenced in the study, the problem is that teachers are not provided with explicit guidance regarding objective valid assessment for creative essay writing in grade 10 Sesotho home language as a subject. This study, therefore, investigates how teachers provide feedback to creative writing essays using the correction code and the rubric recommended by the DBE.

Zeidner (1987:355) states that essays “provide students the opportunity of accurately and optimally expressing their knowledge and ideas in writing”. According to Biggs (1988:185), an essay is “a response in continuous prose to a specific question, for which the student has received advance notice, which is to be prepared in the student’s own time, and which is to be subjected to some kind of summative evaluation”. The definition can be applied to creative essay writing as learners should ideally be given enough time to follow the steps of process writing while receiving feedback, and ultimately provided with overall feedback on the final draft by means of grades.

The essence of the cited authors’ postulations is that while essays are usually marked according to a marking rubric, marking remains a subjective process. Therefore, assessors, due to subjective factors such as the human element, prejudices, and lack of idiomatic proficiency, as well as a limited frame of reference, a learner can be prevented from attaining a valid mark. There is no single “correct” answer to a creative writing task. According to Davies (2004:262), “essays are considered as a means of assessing the subjective skills of a student”. Based on this, marking essays can be said to be subjective in that the marks awarded depend on the marker’s interpretation of the nature of the task (sometimes expressed in a rubric with assessment criteria) and not on the intrinsic nature of the text written. Davies’ continues to note that “essays are demonstrably the form of assessment where the dangers of subjective marking are greatest” (*ibid*). For this reason, rubrics were created with an aim to guide the teacher’s marking in defining what is of quality and what is not in the context of specific creative writing tasks. Hattingh (2009:232) argues that “[a]ssessment is faced with increasing demands for accountability...” As a proposed solution to the subjectivity dilemma, the author devised and

empirically validated a marking rubric for the Grade 12 English First additional language (FAL) examinations of creative writing essays. Unfortunately nothing similar seems available for Sesotho home language (or any of the other vernacular home languages) as a subject as it is taught in South African schools.

In this study, the aim was to establish how teachers sampled from the Fezile Dabi District mark Sesotho home language essays. This study looked at what teachers consider as important when they mark, and compared it to what the rubric guides them to focus on. The study also considered the kind of feedback which teachers provide on Sesotho home language creative writing tasks via the rubric and the correction code. The aim is not to judge whether a marker is right or wrong, but to analyse how the marker marked and commented to understand the nature of the marking process better. Such an understanding of the marking process would inform support and structuring of the training for teachers who are involved in this notoriously complex task. Recommendations for the improvement of rubrics or the training of markers are proposed at the end of the study. New teachers, teacher trainers and applied linguistic researchers who focus on feedback on creative writing tasks stand to benefit from this study.

Although tasks are assessed in schools, a salient question which remains unanswered is why assessment is regarded as crucially important in the learning process. According to Flanagan (1998:74), “the purpose of all types of assessments is to tell learners how well they are doing, to inform teachers about the learners’ progress” and to keep a record of a learner’s achievement. There are a plethora of reasons that motivate the need for assessment. My focus will be on the assessment of creative writing, and the reasons that motivate markers to assess in the way they do. Some of the prominent reasons for the assessment of creative writing include that different aspects of language learning can be assessed through the use of an essay. For example, the teacher may use an essay task to assess learners’ vocabulary, grammar and storytelling abilities. This suggests that teachers look at different aspects when they assess essays. Learning how to write essays in high school is a process.

The level of skill aimed at and task difficulty differ from grade to grade. Van der Walt (2010:328) discusses ways in which the current language curriculum in South Africa tries to differentiate between the skills and the levels of difficulty between tasks of the same nature from grade to grade. In South African terms, the further education and training (FET) phase in school begins in grade 10. This, therefore, makes grade 10 the foundation on which whatever learners learn about essays in the FET phase. The feedback given on essays written in this stage of learning to write essays is important for the progress of learners.

Just as levels of skills aimed at differ from grade to grade and task to task, learners need to progress from task to task in order to reach the bigger goal which is “producing competent, versatile writers who use their skills to develop and present appropriate written texts for a variety of purposes” (CAPS, 2011:10). Learners therefore need to learn from each essay task in order to improve in their next essay. One way of achieving this is when learners’ essay tasks are assessed and feedback is provided. According to Louw (2009:89) even if learners receive feedback on the final draft, which is current practice with rubric feedback in Sesotho home language creative writing as taught in South African schools, a possibility exists that “students may use the feedback to revise their internalised rules of language” which would improve their language use in future essays”. However, learners “will have to refer back to the feedback on a previous text to enhance a different future text” (*ibid*).

The National Protocol for Assessment (2011:03) regards assessment as “a process of collecting, analysing and interpreting information to assist teachers, parents and other stakeholders in making decisions about the progress of learners”. The greatest stakeholder in each learner’s progress is the learner him/herself, as the he/she will reap the benefits of acquiring a good mark and being promoted to a next grade/phase. However, if proper feedback is not given by the assessor (in this instance the teacher), there will be little or no learning. This will impede the learner’s progress.

## **1.2 Overview of Literature**

This section presents a brief selective literature on the assessment of essays. A more in-depth discussion is presented in Chapter 2 of this study. First, this section highlights what is known about the assessment of essays. Second, the unresolved issues pertaining to the assessment of essays therefore leading to the statement of the study’s problem, is presented.

### **1.2.1 What do we know about essay assessment?**

Seemingly little research on the assessment of Sesotho home language creative writing in South African schools has been done up to date. Consequently, not much is known about Sesotho home language creative essay writing and or assessment in the South African school context. Van der Walt (2010:325) states that “the other language curricula [both home language and additional language curricula] are ‘particularised’ from this one [the generic first additional language curriculum].” Van de Walt (2010:26) further elaborates that “this generic FAL curriculum for all South African languages is an English second language curriculum without explicitly mentioning English.” In other words, the Sesotho Home Language curriculum is based

on the English FAL curriculum because the FAL generic curriculum has been proven as an English second language curriculum<sup>1</sup> by Van der Walt (2010).

Marking essays is not as clear-cut as simply marking (ticking) items on the rubric and awarding marks. Spingies (1990:26-7) states that there is a difference between negative and positive marking. This is explicated in essay-marking when teachers give feedback in the form of comments. It is difficult to decide on the correctness of a method because one method does not always yield the same result. Another challenge is that “different markers respond to different facets of writing and focus on different essay elements and perhaps have individual approaches to reading essays” (Yürekli & Üstünlüoğlu, 2007:56).

Since teachers focus on different facets of writing, marking in turn becomes subjective. In support of this notion, Hounsell *et al.* (1995:61) states that strategies for marking specific comments on essays are to some extent a matter of individual preference, and therefore suggests categorising comments into ‘good points’ and ‘could be improved’. This eliminates the preference of the reader in that it does not disregard what the writer wrote but instead suggests changes. The comments given will depend to a great extent on the facets and essay elements a marker focuses on. Individual preference, therefore, means that there can be no single correct answer to a creative writing essay.

It seems from the afore mentioned assertions that marking is neither just marking nor giving feedback by just commenting on what was observed; there are different mechanisms involved in the marking process. There are different problems encountered with each feedback mechanism. Louw (2006) highlights four main problems with providing feedback. These are: (i) lack of consistency, (ii) labour intensity and time consumption, (iii) students’ expectation and ability to use feedback, and (iv) students’ failure to recognise recurring patterns of error in their own writing. The two problems most relevant for this study are the first two listed above. Teachers use the correction code and the rubric to achieve consistency in their marking. However, the correction code and the rubric have shortcomings. For instance, the correction code makes no provision for comments and it does not cover all the errors and mistakes learners produce in their writing. Secondly teachers often neglect to make comments on errors (qualitative marking), but only focus on indicating errors by underlining them or using the correction code, and then award a mark for the essay (quantitative marking), without indicating

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<sup>1</sup> This was also observed by the researcher during the analysis of the department of education documents, that the Sesotho home language CAPS document is a translated from the English first additional language CAPS document. The English home language, IsiZulu home language and Setswana home language curriculum were also compared to the generic FAL curriculum and very few differences were observed.

how to correct the error. According to East (2006:04), “many students struggle to develop competence in essay writing, particularly if they are given only limited guidance”. As such, with the use of the correction code alone, learners will have a limited learning curve from this type of marking, and will often have recurring errors in future pieces of writing. This study seeks to look into actual practices of Sesotho teachers in the marking of creative writing essays.

James (1997:239) states three types of errors that learners make when they write: (i) slips, (ii) mistakes and (iii) errors. For these different errors, there are different types of error correction strategies. Therefore, markers are to respond differently to each of the errors. It is the teacher’s responsibility to ensure that learners understand the areas in which they need to improve. Learners need to know what their errors are in order to correct them. The correction code might not provide clarity as to how the text can be improved. This, therefore, calls for written comments in the feedback.

The problem with feedback starts with the fact that it has a lot of definitions (Louw 2006:61). Another debated issue is the importance and durability of the effects of feedback. For this study though, feedback is deemed as important based on the findings of studies by Spencer (2009) and Lipnevich and Smith’s (2008). The two studies proved that feedback in process writing results in an improved final draft; whereas no feedback results in the least improvement. Looking at essays as a process of writing and taking grade 10 as the beginning of the FET phase in the South Africa high school system, feedback on essay writing is vital for the improvement of learners’ writing. The correction code and rubric used in high schools in South Africa ensures that there is feedback. What is of importance in this study is looking into how teachers provide this feedback via the use of the correction code and the rubric.

In summary, in marking essays, there are different kinds of errors that can be encountered, each of which is treated with a different approach. The approach will depend on the role the marker assumes when marking the text. The approaches are weighted on a continuum between positive and negative marking. The difficulty in choosing an approach is that there are no direct effects for each of the approaches in that one approach does not always yield the same result. Every feedback mechanism should be weighed and tested based on the problems likely to be encountered with each strategy, how effective and how time consuming the strategy is. The problem remains though, that unless we go into each language in specificity, we can never have a research supported understanding of how it is marked. The following section looks at some of the questions that remain unanswered and therefore justify an in-depth inquiry into essay writing in a specific language such as Sesotho home language, which is the case in this study.

### 1.2.2 Unresolved issues

One of the most important issues of concern for this study is the apparent absence of literature and research on the assessment of Sesotho creative writing in South African high schools. The same can be concluded about literature on assessment of Sesotho creative writing and academic writing in Sesotho at University levels. Although teachers are “trained” to assess Sesotho creative essays, it has not been explored how the discipline could be refined or whether current practices are optimal. This study aims to address the issue of the lack of empirical knowledge about the marking practices by Sesotho home language teachers by presenting an account of how teachers use the correction codes and rubric to assess creative writing essays in Sesotho home language grade 10.

Generally, rubrics can be used to call teachers’ attention to both the aspects that have to be assessed and how correction codes standardise penalties allocated to each error. In his study on the effectiveness of standardised feedback in second language students revision of writing. Louw (2008:108) for instance states that:

[t]he standardization of feedback will therefore help solve a small part of the bigger problem with feedback on writing in general. Additional problems which will need solving include teacher focus (what exactly do we mark), learner focus (change from correcting to revising) and techniques to actively engage students in using feedback.

Therefore, research needs to establish what it is that teachers should mark to ensure that they understand their role as assessors/markers. It only makes sense that if teachers know what to mark, they ought to also know how they mark it, otherwise we would not benefit from knowing what to mark. Hence, this study’s focus on how Sesotho home language teachers mark what they mark.

Hillocks’s (1986) study shows that feedback given on written texts is of sentimental value. For example, the author states that “[n]egative comments have a detrimental effect on students’ attitudes” (1986:160-8). In this study data were interrogated for among others, how teachers structure their feedback, and instances of positive and negative feedback were analysed.

Although effects of different response styles have been studied, research is yet to establish how Sesotho home language teachers apply the response styles. This study therefore looks into how Sesotho home language teachers mark creative writing essays. It is assumed here, that the way teachers mark goes hand in hand with the role they assume when they mark.

Unlike in the past, teachers are no longer the only source of information in classes. Neither are they editors of essays as there is just no time given that classes often have too many learners. Fortunately, “the purpose of feedback is also to set students thinking rather than to edit their texts for them” (Louw, 2008:102). This means that teachers no longer have to provide the corrections but should guide learners so that they correct their own writing. The correction code is used to show learners where to improve their texts. Although this gets them thinking, it is still the teacher’s responsibility to ensure that the learners are thinking in the right direction. Teachers cannot give appropriate feedback unless they understand the difference between correction, editing and revision. This is because different marking strategies are used to reach each.

Spencer (2009:18) highlights the correction code as a form of minimal feedback. According to Spencer (2012:32-3) the correction code is highlighted as one of the five marking strategies used to assess students. The other strategies are: (i) minimal marking, (ii) giving no feedback at all, (iii) self-assessment and (iv) taped response. The apparent distinction between minimal marking and the correction code is that in minimal marking the feedback is written on the margins while with the correction codes, codes are written above the error. In this study, marking with the correction code and minimal feedback are not regarded as synonymous because the correction code is not restricted to marking in the margins. This study focused on the frequency of errors instead of their positioning as it was clear that the correction code was used and not minimal marking.

As previously stated, the correction code has its own shortcomings. Spencer (2009:22) states that the correction code focuses on the negative or erroneous parts of the essay. The name of the code suggests that it is focused on correcting. However, an addition of positive codes is not enough to counter the negativity inherent in the code. In most cases of the use of the code, the suggested corrections are indirect in that students are shown where to correct themselves instead of the instructor correcting the text for them. Learners will not always know how to incorporate the suggested improvements and might therefore need more explicit instruction. The correction code is discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

It is reasonable to conclude from Spencer’s position that the correction code is not enough and does not cater for the purpose of providing comments on individual students’ writing. For this reason, it is important to consider the taxonomy of response-styles identified by Spencer (2008). Twelve response styles are considered in the afore mentioned study in order to challenge tutors to improve their responses to student writing. Spencer acknowledges that there is no clear-cut

contrast between the response styles, and that some overlap leading to a conclusion that “[t]he most effective teachers are those that are eclectic and vary their approaches according to the task and stage of writing at hand” (Spencer, 2008:206). The seemingly unanswered question now is whether Sesotho home language teachers of creative writing vary their response styles or whether they simply keep to the strict use of the correction code and the rubric.

In addition to the correction code used to assess essays in FET Sesotho home language learning areas, a rubric is used. Mostert (2013:03) explains the overall use of rubrics as follows:

[f]or educators to award marks, rubrics are used to ensure that school learners and university students are assessed according to the same criteria throughout the assessment process across an education system or in a university department or unit.

Rodriquez (2008:171-2) states that rubrics help writers plan their writing and help markers evaluate their (writers’) work. Documented scholarship is seemingly silent on whether or not the rubric used in Sesotho grade 10 home language standardises essay-marking for the same essay. The same applies on whether the rubric is only used to highlight the areas of concern. Hence the reason for this particular study.

Use of a rating scale is recommended (Hattingh, 2009:233). If this requirement is not met, it might cause inconsistencies in assessment of essays. According to Andrade and Ying Du (2005:01), teachers have different ideas of what a rubric is, even though they may have the same document at hand. If this is so, then it might mean that they might also interpret it in different ways. This makes their perspectives on rubrics and their use an important aspect for this study. The first step will then be to investigate whether participants understand what each category of the rubric entails, by discussing their perceptions of the most important aspect of essays and the least important aspect of essays. The second step would then be an evaluation of whether they use it in a similar manner or not.

It has been ascertained that the Sesotho curriculum is translated from that of the generic English FAL. Consequently, it can be concluded that the translated rubric used to assess creative essay writing in Sesotho is not validated as the source itself was not validated (see Hattingh, 2009). Dornbrack and Dixon (2014:02) indicate that “there is little research on writing in schools in the South African contexts”. This is especially true for South African indigenous languages such as Sesotho. This means that a lot still needs to be investigated in this regard.

It is clear that essay marking is subjective (Davies, 2004:262), and that teachers respond to learners’ compositions differently depending on their “personal pedagogical systems – stores of

beliefs, knowledge, theories, assumptions, and attitudes” (Borg, 1998:9). However, how this affects marking in Sesotho specifically has not been researched.

The use of the rubrics and the correction codes is undoubtedly to influence some sort of standardisation in that teachers look at similar errors and indicate them consistently and that they base their judgments of what a good essay is on the same criteria. Sadly, it has not been studied how teachers in Sesotho use the two tools to achieve this. In addition, it is worthwhile to investigate in future how teachers ensure that the feedback they provide via the rubric and the correction code to learners has an effect on the improvement of composition writing.

To this effect, the following research questions guide the focus of this study.

### **1.3 Research questions**

Based on the preceding discussion, the following research questions are the focus of this study:

- i. What is known about Sesotho home language creative essay-marking in South Africa?
- ii. What are teachers’ perceptions on the use of the rubric and the correction code to standardise their marking?
- iii. How do Sesotho home language teachers in grade 10 use the rubric and the correction code to provide feedback on creative writing in the subject Sesotho home language?
- iv. Based on the analysis of actual marked scripts and the teachers’ perceptions of their own marking, what are the elements of a good essay?

### **1.4 Objectives**

In order to answer the research questions stated in the previous section, in this study I will:

- a. Do a literature review to ascertain what is known about Sesotho home language creative essay writing and marking in South Africa and essay-marking in general.
- b. Analyse the relevant documents provided by the South African Department of Education that prescribe how teachers of Sesotho as a home language should mark essays. Determine if there is a standardised way of marking and how and which rubrics and correction codes are used by Sesotho home language teachers in grade 10.

- c. Analyse the feedback of Sesotho home language teachers of grade 10 creative writing via the rubric and correction code to describe what aspects of essays teachers give feedback on and how they give feedback using these instruments.
- d. Perform a frequency analysis of the rubric and correction code feedback of Sesotho home language teachers of grade 10 creative writing to describe what elements of an essay teachers focus their feedback on.
- e. Formulate recommendations to assist teachers to improve their feedback on Sesotho home language grade 10 essays via rubrics and correction codes.

## **1.5 Researcher's assumption**

This study postulates that due to lack of research into the specific marking of Sesotho creative writing essays, there is a hidden standard of marking. The rubric and the correction code used in marking of creative writing in Sesotho home language grade 10 in South African schools are insufficient to fully describe how teachers mark. As such, teachers are not confined by them and might not be basing their judgement of a good and a poor essay on them. This study, therefore, seeks to look into how teachers mark creative writing.

If we have a clear idea of how teachers mark essays (using rubrics and correction codes in their marking) we can look into refining the practice with a much clearer perspective because there is always room for improvement. Below is a description of how the study was conducted to gather empirical data and a broad outline of how the data was analysed is provided.

## **1.6 Methodology**

This section presents a brief discussion of the method utilized in gathering data in this study. A detailed discussion of the research methods used in this study is presented in Chapter 3.

### **1.6.1 Review of literature**

A literature review and the analysis of Department of Basic Education documents aimed to:

- Determine what is known about the marking of Sesotho home language creative writing in South Africa. The literature review was expanded to include a review of what is known about the marking of English first (L1) and second language (L2).
- Describe what is stated in the policies in relation to the standardisation of marking and of rubrics for Sesotho (or African) Home Language creative writing.

- Discuss the use of the correction code and the rubric as recommended by the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

## **1.6.2 Empirical investigation**

This section discusses the empirical investigation conducted in this study. The participants, instruments for gathering data, the method of gathering data and the method of analyzing data are briefly discussed. The empirical project was conducted to:

- Gather relevant data so that the marking practices of Sesotho home language teachers of grade 10 creative writing essays could be described.

### **1.6.2.1 Participants**

All Sesotho home language grade 10 teachers of creative writing from the Metsimaholo local municipality in the Fezile Dabi district of the Free State province in South Africa were approached to participate in the study. There are a total of eight high schools in the Municipality (spread across four townships) that teach Sesotho as a home language. In the end, nine teachers from six schools participated in this study.

### **1.6.2.2 Instruments**

Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire to gather information about their qualifications and experience as teachers of Sesotho creative writing. The aim was to gain insight into their perceptions of good essays, most important aspects in essays, their strategies of supplementing both the rubric and the correction code, and their opinions on teacher biases in assessing Sesotho grade 10 home language creative essays.

Participants were requested to submit samples of their marking to the researcher for analyses. Participants were asked to select three examples of above average essays, average essays and below average essays for the study. Teachers sampled essays from their learners' first quarter essay submissions. This means that participants did not mark specifically for the study, they sampled from already marked essays from their learners' first quarter essays. This ensured that teachers marked naturally and that they did not feel pressured to change their normal marking practices to fit what they could have perceived as expected by the researcher.

Participants were interviewed after the analysis of the feedback was completed to ensure that:

- (i) the findings for the most important aspects of essays and the least important aspects of

essays are discussed, (ii) to discuss the aspect of creative introductions and conclusions, and (iii) to discuss the standardisation of essay-marking with the use of the correction code and the rubric.

### **1.6.2.3 Gathering of data**

The questionnaires were delivered to the individual teachers at their schools by the researcher. The researcher was present while the teachers filled in the questionnaire to ensure that the questionnaires are filled in correctly. In a few instances, teachers were allowed to fill-in the questionnaire at their own pace; they were requested to flag the questions they needed clarity on, for discussion with the researcher.

Copies of learners' marked essays scripts were collected from participating schools. Original learners' essays were not handed to the researcher. No names of learners were on the scripts selected by the participating teachers. The interviews were conducted at the schools and were audiotaped with the permission of the teachers.

### **1.6.2.4 Analysis of data**

The open-ended questionnaire responses were manually coded by the researcher and codes were confirmed by the supervisor. The participants' responses are reported in the data presentation. The closed question responses were analysed based on frequencies. Error frequency analyses were conducted on the marked scripts and similarities between teachers' grading were investigated through the Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests. A relationship between the correction code frequencies and the rubric grades granted by teachers on the submitted scripts was then briefly investigated. The interview data was coded using Atlas.ti software version 7. The codes were validated by the supervisor of the study and original quotes are provided as support for themes that emerged from the data.

## **1.7 Ethics**

The participants are adults and, therefore, not a vulnerable population. They provided informed consent to participate in the study. The permission of the gatekeeper (the relevant department of education) was received. The information provided to the participants clearly indicated that participation is voluntary and that information about participants and schools would be kept confidential and not reported in such a way that schools or teachers would be identifiable.

The study was cleared for ethics by both the North-West university with clearance code (NWU-00424-15-8), and by the Department of Basic Education with clearance code (see Appendix G).

## **1.8 Contribution of the study**

This research study aims to provide insight into current marking practices of Sesotho home language teachers in South Africa, a topic on which there is currently no research available. This study therefore contributes to scholarship on the appraised knowledge on assessment of creative writing at grade 10 in the selected schools in South Africa and those that are in more or less similar situations. This could assist in guiding Sesotho home language teachers with regard to good marking and assessment practices. As a recommendation, this study proposes: (i) an expanded marking grid for rubric feedback given to learners during all stages of process writing; and (ii) a rubric guide that is aimed to assist teachers in differentiating between different criteria of the current rubric by providing explanations for each criterion.

## **1.9 Overview of chapters**

This study is organised into six chapters. Chapter 1 introduced the study by briefly discussing existing literature, identifying unresolved issues and motivating the contribution of this study. Chapter 2 presents the discussion of the theoretical basis of this study and the relevant framework for the study. The tools for essay-marking in South African Home language grade 10 Sesotho classes are discussed. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology and approach that the study followed in gathering data for this study, the rationale for selection of questions and approaches for data collection are also discussed here. Chapter 4 presents the results collected following the process, methodology and approach described in Chapter 3. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the data collected in Chapter 3 and presented in Chapter 4 and relates them to the discussion in Chapter 2. Chapter 6 provides a short synopsis of the study, presents recommendations and highlights the implications of this study results. At the end, the bibliographical references are presented.

The next chapter presents the review of pertinent literature.

## CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical basis for the current practices of assessment and feedback to learners who write creative essays in South African high schools. As far as could be ascertained for this study, there is no body of academic literature on how teachers assess creative essay writing in Sesotho. As a result, this chapter focused on a general overview of theories that inform the assessment of creative writing in the home language and in the second language since the Sesotho home language curriculum is translated from the generic English second language (Van der Walt, 2010:326).

The only reliable information we have about the assessment of Sesotho essays is from the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document (2011) and the general Subject Assessment Guidelines (SAGs). As such, little is known about the assessment of Sesotho essays. This chapter briefly contextualises Sesotho as an important official language that is also taught at high school as a home language. The second part of this chapter looked into the main approach used in teaching and assessing creative writing in South African schools, namely the process approach. Lastly, the chapter includes an overview of concepts used in the study. A main conclusion and summary of the discussion closes the chapter.

### 2.2 Contextualising South African Sesotho

This section provides a brief overview of South Africa's language situation. The aim here is to get a broader picture of Sesotho's standing, both as one of the official languages of the country and as a home language to people. A brief overview of the writing history of the language is also provided.

Vistawide (2014) states that Papua New Guinea has the most spoken languages in one country with approximately 820 languages spoken by its different peoples. Although South Africa is not the country with the most spoken languages, according to Guinness World Records (2014):

the country with the most official languages is the Republic of South Africa with 11... India has 18 languages that are recognised by its constitution and can be considered as official, however, the difference is that each language is recognised as the official language of a certain area.

This means that the official language context of South Africa is different from those of other countries in Africa and the world. To clearly understand the situation of South Africa, a brief overview of the national situation of official languages in South Africa is provided in this section, as background to the teaching of Sesotho as a home language.

### **2.2.1 Languages in South Africa**

South Africa has 11 official languages and many respected indigenous but not officially recognised languages. Nine of the eleven languages are descendants of Southern Bantu languages, which are said to have originated from the areas now called Congo, Cameroon and Nigeria (Accredited Language Society (ALS), 2014; Kwintessential, 2013). The eleven official languages are Afrikaans, English, IsiNdebele, IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, Sesotho, Setswana, Sepedi, SiSwati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga. Apart from the official languages, there are many varieties and dialects that are not nationally recognised as official languages. These varieties and dialects remain important as expressions of social identity. However, for the purpose of this study, the focus was on the official languages and creative writing assessment at high school, with particular reference to Sesotho.

In terms of Section 6 (2) of the Constitution (1996) all the indigenous and Western adopted official languages are to be treated with equal respect. The section reads:

[r]ecognising the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages.

One way of raising the status of indigenous languages of South Africa is by using it in high function contexts such as in education. Unfortunately, as Verhoef and Venter (2008:386-7) found, students prefer to use their respective indigenous home languages for socialisation, and English for their academic and high-function formal contexts. Webb (2013:180) explains this as the colonisation of the mind, where indigenous language speakers believe that their languages are unable to be used in such domains. Sesotho home language is no exception, however, it must be studied how creative writing essays are assessed in it because it is used as a subject in the school system. The section that follows entails a discussion of the languages in the education system of South Africa and the language choices of learners and parents.

## 2.2.2 Languages in South African Education

According to the Language in Education Policy of the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 (South Africa, 1997), learners must choose the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) upon application for admission to a particular school. The policy states further that the learners can apply to the provincial education department to make provision for their desired language of teaching if no school in a certain district offers teaching in their language of choice. However, according to Mahlasela (2012:15), the common practice is that English is used as the LoLT from grade 4 upwards because parents and learners do not use their freedom to choose an African language as the LoLT. According to Koch and Burkett (2005:1094), studies “indicate that many African-language speakers would, in fact, prefer their children to be educated in their own languages, provided that they receive quality education, and end up being proficient in English as well.” However, this is not the case. Whether this is caused by the colonisation of the mind or the personal choices of parents and learners is uncertain. According to Mahlasela (2012:15), it was expected that after 1996, indigenous languages would be selected as LoLTs at schools. This choice for indigenous languages as LoLTs never materialised. In fact a different unexpected trend arose where “English remained the most preferred LoLT in former DET (Department of education and training) schools. English continued to be taught at a second language level, thereby enjoying first additional language status” (*ibid*). Unfortunately for the mission of raising the status of African languages, this means that other than the respective African language subjects “indigenous African languages are not used for tuition in other subjects” (*ibid*, 2012:16). This means that Sesotho home language learners only practise writing in the home language in one subject, while they use English as a medium of instruction for all their other learning areas. This is not necessarily a bad thing, because “English is the international language, and the language of globalisation and empowerment” (Koch and Burkett, 2005:1095). Internationally, Seidholfer (2005:335) states that “English as a ‘lingua franca’ (ELF) has emerged as a way of referring to communication in English between speakers with different first languages.” A lingua franca is defined by the World English Dictionary (WED, 2014) as “a language used for communication among people of different mother tongues, or any system of communication providing mutual understanding”. This means that non-native speakers of English use it for communication with other non-native speakers of English, with a different native language. Locally, Foley (2004:59) states that the African National Congress which has been the ruling party since 1994 accepted English as the common language of the country. English is also termed the national language.

However, this does not mean that the promotion or use of indigenous languages in education is counter-productive to globalisation and empowerment. Multilingualism should be used to unify the masses in South Africa such that English is not used to marginalise those people who do not have functional or even basic fluency in English (Koch and Burkett, 2005:1095). In fact, according to the Use of Official Languages Act (South Africa, 2012), national departments are obligated to take practical and positive measures to “elevate the status and advance the use of indigenous languages of historically diminished use and status”.

### 2.2.3 The position of Sesotho as a national language

“In 1994 Sesotho became one of nine indigenous languages to obtain official recognition in South Africa’s first post-apartheid Constitution” (Kwintessential, 2013). With the exception of Tshivenda and Xitsonga, all other seven indigenous languages are grouped into two major Bantu language groups in South Africa namely: (i) the Nguni and (ii) the Sotho group (Doke, 1939). The Nguni group consists of IsiNdebele, IsiXhosa, IsiZulu and Siswati. The Sotho group consists of Sepedi (also referred to as Northern Sotho), Setswana (sometimes referred to as Western Sotho) and Sesotho (often referred to as Southern Sotho). This study is concerned with Sesotho as a language in its own right and not as one member of a sub-group of languages.

According to the 2011 South African census, 3 849 563 out of the 50 961 443 (or 7.55%) of the population speak Sesotho as a home language (Statistics South Africa, StatsSa, 2012:23). Table 2.1 below shows the eleven official languages and their population distribution per province.

**Table 2.1: South Africa’s population by home language spoken per province**

First Language	WC	EC	NC	FS	KZN	NW	GP	MP	LP	SA
Afrikaans	2 820 643	683 410	606 225	340 490	161 876	309 867	1 502 940	289 446	140 185	6 855 082
English	1 149 049	362 502	37 842	78 782	1 337 606	120 041	1 603 464	124 646	78 692	4 892 623
IsiNdebele	15 238	14 854	6 023	10 008	111 657	43 988	380 494	403 678	104 283	1 090 223
IsiXhosa	1 403 233	5 092 152	60 187	201 145	340 832	190 601	796 841	48 993	20 275	8 154 258
IsiZulu	24 634	31 634	8 501	118 126	7 901 932	84 835	2 390 036	965 253	62 424	11 587 374
Sepedi	8 144	14 299	2 431	7 395	20 555	83 999	1 282 896	372 392	2 826 464	4 618 576
<b>Sesotho</b>	<b>64 066</b>	<b>158 964</b>	<b>14 136</b>	<b>1 717 881</b>	<b>79 416</b>	<b>201 153</b>	<b>1 395 089</b>	<b>138 559</b>	<b>80 299</b>	<b>3 849 563</b>
Setswana	24 534	12 607	373 086	140 228	52 229	2 191 230	1 094 599	71 713	107 021	4 067 248
Sign language	22 172	42 235	3 933	32 910	48 575	14 924	52 744	8 932	8 230	234 655
Siswati	3 208	2 020	648	2 246	8 347	12 091	136 550	1 106 588	25 346	1 297 046
Tshivenda	4 415	3 663	1 083	2 592	4 309	16 255	272 122	12 140	892 809	1 209 388
Xitsonga	9 152	3 092	1 201	8 039	8 936	127 146	796 511	416 746	906 325	2 277 148
Other	127 117	36 893	12 385	15 935	77 519	60 872	371 575	39 639	86 322	828 258
<b>Total</b>	<b>5 675 604</b>	<b>6 458 325</b>	<b>1 127 683</b>	<b>2 675 777</b>	<b>10 153 789</b>	<b>3 457 004</b>	<b>12 075 861</b>	<b>3 998 726</b>	<b>5 338 675</b>	<b>50 961 443</b>

Van Der Merwe and Van Der Merwe (2006:41) state that the population of Sesotho home language speakers in South Africa is increasing as is also the case with the population of South Africa as a whole. As can be observed from table 2.1, Sesotho is the most prominent home language in the Free State province and the third most prominent home language in Gauteng. The Free State and Gauteng provinces have the largest number of schools that offer Sesotho as a home language. The Metsimaholo district, where this study was conducted is situated on the borderlines of these two provinces.

Sesotho is therefore one of the bigger languages in South Africa. A reasonable perception is that, as the population grows, more schools could offer Sesotho as home language. Therefore, it is important to look into the teaching and learning of the subject. Below is an overview of the history of writing in Sesotho. With this potential for inclusion in more schools, Sesotho home language cannot avoid scrutiny for compliance of writing and reading as the main communication skills in education. Hence the next subsection.

#### **2.2.4 Writing in Sesotho**

In the study on the literary history of Sesotho literature in social transition, Zulu (2003:77-8) lists four literary periods in the history of Sesotho literature. The periods are: the pre-literary period, where the only literature was oral; the missionary literary period, where the missionaries introduced the concept of reading and writing into the previously oral culture of Basotho with the aim of Christianising them. The apartheid literary period, where publication in Sesotho was pressurised by the apartheid government and freedom of expression was limited. The post-apartheid or post-colonial literary period, the era after the 1990s, after the apartheid era came to an end in South Africa, during which Sesotho could potentially increase in use as a literary language.

The pre-literary period came to an end in the 1800s. The first person to transmute Sesotho into written language according to the Accredited Language Services (ALS, 2014), was a “French missionary, Eugene Cassalis of the Paris Evangelical Mission (PEMS), who came to modern-day Lesotho in 1833”. Cassalis’ work was furthered by “Reverend A. Mabile, who compiled the first known list of Sesotho language words”. Mabile was also responsible for the establishment of a printing press in Morija, Lesotho (*ibid*). According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica Guide to Black History (EBGBH, 2013), the first literature written in Sesotho can be traced back to *Mekhoa ea Basotho le maele le litsomo* (1893) (“Customs and Stories of the Sotho” by Azariele M. Sekese).

Sesotho was one of the first African languages to become a written language and, therefore, has an extensive literature (South African History Online (SAHO), 2012; Olivier, 2009). In his discussion about the persistence of the Bantu languages, here referred to as indigenous languages, Doke (1938) states: “Southern Sotho [Sesotho] has for years been developed and has won for itself a place of esteem in the literary world.” This was because years earlier, “under wise encouragement, Southern Sotho writers (had) entered on a 'golden period' in literary production” (*ibid*). It was therefore expected that Sesotho would more or less absorb both Sepedi and Setswana as literary language. However, Sesotho failed to maintain the high standard. Doke (1938:313) states that:

Had that high quality of literary production been maintained there is little doubt that Southern Sotho would by now have definitely dominated the whole Sotho group and solved any questions of choice of medium of the literature of all these peoples. But that is not the position today, and Southern Sotho has not maintained that virility.

Although Sesotho, Sepedi and Setswana together form the Sotho group, they are independent of each other in terms of orthography. According to Doke (1935:185), the standard orthography of Sesotho was untouched in the 1930s, while new orthographies for Sepedi, IsiXhosa and IsiZulu were settled. To overcome the difficulty of various dialects, Sesotho took the dialect of the publications of the Morija Printing Press which according to Sekere (2004:35) was based on Moshoeshoe’s Kwena dialect. In addition, since the development of writing in Sesotho, the South African Sesotho orthography has developed differently from that of Lesotho (ALS, 2014; SAHO, 2012). Key differences exist between the orthographies of South African Sesotho and Lesotho Sesotho (ALS, 2014; SAHO, 2012). For example, South Africa often uses “*d* in place for *l*”, and “*w* in place for *o*”. Also, Sekere (2004:30) states that “native speakers of Sesotho from Lesotho and South Africa will exhibit significant differences from each other with respect to the vocabulary of the Sesotho language and lesser differences with regard to its syntax.” It should, however, be noted that Sesotho is not restricted to South Africa and Lesotho. According to SAHO (2012), Sesotho is also spoken in Namibia and Zambia. In this study, Sesotho is contextualised in the South African Education system in which assessment of communicative ability in a language applies to creative writing among other learning areas. Hence the next sub-section.

### **2.2.5 Implications of the background for the study**

With this background, the study of the assessment of creative writing can be deemed important. According to Sekere (2004:74) “due to the continual development in the field of science, technology and culture, there is constantly a need for languages to create new terms to name

and describe new concepts.” For this purpose, words are adopted from other languages. This however, does not mean that indigenous languages cannot stand independently. According to Doke (1948:285), “[c]ontrary to common belief, most Bantu languages are remarkably rich in vocabulary, and the 'common people' employ in daily use a high percentage of the known vocabulary.” The implicit challenge, is however the fact that spoken and written languages differ. Thus, even though Sesotho does have an extensive vocabulary, strategies of loaning, borrowing and adopting words have to be employed to represent such abstracts that are not referenced in Sesotho. Such abstracts include untranslated mathematical terms. Sekese (2004:74) states that “[i]t is an indisputable fact that we do not write the way we speak. It is this difference between the spoken language and the written language that creates problems in the teaching and learning situations.” The study into how creative writing is assessed is, therefore, important in understanding how teachers deal with this challenge. Creative writing and how it is assessed are aspects of written language. If Sesotho as a home language continues to gain educational value at the rate it is doing, a research-informed understanding of how creative writing is assessed becomes an educational/teaching need. Hence the focus of this study.

In summary, Sesotho is an official language in South Africa and Lesotho although it is also spoken in Namibia and Zambia. The most notable difference between Lesotho Sesotho and South African Sesotho is the orthography and vocabulary. As can be observed in the last column of table 2.1, Sesotho is the seventh largest language in South Africa. From an education perspective, this makes looking into its teaching and assessment practices worthwhile. It was demonstrated that English is the dominant language in South African schools, mostly as the first additional language and the language of learning and teaching. This study sought to contribute to an understanding of the assessment of Sesotho home language essays by looking at how the written form of creative writing in Sesotho grade 10 is assessed and how learners receive their feedback. According to Schoonen *et al* (2003:03) “writing in one’s mother tongue is a demanding task, which calls upon several language abilities, as well as upon more general (meta)cognitive abilities.” It is even more of a demand if the mother tongue is not the LoLT, but only one subject. The following section reviews literature on writing focused on the process approach.

## 2.3 The process writing approach

### 2.3.1 Introduction

It is not the aim of this dissertation to provide a comprehensive discussion of the models of writing in the first language (L1) and/or second language (L2). This discussion should be viewed as an attempt to explain the writing process learners undergo in order to present a final draft to teachers for assessment. In addition, the section looks at the advantages and disadvantages of process-oriented writing.

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document prescribes four approaches to teaching language, namely, the text-based approach, the communicative approach, the integrated approach, and the process-oriented approach (CAPS, 2011a:11; Setatemente sa Leano la Kharikhulamu le Tekanyetso, SLKT 2011b:12-3) is related to the teaching of reading and writing:

The process approach is used when learners read and produce oral and written texts. The learners engage in different stages of the listening, speaking, reading, and writing processes. They must think of the audience and the purpose during these processes. This will enable them to communicate and express their thoughts in a natural way... During process writing, learners are taught how to generate ideas, to think about the purpose and audience, to write drafts, to edit their work, and to present a written product that communicates their thoughts.

“The focus of process-oriented writing instruction is to stimulate students to think about their writing and reflect on their ideas” (Goldstein and Carr, 1996:07). The process approach is used for all creative writing in grade 10 Sesotho home language teaching in South Africa. Below, a few definitions of process writing are reviewed and then the working definition of process writing as used in this study is provided.

### 2.3.2 What Is process writing?

According to Graham and Sandmel (2011:396), “there is no universally agreed-on definition for the process approach to writing...” As such, a few definitions of the process approach are provided in an attempt to clarify it as it is used in this study.

According to Goldstein and Carr (1996:02) process writing "refers to a broad range of strategies that include pre-writing activities, such as defining the audience, using a variety of

resources, planning the writing, as well as drafting and revising.” This definition highlights activities or steps associated with process writing. According to Vanderpyl (2012:09), “writers are encouraged to spend significant time performing tasks within each step and revisit previous steps as necessary.”

Onozawa, (2010:154) states that process writing is “an approach to writing, where language learners focus on the process by which they produce their written products rather than on the products themselves.” The processes focused on can be cognitive in that learners focus more on their cognitive planning of the essay and idea generation or practical in that learners actually put ideas and thoughts in writing. However, although the process is stressed more, “[i]n the end, learners surely need to and are required to complete their products” (*ibid*).

The process approach to writing essays, therefore, refers to the strategic steps that language learners follow in producing an essay. These steps include the cognitive and physical processes, where learners think about what they are going to write before they write it, and then write it. Understanding what process writing entails, allows us to infer what is expected in the marking of texts produced under such conditions.

### **2.3.3 Stages in process writing**

Although Graham and Sandmel (2011:396) conclude that there is no universally agreed on definition of the process approach, they admit that “... there are a number of underlying principles that are common to it.” The writing stages form part of the principles of the process.

According to McKensie and Tomkins (1984:201), the names of the stages of process writing vary, but fall generally into the categories of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. These categories are also identified by Vanderpyl (2012). Ho (2006:01) adds that these strategies are taught at “each stage of the writing process to help them [learners] to write freely and arrive at a product of good quality.” However, Wang (2014:89) classifies only three stages of process writing. These stages are the same stages listed by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document (DBE, 2011a:11), discussed below. Appendix C summarises what the CAPS document states about the process of writing.

#### **2.3.3.1 The Planning/Pre-writing stage**

Brainstorming is viewed as an important pre-writing stage. Upon receiving or choosing the topic, learners think about what they need to write and how they are going to write it. According to

Wang (2014:89), “[b]y means of brainstorming, students can think fast about a writing topic and share some opinions in class.” Although brainstorming in groups is not compulsory, “such a stage is very crucial for students, particularly when they are not quite familiar with the given topic” (*ibid*). When a teacher explains the different topics, he/she engages in brainstorming ideas with learners on what can be written about.

McKensie and Tomkins (1984:202) state that “another important dimension of students’ writing development is their awareness of audience.” They further illustrate that “[w]ider, known audiences could include classmates, relatives, and favourite authors. Unknown audiences might include mail order companies and literary magazines.” This consideration of audience is part of the pre-writing stage. Learners decide on who they are writing for, what they are writing, how they are writing it and why they are writing it with the audience in mind. A mind map is used in South African Sesotho home language classes to prove that learners have planned their essays. What has not been researched on much as far as Sesotho home language is concerned, is the validity of mind maps as an indicator of planning. This is not the focus of the current study, but it could be a topic for future research.

### **2.3.3.2 The Drafting stage**

After planning, learners need to start writing/drafting. According to McKensie and Tomkins (1984:204), “the goal of the drafting stage is that students develop their ideas, the content of the compositions.” The authors further suggest that rough drafts and the emphasis of content over mechanics are two key features in the drafting stage (*ibid*). This means that in the drafting stage, learners focus more on what they want to say and they put it in writing, paying more attention to the ideas and less attention to the grammar, punctuation and the length of the essay. According to Wang (2014:89), the following stages of drafting are followed:

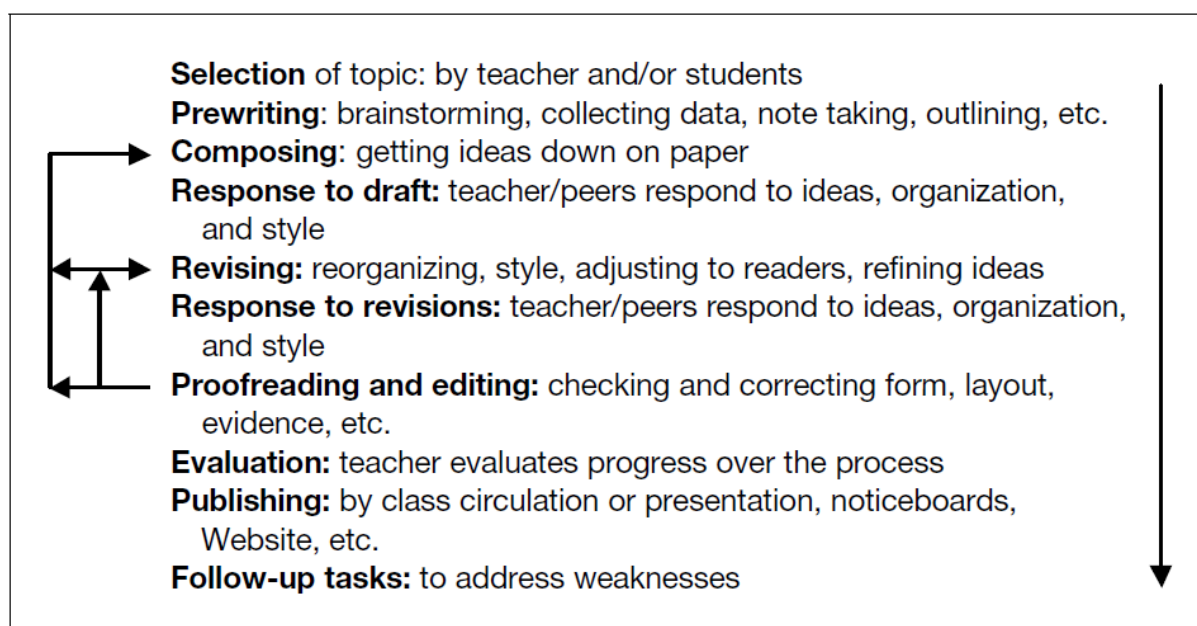
In the first drafts, students focus on the macro level of expressing their ideas. In the second drafts, students emphasize the micro level of vocabulary, grammar and spelling, etc. In the third drafts, students try their best to make perfect writings both in the content and in the form.

The number of drafts is determined by the number of times that the writer revisits the planning/pre-writing stage to change ideas and the focus of the essay. In addition to revisiting planning/pre-writing, the changes in focus or the arrangement of ideas may be influenced by the following stage.

### 2.3.3.3 Revising, editing proofreading and presenting

Wang (2014:89) refers to this stage as post-writing. “The post-writing stage includes peer review, teacher feedback and final publication” (*Ibid*). According to McKensie and Tomkins (1984:207) “in the editing stage teachers and students work together to polish the writing by correcting spelling, usage, punctuation, and other mechanical errors.” They further state that “children [learners] should proofread their writing and then have a classmate proofread it before going to the teacher for assistance” (*ibid*). In other terms, the learner has to self-assess, receive peer assessment and then submit for teacher assessment.

According to Hyland (2003:11) “[p]lanning, drafting, revising, and editing do not occur in a neat linear sequence, but are recursive, interactive, and potentially simultaneous, and all work can be reviewed, evaluated, and revised even before any text has been produced at all.” This might be viewed as a trial and error process in that learners can continue to other stages, and then come back to earlier stages. For example, a learner might decide preliminarily to address the youth in his town about the use of drugs, but later on realise that the scope is too big, and then he will return to the planning stage and redefine the scope.



**Figure 2.1: A process model of writing instruction (Hyland, 2003:12)**

As illustrated in Figure 2.1, although the stages are orderly, they have no strict sequence. Badger and White (2000:154) state that “this is a cyclical process in which writers may return to pre-writing activities, for example, after doing some editing or revising.” Vanderpyl (2012:09) posits that “the process approach is not linear; it is cyclical and fluid. Multiple revisions and

feedback sessions with teachers and peers take place before submitting final, polished products.” The learner can return to the stage of composing at any time to incorporate suggested changes. The teachers and peers can suggest changes and then follow up to see if the changes were incorporated and if necessary, suggest new changes until the composed product is seemingly flawless.

According to Hyland (2003:12) “the effectiveness of error correction and grammar teaching in assisting learners to improve their writing remains controversial in this model.” The following sections discuss a few advantages and disadvantages of the process approach to writing.

#### **2.3.4 Benefits/Advantages of process writing**

Graham and Sandmel (2011:397) list three advantages of process writing:

- (i) students are encouraged to plan, draft, and revise. The cognitive activities involved in these writing processes account for close to 80% of the variance in the quality of papers produced by adolescent writers
- (ii) instruction in writing through mini-lessons, conferences, and teachable moments should result in improved quality of writing. These teaching tools also provide mechanisms for addressing the instructional needs of individual students.
- (iii) motivation for writing should be enhanced as collaboration, personal responsibility, personal attention, and a positive learning environment are stressed.

According to Bijami and Raftari (2013:12) “a process approach tends to focus more on different classroom activities which promote the development of language use: brainstorming, group discussion and rewriting”. Although these activities do not focus on the accuracy, they at least get the learners to use the language.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (1992) report indicated that the success of process writing depends on the teacher. It states that “students of teachers who always encourage particular elements of process writing ... were found to be generally better writers than students of teachers who reportedly never encourage these activities” (Goldstein and Carr, 1996:06). Process writing informs us of what both learners’ and teachers’ roles are in the writing and the assessment of creative writing essays. It is directly applicable in Sesotho grade 10 writing classes in that the exact process of writing is followed.

### 2.3.5 Criticisms of the process approach

Graham and Sandmel (2011:397) list three disadvantages of process writing. Firstly, the “instruction provided in process writing classrooms is not powerful enough to ensure that students, especially students experiencing difficulty with writing, acquire needed writing skills and processes” (Bijami and Raftari, 2013:13). This means that the approach benefits those who can already write more than those who cannot. Secondly, “not enough attention is devoted to mastering foundational skills, such as handwriting, spelling, and sentence construction” (Bijami and Raftari, 2013:13). In South African Sesotho home language classes, this might not entirely be the case. The use of a correction code points out errors such as spelling to learners. Thirdly, “very little time is devoted to explicitly teaching students strategies for carrying out basic writing processes such as planning and revising” (Bijami and Raftari, 2013:13). Unfortunately, creative writing is only a component of the whole subject of Sesotho home language and not much time can be spared for teaching basics.

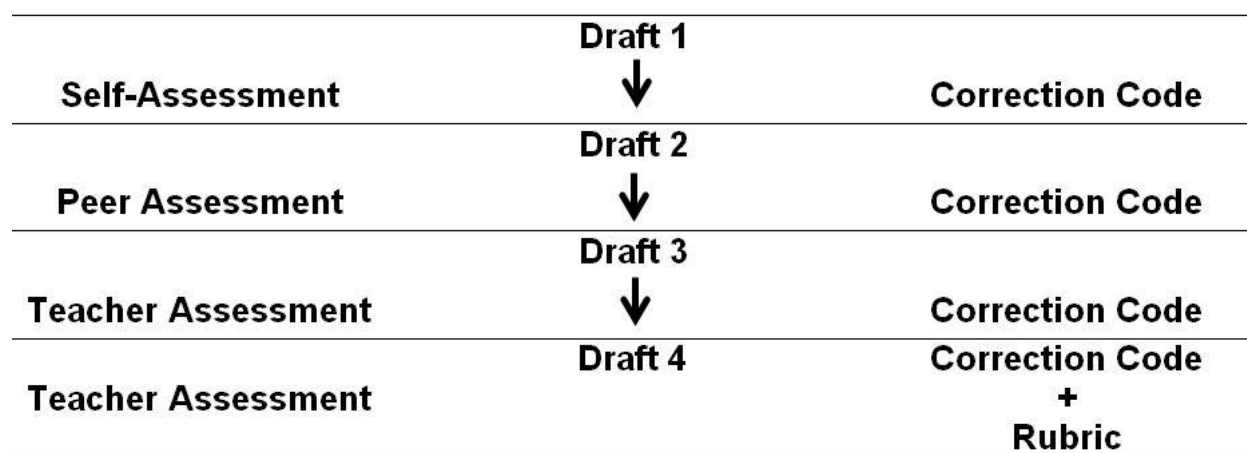
According to Onozawa (2010:158), “[t]he main concern that people have with the process approach is that it pays less attention to grammar and structure, and puts little importance on the final products.” This is not entirely true for the context of Sesotho home language essays. Although in theory, the emphasis is put on the process, in practice the product counts more. Both the learners and the teachers work together to produce a final draft. The learner is then evaluated and graded based on the final draft. In other words, the whole process of writing is devoted to ensuring that the final product is of high quality.

Ultimately, the examination of essay writing in the summative phase at South African high schools also emphasises the final product of the essay. The summative examination processes for essay writing in South African schools does not currently allow learners to apply a process approach to writing. Although learners are therefore trained in the process approach to essay writing, assessment of essay writing remains predominantly a matter of crafting a final product for marking. Learners might be asked to provide their planning for an examination essay. However, there is no easy way with which to apply a process approach to writing in the context of examinations as they are currently administered in South African high schools. To make this possible, learners would need to be able to take a “day long” examination, for example. Where they get the topic of their essay in the morning; are allowed to do research and planning for their essays until lunch time; then be allowed to complete their essays based on their research and planning after lunch; and then be allowed to edit their essays with a rubric and correction code before submitting the essay for marking. One would also need to take a decision about the

inclusion or not of peer-assessment in the examination process. It is not impossible to make these arrangements, but it would require a true commitment to a process writing approach even in the context of the final examination. Until such time, learners are therefore disadvantaged as the type of summative assessment of essay writing is not aligned to the way in which learners are taught to write essays.

### **2.3.6 The process approach in creative writing essays by grade 10 home language learners in South Africa**

It was stated earlier on this chapter, that not all desired steps and stages in process writing are followed in composing and assessing creative writing in Sesotho as a home language. Figure 2.2 is a visual representation of the process approach as prescribed for assessment of essays in Sesotho home language classes (see Appendix C for a summary of what the CAPS document states about process writing and assessment in Sesotho FET phase). The first draft is expected to be assessed by the author (learner) with the use of the correction to indicate to him/herself where improvements are to be included. The second draft is then desired to be assessed by a peer, through use of the correction code.



**Figure 2.2: The process of essay assessment from the first draft to the final draft assessed by the teacher**

The first draft that the teacher assesses with the correction code is the draft with suggested changes from the peer (it is indicated as draft 3 in figure 2.2). The learner is then given an opportunity to incorporate final changes and to present the final draft which is then assessed using the correction code and the rubric. The rubric is, therefore, only used to provide feedback on the final draft.

Unfortunately, the process approach to teaching writing in formative assessments disadvantages learners in summative assessment. The essays written in summative assessments such as examinations require only the final draft and no feedback on pre-final drafts. As such, learners who depend on teachers' input or feedback produce essays of lesser quality in summative assessments.

### **2.3.7 Conclusion**

In summation, this section provided the working definition of process writing, explored the basic steps in the process approach to writing and discussed the advantages and the disadvantages of the approach. Ideally, the Sesotho home language grade 10 learners should produce four drafts. The first one is self-assessed (with the correction code). The second one is peer-assessed (with the correction code). The third one is teacher-assessed (with feedback on the correction code) and the fourth and final one is graded by the teacher with feedback on the rubric. Unfortunately, these drafts are not always produced as learners may choose not to receive certain assessments and simply focus on the final draft. This study sought to investigate how teachers follow the process approach in their use of the correction codes and the rubric to assess creative writing in Sesotho grade 10.

## **2.4 Contextualisation of the main concepts in this study**

### **2.4.1 Introduction**

Due to the nature of process writing, different assessments are employed in the production of one essay. Such include self, peer and teacher assessment. This section contextualises the common concepts in the marking of essays by discussing assessment in general, looking into the aspect of marking, reviewing the broader aspect of feedback followed by a discussion of the correction code and the rubric.

### **2.4.2 Assessment**

The Standard Assessment Guidelines (DBE, 2008b:01) state that "assessment should be part of every lesson and teachers should plan assessment activities to complement learning activities". To achieve this, the guidelines further suggest two types of assessments to be conducted namely; "informal daily assessment and the formal Programme of Assessment" (*ibid*). Both types of assessments are regarded as continuous assessments, however, purposes and uses of the two types of assessment differ. This section seeks to provide a working

definition of assessment and to give a brief discussion of the concept. The process of essay assessment is also provided. The conclusion highlights the most important defining factors of assessment as used in this study.

#### **2.4.2.1 What is assessment?**

In the case of Sesotho home language assessment of creative writing, learners are provided with rubrics and the correction code so that they know what they will be assessed on and how they will be assessed on it. The correction code is used to diagnose problematic or lacking areas for learners. The rubric on the other hand shows learners what is important to achieve in each assessment. Providing learners with such resources is important as Gibbs and Simpson (2004:04) state that “what influences students the most is not the teaching but the assessment”. The section on essay assessment process discusses how learners use these two tools.

According to Brown *et al.* (1997:08) “[a]ssessment consists, essentially, of taking a sample of what students do, making inferences and estimating the worth of their actions.” On the other hand, Chappuis *et al.* (2010:13) define assessment as “the process of gathering evidence of student learning to inform instructional decisions”. According to Brown *et al.* (1997:08), inferences are made about learners’ “achievements, potential, intelligence, aptitudes, motivations and, perhaps, personality and an estimate of worth in the form of grades, marks or recommendations is made”. O’Farrell (2002:22) also states that assessment is “the systematic and on-going method of gathering, analysing and using information from measured outcomes to improve student learning in terms of knowledge acquired, understanding developed, and skills and competencies gained.”

From the definitions of assessment above, three elements of assessment can be identified, (i) gathering evidence about learning, (ii) making inferences about the quality of learning and (iii) grading. These three elements will be discussed further in the following sections.

According to Lockett and Sutherland (2000:98), “[a]ssessment defines for students what is important, what counts, how they will spend their time and how they will see themselves as learners.” This means that learners judge the worth of study units on whether they are assessed on them or not. If they are assessed on the unit, it means that the content thereof is important, and if they are not assessed on it, it means that the content thereof is not important and as such, they pay more attention to what they are assessed on. Therefore, to change student learning, teachers need to “change the methods of assessment” (*ibid*).

Hounsell (1995:51) defines assessment as “making informed and considered judgements about the quality of a student’s performance on a given assignment.” This can be tied to the element of gathering evidence about learning in that if the learners pass, it shows that they have learned and if they do not pass, it shows that they did not learn. However, it should be noted that gathering the information and making inferences are not always with a view to simply improving learner performance. Coetzee van Rooy (2011) states that the information collected can be used to make “judgements about a language learner’s knowledge of a language and ability to use it”.

From the above definitions of assessment, two broad objectives of assessment can be identified. The one objective is making judgements, and the other is encouraging development. Brown *et al.* (1997:09) state that “even though all assessments provide estimates of learners’ current status, the results of assessment can be used for **judgemental** and for **developmental** purposes” (emphasis added). To best explain this, Chappuis *et al.* (2010:17) state a very important distinction, the differentiation between assessment “for” and assessment “of” learning. In short, the assessment for learning aims for development while assessment of learning aims to make judgements.

For this study, assessment refers to the activities undertaken to evaluate students’ level of understanding of creative essay writing, thereby making inferences about the quality of teaching and learning methods and sometimes grading the performance either of each assessment or a collective of assessments.

#### **2.4.2.2 Stages of assessment of language in South African high schools**

Not all assessments are the same nor are they all used for the same purpose or outcome. According to the Standard Assessment Guidelines (SAGs) (DBE, 2008b:01), two types of assessments are required at the grade 10 level. The two assessments are the formal programme of assessment (FPA), which is used to provide the summative mark of the student and the class assessment also referred to as Continuous Assessment (CA), which is used to measure the learner’s progress and understanding and to identify gaps in his/her knowledge and/or understanding. Below, the two types of assessments are discussed in more detail and contextualised into documented literature.

##### **a. Formal programme of assessment (FPA)/Summative assessment**

According to Chappuis *et al.* (1997:07), the assessment of learning is judgemental because “it documents individual or group achievement or mastery of standards. It measures achievement

status at a point in time for purposes of reporting; and is in short, concerned with accountability.” Through this assessment, learners are either threatened with punishment (for example, repeating the grade) or promised rewards (for example, advancing to the next grade). Brown *et al.* (1997:09) state that “summative assessment is concerned with licences to proceed to the next stage.” The formal programme of assessment (FPA) plays the role of assessment of learning. The outcome of the FPA is the summative assessment marks.

According to O’Farrell (2002:05), “[s]ummative assessment is assessment that is used to signify competence or that contributes to a student’s [in the case of this study, learner’s] grade in a course, module [learning area in the case of a high school learner], level or degree.” Furthermore, Garrison and Ehringhaus (2011:01) state that “[s]ummative assessments are given periodically to determine at a particular point in time what students know and do not know.” The authors then provide examples of summative assessments and name amongst others, “[d]istrict benchmark or interim assessments, end-of-unit or chapter tests, end-of-term or semester exams, and students (report card grades)” (*ibid*). In short, summative assessments provide the basis for the judgement of whether a learner is ready for a new level in his/her academic development or not. The Formal Programme of Assessment is referred to in this study as summative assessment (the generally used term) because grades and marks attained here are summed up to give an overall grade for the learner. The mid-year examinations and the year-end examinations also form part of this assessment.

This study sought to research how teachers deal with different essay assessments written under different conditions throughout the tenth grade in Sesotho home language. In preparation for summative assessment, learners are usually granted an opportunity to practice. The process of practice for formally recorded assessment is discussed below.

#### **b. Daily/Formative assessment**

In contrast to assessment **of** learning discussed above, formative assessment is assessment **for** learning. Broadfoot *et al.* (2002:2–3) define it as “the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there”. In other words, “[f]ormative assessment focuses on providing learners with feedback to assist them in recognising their knowledge gaps and offering guidance for closing these gaps,” Heinrich (2006:15). Assessment for learning is, therefore, developmental. Chappuis *et al.* (2010:17) state that it promotes an increase in achievement to help students meet more standards and it supports on-going student

growth; in short, it is concerned with improvement. Learners are promised here that success in learning is achievable.

Formative assessment is the generally known and used term for continuous and daily assessments. In this assessment, things are usually still new to learners; therefore, assessments carried out during this stage cannot accurately represent learner competence. However, this does not mean that daily and continuous assessments are useless. It means that teachers “must allow for practice... formative assessment helps teachers determine next steps during the learning process as the instruction approaches the summative assessment of student learning” (Garrison & Ehringhaus, 2011:02). According to Brown *et al.* (1997:12), an assessment qualifies to be formative if it is “given during training and feedback on the skills development is provided.”

This is supported by O’Farrell’s (2002:05) statement that formative assessment is “strictly used to provide feedback to the student on their learning. It provides the student with advice on how to maintain and improve their progress, but should not form part of their summative grade or mark”. However, according to the SAGs (DBE, 2008b:02) “these assessments may be used as part of the summative assessment if the teacher chooses to do so with good reason”.

According to O’Farrell (2002:05) “one distinction is to think of formative assessment as ‘practice’”. Furthermore, continuous assessment “usually involves a series of tasks that are individually assessed ... It is best used when there are several distinct module learning outcomes which are achieved at definable stages during the module” (*ibid*). This means that in ideal contexts, after each study section or unit, learners are given an assessment to see if they understood the section or not.

In short, daily assessments “become formative when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching to meet the needs of students” (Black and William, 1998). Learners’ potential to progress to the next level is not based on the outcome of this assessment. They are based on summative assessments prescribed by the FPA. Although learners assess both their own essays and those of their peers, they do not decide on grades.

As indicated in from the preceding discussion; assessment is generally used to monitor learners’ progress, assist them in their development and finally, to make judgements on the teaching and learning. Similarly, the SAGs (DBE, 2008b:02) state the following reasons for assessment:(i) developing learners’ knowledge, skills and values, (ii) assessing learners’

strengths and weaknesses, (iii) providing additional support to learners, (iv) revisiting or revising certain sections of the curriculum, and (v) motivating and encouraging learners.

In an ideal situation, all three sources of assessment (self-assessment, peer assessment and teacher assessment) are supposedly used in South African high schools. In examination settings, the learners should use the correction code to show that they have revised their essays and are aware of their mistakes. This would then mean that the teacher will not mark the mistake learners indicate awareness of (with the correction code). Unfortunately, only the self-assessed draft is submitted and the feedback is final. In this study, the scripts used for investigation in this study were sample from formative assessment. Unfortunately, only the final draft of the essays are considered. Therefore, no evidence of self and peer assessment are presented.

#### **2.4.2.3 Peer and self-assessment**

During the course of the year, learners and their peers also perform assessment duties for their own learning and the learning of their peers. However, the teacher is responsible for grading. The concepts of self- and peer assessment are discussed below:

##### **a. Self-assessment**

Teachers need to ensure that learners also take responsibility for their learning by allowing them to fix their own mistakes. Nicol (2007:5) states that “this dimension depicts progressive reduction of teacher scaffolding.” Learners need to be able to first correct their drafts using their correction codes before being trusted to correct their peers.

During examinations, peer-assessment and teacher-feedback are omitted from the writing process, as such, the only reader of the pre-final draft is the writing learner. During reading, learners indicate their own errors using the correction code to demonstrate that they are aware of the errors. This process is called self-assessment and is defined by Boud (1991), as cited by O’Farrell, (2002:12), as “the involvement of students in identifying standards and/or criteria to apply to their work and making judgements about the extent to which they have met these criteria and standards.” Self-assessment for some people “... means them having to judge themselves (often their deficits) on someone else’s criteria ...” (Watkins *et al.*, 2007:148). According to Brown *et al.* (1997:176) “it involves one part of the self — assessing another part of the self’s actions and outcomes”. This means that the learner assumes both the duties of composer and assessor. As such, the assessor part of the self, assesses the composing part of

self. According to the SAGs (DBE, 2008b:02), “[t]his is important as it allows learners to learn from and reflect on their own performance”. However, since there is no proof that learners do engage with their rubrics, it cannot be concluded whether they benefit much from self-assessment or not because they only revise their essays through the use of the correction code, which is used mainly to provide feedback. According to Chappuis *et al.* (2010:22) “when students become involved in the assessment process during their learning and have the opportunity to watch themselves improve over time, their confidence, motivation, and achievement also improve.”

#### **b. Peer assessment**

Peer assessment is “the assessment of the work of others of equal status and power” (O’Farrell, 2002:12; Brown *et al.*, 1997:171). It is used to estimate the worth of other students’ work, and to give and receive feedback” (O’Farrell, 2002:12). The importance of this form of assessment is “forming the bridge between the private and the public ... that is between a learner’s internal judgement and a more validated and reality-based judgement” (Watkins *et al.*, 2007:147).

In South African high schools, this is done by allowing learners to exchange scripts or essays and assess each other, giving each other suggestions on where to improve and how to introduce the changes. This is, however, not always possible because of time constraints. Peers only use the correction code to give feedback to their peers and they are not required to use the rubric to check whether the essay is of good quality or not. They focus on the aspects covered in the correction code alone.

In summary, therefore, self-assessment is the assessment done by a learner on his/her own work. On the other hand, peer assessment refers to the assessment done by fellow learners in the same grade studying the same content. The use of self- and peer assessment ensures that learners are involved in their own studying. Nicol (2007:4-5) states that teachers need to “create academic structures that involve and engage” their learners, they also need to “develop ways of sharing responsibility for learning with students”. His argument is that if students are engaged with their studies at whatever level, “they are more likely to persist and succeed in their studies” (*ibid*).

#### **2.4.2.4 Conclusion**

In summary, this section established a working definition of assessment. It was also demonstrated that assessment could be used for either judgemental or developmental purposes. The judgemental purposes include grading which forms the basis for deciding whether learners remain on the same level or proceed to the next. The developmental purposes include making inferences about the quality of learning and allow teachers to gather evidence about learning. Assessment informs a learner about his/her progress. If the assessment shows low levels of achievement, then the learner knows that there should be some improvement, and most importantly, gets to focus on what needs more work. Due to the benefits of assessment, the South African schooling system prescribes clear expectations for assessment (DBE, 2008:01). The learner is first given an opportunity to locate and fix his/her own mistakes and then gets feedback from his/her peers, which is less threatening than the final feedback received from the teacher (see more on feedback and its advantages in section 2.4.4).

#### **2.4.3 Marking**

Marking is always challenging. There is a substantial body of knowledge about the validity and reliability of marking practices. Some academics go as far as to say, “marking is unfair, statistically invalid and intellectually indefensible regardless of quality assurance procedures” (Rust, 2007). Despite strong views about marking, it prevails as an important activity in the teaching and learning process. This subsection aims to define and describe marking as used in general and as used in South African high schools where the empirical research is based.

Marking is the end result of the assessment of student learning. In most cases, it goes hand in hand with grading, which according to Cross and Frary (2009:56) is “the measure of academic achievement”. Hamp-Lyons (2007:02) states that “for instructors, grading assesses teaching effectiveness, and helps educators to make informed decisions regarding students’ progress and their own teaching.”

In short, marking is assessing students/learners’ learning and thereby concluding whether the learners learnt something or not. Grading is responding to students/learners’ output by attaching value scores to their performance for completed tasks.

##### **2.4.3.1 The purpose of marking**

When learners write assessment tasks, they give feedback to their teacher. When learners pass, it may mean that the teaching method employed by the teacher was effective. By the

same token, if learners fail, it may be an indication that the teaching method was not successful; and the teacher therefore needs to employ a different teaching strategy. According to Smith (2002:182), when learners tackle work independently of the teacher, it is as if they are ‘talking’ to the teacher one on one. This means that one of the purposes of marking is allowing teachers to listen to what their learners understood from the lesson. This “lies at the heart of an effective teaching and learning relationship” (*ibid*). Teachers, therefore, have a responsibility of tailoring their lessons to cater for assessments through which they can get to measure their learners’ understanding.

After the teacher receives the message (assessment task from the learner) and decodes it (reads, understands and marks it) he/she has to respond to the learner, thus completing the conversation cycle. The act of responding is marking, giving grades, and/or feedback.

Another aim would be to encourage learners to engage with their studies. Rust (2002:153) states that learners only “seriously engage with learning tasks if they are going to be assessed, with marks attached”. Therefore, while ensuring that marking takes place, grading and feedback should not be omitted because it encourages engagement with studies.

#### **2.4.3.2 Principles of marking**

According to Fry *et al.* (2009:144), marking is a science. As such, it calls to play certain principles that should be followed to validate it. The six basic principles of marking are: (i) consistency, (ii) reliability, (iii) validity, (iv) levelness/appropriate levels, (v) transparency and (vi) inclusivity. “Fundamental to these principles is the concept of objectivity which assumes that marking is a science” (*ibid*).

i. Consistency – “means ensuring that marking and grading across all departments and faculties is appropriate and comparable by institutional guidance” (Fry *et al.*, 2009:143).

ii. Reliability – “means that any two markers would assign the same grade or numerical mark to the same piece of work. It is usually ensured by using assessment criteria and/or a marking scheme” (*ibid*). We also find rubrics used to ensure that the same aspects are marked and that they weigh the same throughout their marking of different learners’ essays.

iii. Validity – In order to obtain a valid status the assessment needs to focus on what is intended to be learned or to ensure that it measures what it is supposed to measure (Rust, 2007:82; Fry *et al.*, 2009:143). For example, in the context of essay-marking, leaving sentence construction out would be viable while assessing poetry but it would not be viable while assessing essay writing.

iv. Levelness, which according to Fry *et al.* (2009:143) means “assessing learning outcomes that are appropriate for each level of study,” which in this case is the school grade. In South African high schools, levels are referred to as grades.

v. Transparency – “involves making sure that the assessment criteria and marking schemes for each assessment task are published and open to all; ensuring that assessment tasks are published in good time; having a fair and equitable appeals and complaints process that is accessible to all” (*ibid*:144).

vi. Inclusivity – which Brown (2004:83), perceives as deploying of a various of methods for assessment “so that the same students are not always disadvantaged. All participants need to be provided with equivalent opportunities to demonstrate their abilities and maximize their potential.” According to Fry *et al.* (2009:144), it “means making reasonable adjustments in assessing students who have disabilities”. In essay-marking this may refer to weighing equal marks to certain aspects of writing (for example, logic and grammar) so that students may receive marks for their strongest points in creative writing instead of always focusing on an aspect at which only a certain number of learners excel, and disadvantaging other learners. The concept of awarding marks is synonymous with grading.

#### **2.4.3.3 Grading**

The issue of grades is debatable. For example, Kohn (2006:12) argues that “the ultimate goal of authentic assessment must be the elimination of grades.” However, other literature assumes that the practice only needs refining. In simple terms, grading may mean putting things into different categories. According to Randall and Engelhard (2010:1373), “grades should only represent student achievement”. Other factors should not affect the grade or mark given to a learner for a certain task. However, this is seldom possible, for example, it may be recalled “from schooling experiences that an A grade (or equivalent grade of excellence) in one teacher’s class meant something completely different than an A (or equivalent) in another teacher’s class” (Randall and Engelhard, 2010:1378). As such, teacher biases and expectations make it hard to accept grades as solely representative of learner achievement. For example, learners can achieve similar marks for different strengths and weaknesses (Rust, 2002:154). This means that different teachers will focus on what they believe is of great importance instead of marking the task for itself without any teacher bias. In this study, the aspect of bias is explored and teachers’ perspectives on biases are reported in chapter 4.

At times, non-achievement factors, such as growth, ability, effort, past achievements, learners’ personal problems, good or ill conduct, play a role in the grade awarded by a marker or teacher.

However, according to Cross and Frary (2009:53) “there is a widespread agreement among measurement specialists that grades, at least in academic subjects, should be based exclusively on measures of current achievement and that growth, ability, effort, conduct and other non-achievement factors should not be considered”. Although this study aims to describe teacher practices, biases were briefly discussed with the teachers to find out which biases they think play a role in their marking and that of other teachers.

#### **2.4.3.4 Controversies in marking**

Since the concept of marking is a science, it may follow that there is controversy around it. According to Cross and Frary (2009:53), Ebel and Frisbie identified three factors contributing to the controversies surrounding marks and grading. There are the subjects of the following subsection:

##### **i. The in challenges measuring educational achievement**

Fry *et al.* (2009:143) state that ensuring that the marking is valid in that it “measures what it is supposed to measure, is especially difficult when assessing high-order skills, such as critical thinking, formulating, modelling and solving problems in written work.” These issues of high-order skills also apply to essays. Marks need to be valid, this would ensure that one piece of writing receives approximately the same grade from different markers. This is, however, not always possible, for example, Hamp-Lyons (2007:02) states that as the “...pool of readers expanded over time, and as the composition of the reading group changed more markedly from day to day than in the past, it became more difficult to maintain score reliability.” In other words, the validity of the marks was jeopardised. This study sought to investigate whether teachers hold the same notion in terms of what each category of marks as presented in the rubric is supposed to measure. This allowed for inference on whether the marks are valid or if they are subjective to each teachers’ preference.

##### **ii. Differences in educational philosophies**

“There are likely to be differences between the judgements that different people make about the same issue” (DBE, 2008a:04). In terms of essay assessment, Moslemi (1975:154) states that “[a]n underlying problem in achieving high inter-rater reliability when dealing with creative writing is in the definition of terms.” This means that teachers may not be sure what terms mean. A definite grade may not be agreed upon as assessors look at different aspects of the same text even when they assess the same aspect. Teachers tend to use their own understanding and thus mark according to it.

### iii. The roles that teachers assume when they assess compositions

When teachers mark, they adopt a variety of different roles. Spencer (1998:29) asserts that these include those of a “common reader, gatekeeper, representative of a discourse community, diagnostician, and co-writer of the text”. The roles suggest that the marker does not only mark, but may have to teach, support, criticise and suggest improvements for the learner.

According to Hao and Johnson (2013:54), researchers who prefer performance assessments, such as essays, over traditional assessments, such as multiple-choice questions, base their argument on the fact that performance assessments measure “abilities and skills of wider range and are more aligned with those skills required in the real world” (*Ibid*). This means that instead of simply reproducing what has been taught as in traditional assessments, performance assessments may be said to measure high-order skills. However, markers may avoid the difficulty of validating their marking “when dealing with high-order skills by focusing on low-order skills such as referencing” (Fry *et al.*, 2009:143). This means that they avoid the judgement role by leaving it to the marking rubrics. This study sought to investigate how teachers ensure that they assume the roles they are expected to assume while ensuring that learners receive the best rubric and correction code feedback they can put to use.

#### **2.4.3.5 Marking process**

Teachers with in-depth knowledge are more likely to focus on high-order skills than teachers with less experience. Teachers should first know the subject matter of their assessment thoroughly before they can assess learners. This will ensure that they understand student responses better than they would if they had less subject knowledge. Crisp (2010:08) states that “reading and understanding the intended meaning of a student’s response (as accurately as possible), is an important first step in the marking process”. Only after reading and comprehending can a marker begin to mark and grade a learner’s response.

A simple method is that of Freedman and Calfee (1983) who presented a three-stage model of marking, which includes:

- (i) the reading and comprehension of the text,
- (ii) the evaluation of the text, and
- (iii) the articulation of the evaluation.

Milanovic *et al.* (cited by Crisp, 2010:05), produced a much more elaborate model, which includes the following phases: (i) pre-marking (which encompasses everything a marker does in

preparation for marking), (ii) scanning (with evaluation), (iii) reading quickly, (iv) rating, and (v) modifying (the grades awarded for the task, either increasing the marks or decreasing them). Sanderson (cited by Crisp 2010:05) presents this process in a six-stage marking sequence:

- (i) prepare,
- (ii) read,
- (iii) comprehend,
- (iv) evaluate,
- (v) categorise and
- (vi) quantify judgement.

However, there are possible loops back to reading and comprehending at any stage

Although the models presented seem to have different stages, they are conceptually similar. These concepts suggest that when marking, a marker has to prepare for marking, read for the gist of the essay, read for understanding the essay, read to evaluate the correctness of the essay and to grant and motivate a grade to the essay. This study sought to describe the steps that teachers follow in the assessment of creative writing essays in Sesotho grade 10 by describing what they do and how they go about assessing essays.

#### **2.4.3.6 Marking strategies**

Spencer (1998:32-3) highlights five marking strategies used to assess students. As will be demonstrated in chapter 4, in South African high schools, not all of the five strategies are used for assessing creative writing essays in Sesotho home language. The strategies are:

- (i) Minimal marking – The minimal strategy is characterised by using a cross in the margins to indicate that something should be done to the text in that specific line.
- (ii) The correction code – Here, the marker simply uses codes to indicate the suggested change to the writer without being explicit on what the writer has to introduce as a change. For example, instead of telling the writer to use a comma instead of a colon, the marker simply indicates that there is a problem with punctuation.
- (iii) Giving no feedback at all – In giving no feedback at all, the marker simply provides the final mark. It might be argued that final examination results fall within this strategy in that only the final mark is revealed and the scripts are not used for further engagement with the learner. However, this study is not concerned with essays written in final examination settings.

(iv) Self-assessment – In high schools, self-assessment in essay process writing is used as the first step, followed by peer assessment, “peers should also learn to edit one another’s work as this interaction is an important part of the process of writing and improves own and other’s awareness of the process” (DBE, 2008a:04), and then the two drafts are submitted with the final revised draft for assessment by the teacher.

(v) Taped response – This strategy is restricted by the technical costs for schools; as stated earlier, most schools do not have enough funds to cover all needed expenses.

From Spencer’s (1998) list above, the South African school system employs the correction code and self-assessment strategies. They are complemented by the use of rubrics and peer-assessment. Different teachers and assessors focus their feedback on different aspects. Some may focus on weaknesses with an aim of improvement and some may focus on strengths with an aim of encouraging learners.

#### **2.4.3.7 Types of marking**

Types of marking refer to the focus of the assessment and feedback. Whether there can be neutral marking that looks at both negative and positive aspects from essays is a standing question. It was established more than two decades ago by Spingies (1990) that there is a difference between positive and negative marking. The correction code as mentioned in Chapter 1 focuses on indicating negative aspects in an essay. Spencer (2009:25) states that “the inclusion of a positive code is not enough to counter the negativity inherent in the marking code itself”. Therefore, in South African high schools, marking essays is of the negative kind because the correction code is used alone with the rubric and no other mandatory supplement focused on positive marking is required.

Hounsell (1995:61) states that strategies for marking specific comments on essays are to some extent a matter of individual preference, and, therefore, suggests categorising comments into “good points” and “could be improved”. As will be demonstrated in chapter 4, the comments feature is not mandatory in South African high schools. There is a high workload and the working hours are not enough. This means that the teacher is required by the DBE to point out the errors in a learner’s essay but is not obligated to compliment the learner or comment on the improvement thereby exhibited.

#### **2.4.3.8 Marking in South African high schools**

“It is not compulsory for a teacher to mark every submitted task, be it oral or written,” (DBE, 2011a:47). However, “the teacher has to assess every task that counts as part of the overall grade level” (*ibid*).

When awarding and grading, the rating scale (Appendix D), is used in South African public high schools. The same scale is used by most post-matric academic institutions to calculate prospective student scores. The rating scale represents the overall performance of learners on a 100-point scale although Rust (2007:144) argues that it is “not possible to make judgements about the quality of work to the precision of a percentage point”.

In more formal writing, teachers are advised to assess all skills being dealt with during that particular stage of the process. For example, ‘all language skills need not be addressed during each step of the process’ (DBE, 2008a:04). This will ensure that learners achieve Learning Outcome 3 (LO 3), which “aims to ensure that the learner is able to write and present for a wide range of purposes and audiences using conventions and formats appropriate to diverse contexts” (Clift, 2007:04; DBE, 2008c:15; Van der Walt, 2010:326). This study sought to describe how teachers of Sesotho grade 10 assess creative writing through the use of the correction code and the rubric and to inquire into their perceptions of comments on essays.

#### **2.4.3.9 Conclusion**

In summary, marking is a science that needs to be perfected. It is the assessment of learning in that it assesses how well the learners understood the content of the lesson, thereby judging the learners’ level of understanding. The end result of marking is usually grading. Unfortunately, grading alone does not motivate learners enough to get them engaging with their studies. In short then, it could be assumed that marking decides to what extent (measured in marks) learners have understood the lesson. This section looked at the marking strategies and processes and gave a short description of the marking model as described by Freedman and Calfee (1983) and from it, it was learned that marking has at least three stages.

Crisp (2010) provides an in-depth discussion of the marking processes. It was also established in this subsection that the correction code and self-assessment used at South African high schools are not the only marking strategies available as Spencer (1998) discusses more strategies. It was explicated that even though there are oppositions to the practice of marking,

the practice prevails. This study among others aims to explore how teachers assess creative writing in Sesotho as a home language. By understanding how teachers go about marking essays, a marking process model for creative writing in Sesotho may be generated in future.

#### **2.4.4 Feedback**

In contrast to marking, feedback is assessment for learning. By using the correction code for peer and teacher assessment and by using rubrics for the final grading of essays, feedback is provided to each learner on his/her performance. The effect of feedback as an assessment for learning can be minimised or maximised by learners' interaction and response to the feedback.

##### **2.4.4.1 What is feedback?**

One of the problems in the debate surrounding feedback is that it is not clearly defined (Louw, 2006:22), this could mean that there are several definitions of feedback. As a result, feedback has to be defined based on each context to avoid using it out of context. In general, feedback refers to any indication of an error in, or any comment about, a written text (*ibid*). For the purpose of this study, Louw's (2006:31) definition is used. The conceptualisation of Louw posits that feedback:

constitutes any mark by an external reader on the text. The mark may indicate something that is considered to be wrong, or something that is considered less than optimal. Feedback may also indicate instances where the reader is satisfied or impressed by something in the text.

Feedback is used to indicate non-optimal constructions in written texts and to provide appraisals. Feedback can benefit learners by enhancing learning, counterfeiting fossilisation, improving writing, facilitating and moving students towards using an already known construction (Louw, 2008:89). *Ibid* (2008:93) also states that feedback is much more than simply the identification of incorrectness. Louw (2008) categorises the types of errors made into four types: (i) inaptness (could be better), (ii) superfluous, (iii) incorrect and (iv) omission. The problem with the many uses and distinctions of feedback is that instead of looking to revise, learners simply look for correct versus incorrect remarks (*ibid*, 2008:95).

#### **2.4.4.2 To give feedback or not to give feedback**

Besides the proven benefits of feedback, the debate on whether it is necessary or not is an inconclusive one. Truscott (1996) found feedback ineffective and states that the fact that feedback is expected by learners “does not mean that teachers should give it to them” (*ibid*;359). Truscott was not ignorant of the fact that “feedback is expected by both society and learners” (Louw, 2008:89), however, he states that teachers do not need to meet this expectation. Chandler (2004:345) states that it is difficult for teachers to not give feedback because of the strong desire of most students to have corrective feedback. According to Ferris (1999:02) teachers were taken aback by Truscott’s (1996) suggestion of not giving feedback, worrying that their students would revolt if there was no feedback given. Others were even afraid of losing their jobs if the students’ failure was to be associated with lack of feedback. Louw (2011:iii) states that “one group of researchers argues that it is ineffective and another group remains convinced that it is effective, while at ground level teachers and lecturers simply carry on ‘marking’ texts”. What is needed is the refinement of the practice to ensure that when it is done, it is done correctly with desired results. One way of ensuring this, is the standardisation of feedback through rubrics and correction codes as is the current practice in South African high schools.

#### **2.4.4.3 Using correction codes to provide feedback**

Makino (1993:340) states that “it is important for teachers not to correct learner errors or give the right answers to them immediately; giving cues to the students so they can correct their own errors will further activate their linguistic competence.” This is particularly important since Dukes and Albanesi (2013:97) state that “the colour red can create a strong effect that might interfere in the communication of cognitive feedback to students”. To address this problem, correction codes may be used as remedies. Gulcat and Ozagac (2006:01) state that correction codes decrease teacher writings on students’ papers. “This means that teachers can use correction codes when feeding back on writing tasks and then students should find out the errors they made from the symbols and re-write it again with the corrected mistakes” (*ibid*). “Teachers underline errors to signify the mistakes and write the symbols [codes] for these mistakes in the margin, then students correct the mistakes by themselves” (Riddell, 2001:157). This is because “self-corrected mistakes are more memorable and less likely to be repeated” (*ibid*:152). This is aligned to an observation by Al Marzouqi (2006) that in the subsequent drafts, “...students did not repeat the same mistake they made in the previous writing” (*ibid*, 2006:63), proving that self-correction does work. Spencer (1998:32) states that “the positive view of the method is that it

serves the same function as road signs, briefly and efficiently indicating whether the student is on the correct route.” The correction code used in South African Sesotho creative writing is attached as Appendix A.

#### **2.4.4.4 The correction code in the South African school context**

The problem in South African high schools is that the teacher does not always get an opportunity to give feedback on learners’ drafts. Such instances are most likely during tests and examinations. The problem with this is that the same tools for assessment, the correction code and the rubric, are used in both contexts (both formative and summative assessments). This means that there are excessive markings on the final draft assessed. According to Gulcat and Ozagac (2006:01), “if the teacher tries to make comments and corrections on the final version of the student paper, the teacher would be exhausted and the student would be discouraged.” Therefore, this practice is questionable. It should, however, be noted that providing helpful feedback is time-consuming and as a result, “students receive fewer opportunities for revision than would be desirable” (Britt *et al.*, 2004:360).

Due to work overload on the teachers’ side, Bitchener and Knoch (2009:328) state that teachers do not need to feel the need to provide more than the feedback required by the correction code if they are busy. Authors base their recommendation on their finding that “the provision of error correction alone on specific functional uses of rule-based features may be just as effective as combining it with written and oral meta-linguistic explanation” (*ibid*). This should, however, not be taken as promoting lack of teacher feedback during the early stages of writing. Unfortunately, most of the time teachers cannot provide feedback on pre-grading essay drafts. As a result, peer feedback, together with self-assessment become the two mechanisms of providing feedback during the early writing stages.

#### **2.4.4.6 Peer-generated feedback**

This section presents a brief overview of peer suggested revisions and how it is received by peers. Although this study does not study peer feedback, it does look into the perceptions of teachers about peer feedback.

In Peterson and McClay (2010:93) “peer editing was identified as an important source of feedback to students in 58.3% of participating teachers’ classrooms”. Paulus (2008:267) states

that the “peer review process is extremely complex, requiring careful training and structuring in order for it to be successful in both the L1 [first language] and L2 [second language] contexts”. The remaining question now is the intensity of learner training on using the correction code for peer review/assessment.

In their study, Nelson and Carson (1998) found that students do not find their classmates’ advice particularly useful, however, recent studies show contrasting results. For example, Paulus (2008:281) states that “not only do students take their classmates’ advice seriously, but they also use it to make meaning-level changes to their writing”. Zhao (2010) also found that 46% of peer-suggested revisions were incorporated into the final draft submitted to the teacher. This makes for almost half of the suggested revisions. It should be noted though, that the incorporation or lack thereof does not always determine the importance learners attach to it, other factors may be at play. Louw (2008:89) states that “students may possibly not know how to identify and correctly revise some errors, or simply choose not to revise them”. For example, when learners do not know the correct spelling, it might not mean that they neglected the feedback on the need to fix the spelling; they may choose to let it go instead of consulting the dictionary. A finding of Louw (2008:96) is that “[i]t is apparent that students would much rather leave out a revision than attempt it.” On the one hand, if learners behave in this way, they lose out on the opportunity to learn, and on the other hand, if teachers do not provide guiding feedback during the early stages of writing, the learners might not benefit from feedback.

Learners’ choice not to incorporate peer feedback does not nullify the whole process. According to Paulus (2008:267) the advantages of using peer reviewing include the fact that it: (i) brings a genuine sense of audience into the writing classroom, (ii) helps develop students’ critical reading and analysis skills since they exchange feedback and (iii) encourages students to focus on their intended meaning by discussing alternative points of view that can lead to the development of those ideas. It cannot be contested that in order to achieve the benefits of peer-feedback, learners ought to use the feedback. According to Paulus (2008:266):

Successful revision was found to depend on the writer’s ability to read a written text as communication, to compare his or her intentions and goals for the writing with the actual text produced, and, finally, to reconcile these two facets of writing by making all of the necessary adjustments.

Zhao (2010:14) states that “learners’ use and understanding of feedback should be viewed as two equally important factors for deciding whether peer feedback should be integrated with

teacher feedback in ESL/EFL writing classes.” This is true for other languages as well, for example, if learners do not understand the difference between a comma and a full stop, they may change as per suggested revision, but that will not benefit them in any other way beyond receiving marks for the task at hand.

This means that in order for the feedback given during drafts in process writing to benefit learners, they ought first to know how to use the feedback given (by their peers and their teachers) and to revise their essays, especially since revision counts for marks.

#### **2.4.4.7 Direct and indirect feedback**

The correction code as the only means of feedback to South African learners of Sesotho as a home language provides both direct and indirect feedback. Direct feedback is defined by Bitchener (2009:323) as “the provision of the correct linguistic form or structure by the teacher to the student above the linguistic error”. “Indirect corrective feedback is that which indicates that in some way an error has been made without explicit attention drawn” (Bitchener, 2009:323; Ferris, 2003). Instead of providing an explicit correction, teachers point out errors for learners to resolve and correct on their own (Ferris and Roberts, 2001:163).

#### **2.4.4.8 Problems with the current correction code**

South African learners benefit from multiple drafting because they receive feedback from their peers and from their teacher through the use of the correction code that is used to provide feedback on the final and graded draft. Provided that they compare the graded draft with earlier drafts, they can clearly see where they successfully and unsuccessfully incorporated suggested changes. Table 2.2 presents revision aspects that are indicated through the current correction code. For this study, the aspects were divided into two categories, the direct and the indirect categories. The direct feedback codes were chosen based on whether the learner is given direct instruction on what to do, and the indirect feedback codes were chosen based on whether the learner was given inconclusive instructions on how to improve the text.

**Table 2.2: Correction codes used for Sesotho home language essays classified into feedback categories in South African high schools**

<b>Direct feedback</b>	<b>Indirect feedback</b>
Word division Compounding words Omissions Re-ordering Paragraph divisions	Word choice Punctuation Spelling Orthography

In table 2.2, word choice, punctuation, spelling and orthography are indicated as indirect feedback. Although some may be argued, the contexts in which the codes are mainly used in providing feedback justify this classification. For instance, although a teacher may indicate the use of wrong orthography or spelling, the learner is not necessarily provided with the correct version.

It should however, not be negated that direct and indirect feedback can intertwine. For example, the punctuation code covers both punctuation and capitalisation. Therefore, if a student made a capitalisation mistake, a code highlighting the error is directly providing the correct case of the letter by stating that it should either be lower or upper case. When the same code is used to highlight punctuation errors, there is no suggested punctuation, as a result, the feedback is indirect; it only indicates that there is an error without correcting it. The fewer the codes, the more confusing they might be, in that a teacher can use the same code over and over, for example, the use of one code to indicate both case and punctuation, learners might be confused as to what is being highlighted as an error. Another example is when there are too many codes, to such an extent that learners need to read up to understand what each code means each time it is used.

Table 2.3 presents revision aspects as identified by Paulus (2008). In the table, elements highlighted in bold are relevant aspects in Sesotho essay editing, which are not addressed by the current correction code in Appendix A. Other elements that were left out from the current correction code include (i) the subject-verb agreement, which is a serious problem with Sesotho beginner writers, and (ii) concord-noun agreement, which is also a serious issue. Beginner teachers would benefit best if it were explained to them how to counter the inefficiencies of the correction code without writing comments.

**Table 2.3: Revision aspects (Adapted from Paulus, 2008:274)**

<b>Formal changes (editing) on surface level</b>		<b>Meaning changes</b>
Meaning preserving	Meaning inferred	Micro/Macro changes
Minor spelling/Capitalisation	<b>Additions</b> (information is now explicit)	Additions
Tense/Number/Modality	<b>Deletions</b> (information is now inferred)	Deletions
<b>Abbreviations/contractions</b>	<b>Substitutions</b> (elements are traded)	Substitutions
Punctuation	<b>Permutations</b> (elements are rearranged)	Permutations
Formatting	<b>Distributions</b> (a single unit becomes more than one unit)	Distributions
<b>Morphological changes</b>	<b>Consolidations</b> (multiple units are combined into one unit)	Consolidations

In the preceding table 2.3, it can be observed that teachers do not indicate where more information is needed or where some should be deleted. The rearranging code also only applies to the paragraphs and not sentence elements that could change the meaning of the sentence. Overall, it is clear that the current correction code used to provide feedback on Sesotho home language essay writing is focused on micro or surface level errors. According to Spencer (1998:32) “teachers can restrict commentary to surface-level alterations so that once they have circled, checked, coded, and assigned marks, they forget to respond to what the student is saying”. This hints a downside to focusing on the use of the correction code at the expense of listening to what is communicated. Meaning is not given much attention as the codes are more aligned with minor surface level errors that do not affect the content communicated.

#### **2.4.4.9 Conclusion**

In summary, the system used at South African high schools for providing constructive feedback for process writing in Sesotho as a home language might be optimal. Learners work together with their peers and their teachers to ensure that they attain a high grade for their creative essays. There is, however, no research to prove whether the effects of the feedback given in Sesotho home language creative writing essays are short- or long-term. It would therefore be worthwhile to investigate whether the current practices in the assessment of essays in Sesotho as a home language result in any effect whether short- or long-term. According to Askew and Lodge (2001:01) “learning is supported by a whole range of processes, one of which is feedback”. To this effect, Louw (2006:59) concludes that “feedback on its own is not enough”. This is because it is hard to isolate the effect of feedback from other influencing factors that

support learning. Also, it is difficult to monitor or study the effects of feedback (*Ibid*, 2006:09). Hyland (2003:219) however states that "... students who receive error feedback over a period of time do improve their language accuracy". Likewise, Louw (2009:93) states that "more and more evidence points towards the effectiveness of feedback". This would depend on whether the learners in question consistently make use of the feedback they receive or not. Additionally, Hattie and Timperly (2007:95) warn that the feelings that feedback is desirable should not be confused with the question of whether it benefits performance.

Although scholars are debating the benefits and effectiveness of feedback, teachers continue providing it because it is expected by both the society and learners. The correction code used provides for both direct and indirect feedback. Direct feedback means that the teacher corrects the learners' errors, ensuring that the learner incorporates the correct changes into the final draft. The problem here is that learners do not get an opportunity to learn as they would if they were given an opportunity to correct themselves. Current literature indicates that learners do incorporate peer feedback and that the choice to incorporate suggested changes may depend on whether the learner understands the feedback or not. Issues with the current correction code used to give feedback on earlier and final drafts include the fact that the most important codes for inserting information or requesting revisits to the written texts are missing from the common code. This means that only surface/minor level revisions are considered in the correction code. As such, the practice needs refining. This study looked into what teachers focus on in the provision of feedback via the use of the correction code and the rubric.

## **2.4.5 Rubrics**

In this section, alternative definitions of a rubric are provided and the definition of a rubric as understood in this study is featured. Some of the different uses of rubrics by teachers for different purposes are highlighted and the rubric used for Sesotho home language essay assessment in South African high schools is discussed. The rubric discussed in this section is attached as Appendix B. It was provided to the researcher by the participants of the study. The conclusion will then provide an overall summary of the main concepts derived from this discussion.

### **2.4.5.1 Defining a rubric**

A rubric is "a document that articulates the expectations for an assignment by listing the criteria, or what counts and describing levels of quality from excellent to poor" (Andrade *et al.*, 2008:03). It provides "scoring guidelines, written and shared for judging performance, that indicate the

qualities by which levels of performance can be differentiated, and that anchor judgements about the degree of achievement” (O’Farrell, 2002:22). Above all, it is “a tool to promote standardisation, to turn teachers into grading machines or at least allow them to pretend that what they are doing is exact and objective” (Kohn, 2006:12).

Rubrics can be defined in various ways, depending on their expected function. Even so, from the above given definitions of a rubric, a few themes can be drawn, namely (i) a document, (ii) criteria, (iii) quality, (iv) judgement, (v) standardisation and (vi) objectivity. The working definition of a rubric for this study is, therefore, a document drafted to provide the judging criteria which clearly states different achievements of quality work used to enhance standardisation and objectivity by providing transparency in the awarding of grades.

Rubrics can be holistic, analytical or a combination of both. Holistic rubrics are concerned with an overall grade; this means that, for example, instead of awarding grades for punctuation, word choice, etc., it only provides an overall mark for language and technicality. On the other hand, analytic rubrics “consist of multiple, separate scales, and, therefore, provides a set of scores rather than just one” (Rezaei and Lovorn, 2010:19). The rubrics used in South African high schools are a mixture of both holistic and analytical rubrics in that the categories do not go into much specificity but there are different elements of the categories. Therefore, although the rubric provides categories of quality judgement, it cannot be used to teach because it does not define how each judgement is awarded. Therefore, this limits its usability for teaching.

According to Rezaei and Lovorn (2010:19), “[t]he use of rubrics for evaluating students’ writing emerged from a general dissatisfaction, among teachers and administrators, with traditional essay grading strategies.” Although before the implementation of documented rubrics, graders had their own sets of standards by which they assessed, that can be referred to as “teachers’ subjectivity”, since they were not documented, they were not standardised or transparent, and as such, do not qualify as rubrics.

#### **2.4.5.2 Uses of rubrics**

According to Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI, 2014), “a rubric communicates expectations of a quality around a task”. This means that as learners consult their rubrics, they know exactly what constitutes good quality for the assessment at hand and what does not. Some rubrics are more specific than others. For example, in the technicality criterion, some rubrics may award marks depending on the number of errors produced, with few errors constituting higher marks than

marks awarded for essays with more errors. Again, rubrics may include a differentiation between major and minor errors, granting marks depending on which errors are predominant. For example, they may state that five major errors constitute the lowest mark, whereas one major error makes for a high mark. The level of specificity in a rubric is only acceptable given that it corresponds with the need for and use of the rubric.

Saddler and Andrade (2004:49) state that “[t]eachers commonly use assessment rubrics to score and grade student work” and add that instructional rubrics “teach as well as evaluate”. TKI (2014) agrees with this by stating that rubrics are “aimed at accurate and fair assessment, fostering understanding, and indicating a way to proceed with subsequent learning/teaching”. The teaching aspect of rubrics is achieved when learners can learn from the rubrics what is good quality and what is not. For example, this could include specifying what constitutes major and minor errors or indicating what elements of an introduction makes for a good introduction. As a result, “a rubric can also provide a basis for self-evaluation, reflection, and peer assessment” (*ibid*). Although learners do not grade each other’s assessments with rubrics in South African high schools, they may still use the rubric to estimate their own probable grades. More specific rubrics are needed for the function of teaching, consequently, holistic rubrics are in general not suitable for the teaching aspect since they are, according to Rezaei and Lovorn (2010:19), “more product-oriented than process-oriented, and are primarily concerned with the total performance or product rather than with the individual steps taken to arrive at the final”.

According to Kohn (2006:12), some of the claimed benefits of using rubrics include the fact that “rubrics help to legitimate grades by offering a new way to derive them, and that they make assessment “quick and efficient”. However, the rubric does not seem a good teaching tool if used all on its own to provide feedback to learners; this is explicated by (*ibid*) in the statement that “[b]ut all bets are off if students are given the rubrics and asked to navigate by them.” This may also be caused by the fact that rubrics do not make explicit references to the text, for example, it does not indicate where the word choice was dissatisfactory, or where the punctuation needs some more working. It only gives the overall impression. As a result, it does not give much explicit feedback to students as observed in table 2.3. In South African high schools; the rubric is used in conjunction with correction codes by teachers. The rubric used in South African high school Sesotho home language as observed in Appendix B, conforms to the description of a rubric by Smith *et al* (2010).

### 2.4.5.3 Elements of a rubric

According to Smith *et al.* (2010:1) in a rubric, “across the column heads of the matrix are set out the performance standards”. In this regard, this is indicated by form of levels, from level 1, which is not achieved, to outstanding, which is level 7 (see Appendix D for an explanation of all seven levels of achievement used in South African schools). The current pass mark for home languages in South African high schools is 40%. This means that any learner who receives marks above 39% for any assessment is considered to have acquired the desired outcome. For creative writing, according to Kumeke *et al.* (2011:195-6), this means 24 marks out of 60. These marks are categorised according to 7 levels of achievement rating from level 1.

“The rows set out the dimensions of the performance that have been selected as the aspects upon which the judgement will be focused. Each row corresponds to one criterion” (*ibid*). The three criteria used in South African high schools are discussed below.

The first category is planning and content, which makes for 60% of the overall mark of the essay. Here, five aspects are looked at: (i) suitability of the content, (ii) coherence and/or flow, (iii) interesting ideas, (iv) levels of creativity and (v) clarity of planning. What could be controversial here is the fact that the teacher, upon careful consideration of the topic, decides on whether the learner has presented suitable content or not<sup>2</sup>. This then counters the desired effect of standardisation because the teacher still decides what is correct and what is not. Planning cannot be wrong in that it only needs to make sense to the person who uses it to execute the writing. It is similar to notes scribbled on paper for revision and summaries. However, here the teacher decides on whether the planning is correct, and/or appropriate or not. In this category marks range from 0, which would mean that none of the ideas in the essay make sense, there is a total lack of coherence, everything is repeated over and over, and the planning makes no sense at all. This mark allocation shows a total lack of effort, which might be argued in that the mere fact that the essay was written indicates that some effort was exerted.

The second category comprises language, style and proofreading; this makes for approximately 30% of the overall essay mark. Here, five aspects are also looked at: (i) good language, (ii) clarity of language, (iii) punctuation, (iv) word choice, (v) appropriateness of style, context and register and (iv) number of errors produced. Here, what might be frowned upon is the number of errors. There is no clear relationship between the errors marked through the use of the

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<sup>2</sup> Teachers’ workshops to discuss examination papers are usually done after the assessment, to discuss together with their learning facilitator and fellow teachers, how they graded and how they dealt with the problems encountered. However, for process writing, the teachers still use their own discretion.

correction code and grades. There is no clarity on how the errors are supposed to be counted. Possible methods of counting can be practised, one might count similar errors as one error, another might count them as separate errors. What would work better here would be to categorise the types of errors encountered and then decide which ones carry more weight. However, this is still dependent on the teacher. There is no denying the fact that, although there are very good writers, there are also very bad writers, and teachers might feel compelled to award effort. This investigation, therefore, seeks to study how teachers deal with this.

The last category comprises structure. This makes for about 10% of the overall mark for the essay. Here four aspects are looked at: (i) paragraphing, (ii) flow, (iii) suitability of introduction and conclusion and (iv) the length. What may be debatable here might be the length of the essay. Some people need more words to express their thoughts than others. Now there are stipulations as to the maximum length because unfortunately, even though learners are encouraged to write and ensure that their thoughts make sense; teachers are bombarded with too much work to mark lengthy essays. As a result, learners are restricted to a maximum length. In this category, the lowest mark is 0, which indicates the possibility of a learner not receiving any mark for his/her effort.

#### **2.4.5.4 Flaws of the rubric**

There are a few flaws with the current rubric used to assess Sesotho creative writing essays in grade 10. The major flaw identified is the fact that marks are awarded holistically for the different criteria. In other words, learners receive feedback on general marks covering a group of different aspects instead of receiving detailed and specific feedback through the use of the rubric. Learners, therefore, do not get the full benefit of feedback since they do not get detailed feedback on each of the assessed aspects.

Different teachers might approach the awarding of marks for each category differently. According to the rubric, for a learner to receive an average mark for the first category, he/she needs to get everything on average; the problem begins when one or more of the aspects are not average, the rubric does not guide the teacher on which mark to allocate. The teacher might decide that the content is not suitable for the topic, but the essay may be wonderfully written, coherent and creative, the decision rests with the teacher on which mark is to be awarded. For example, one teacher might award an overall mark for a category based on the majority of aspects, and another might have a different approach. This study seeks to uncover how teachers in practice handle this deficiency.

The rubric provides close to nothing on justifying the derivation of marks. For example, it does not state what a good sentence is, or what a bad sentence is. It simply states that the sentences are poor, adequate, etc. This, therefore, means that its usability as a guiding factor during the writing stage of the essay is limited. As previously stated, the deficiencies of the rubric used are countered by using the correction code. The rubric is used to provide an overall impression of the essay to the learner, and might be said to provide the function of grading above all, whereas the correction code is used mainly to provide guidance and explicit feedback.

It cannot be denied that some assessment and grading criterion are not present in the CAPS rubric. Wilson (2007:62-3) states the following about rubrics in general:

...I'd come to think that the categories of the rubric represented only a sliver of my values about writing: voice, wording, sentence fluency, conventions, content, organization, and presentation didn't begin to articulate the things I valued such as promise, thinking through writing, or risk-taking.

This means that in addition to the documented rubric, Wilson (2007) still had some criterion that needed to be assessed as well. However, Wilson could not make space for it in the rubric, as such, it remained as a hidden criterion.

According to Parr and Timperly (2010:75) “[t]eachers are able to see where each writer’s strengths and weaknesses lie and to use the developmental characteristics provided by the progress indicators to plan teaching and learning activities and provide feedback and feed-forward to students”. This, therefore, means that most of the teacher’s feedback may not depend on the sole assessment at hand but also draw from past written assessments; this is where the introduction of such aspects as promise and improvement arise. Wilson (2007:64) agrees with this by stating that: “...I was layering the richness of another piece she had written earlier in the year...my first response was taking into account words and pictures that weren’t there yet”. Wilson (2007) opposes the use of rubrics in that they do not provide the same response a human would, by demonstrating how hard it is to deal with a non-documented criterion. The non-documented criteria are related to teachers’ own understanding of the rubric and what is expected of learners’ essays in addition to what is explicit on the rubric. The current CAPS document leaves a lot to the judgement of the teacher. It does not provide enough guidance on grading.

This study, therefore, seeks to uncover how teachers deal with non-documented rubric criterion, and how they measure the grades as compared to the documented rubric provided by education specialists (the DoE and textbook publishers).

#### **2.4.5.5 Conclusion**

This section, shows how a rubric can be used as both a tool for the assessment of (marking) and the assessment for (feedback) a task in that it can be used to both teach and grade. The rubric used for assessing South African high school Sesotho essays is a blend of the holistic and the analytic rubric in that it does not solely satisfy the criteria of either one of the two. It may, therefore, be advisable to agree with Kohn (2006) by stating that the only chance this rubric has of enhancing learning is if it is used in conjunction with the correction code as is the current case in South African high schools. The advantage of using a rubric is that it is transparent in that both learners and teachers have the same copy of the rubric and that both parties are expected to know how to use it, therefore, they both understand the grading. The definition of a rubric as used in this study means that it has to be documented, provide a judging criteria, which clearly states different achievements of quality, and it must enhance standardisation and objectivity.

### **2.5 Overall summary and conclusion**

This chapter provided an overview of Sesotho as a national language in South Africa. It also looked into a brief overview of South African Sesotho writing history. It was then ascertained (based on Van der Walt's (2010) assertion) that the Sesotho curriculum used in South African high schools is based on the generic English first additional language curriculum. The process approach to writing was identified as the approach used to teach creative writing. The concepts of self-assessment and peer assessment were also discussed to a brief extent with an aim to explain how process assessment is conducted in South Africa.

The relevant documents supplied by the DBE, which are the SAGs (DBE, 2008b) and the CAPS (DBE, 2011b) were analysed to conclude what the department requires for the assessment of creative writing. It was determined that the feedback mechanisms used to provide feedback are standardised in the form of a correction code and rubric. However, essay-marking itself is not standardised, as teachers still use their discretion to award grades for the essays.

In an ideal situation, in addition to assessing themselves, learners receive feedback on their essays from both their peers and their teachers. The most valued assessment is one

administered by the teacher, who decides, based on the rubric, whether the learner has succeeded in writing the essay or not. Since the rubric has been proven to show close to no guidance in awarding marks, the teacher may be said to award marks based on her/his views of what is important.

The correction code is used with an intention of simply highlighting errors for learners, for instance where they need to make improvements. The question, however, still remains of whether a pass mark on the essay indicates to learners that they need not review the essay? If a pass mark means that the learner has achieved the expected outcome; then how do we prove whether learners consult the feedback on their essays? Unfortunately, the scope of this study does not answer this question. It does, however, cover the question of how teachers use rubrics and correction codes.

The minimal feedback granted by the use of the correction code and the rubric complement each other, meaning that neither can be used in isolation as it does not provide sufficient feedback. Although the correction code generally implies pointing out where the correction needs to be done, it does also assist with providing solutions, for example, when suggesting the use of capitalisation or suggesting sentence splitting, the correct version is consequently given. Therefore, when the rubric suggests that there were too many spelling errors, the learner can observe where the spelling mistakes were on his/her marked essay.

The main weakness of both the correction code and the rubric is the lack of specificity on what "rich text" is, for example in terms of contents. The content of the essay might not be up to standard even though the essay is well written. The correction code, (which focuses on surface level errors), would not indicate such errors on the essay. The rubric, however, may indicate to the learner that the content was not satisfactory; yet, there would be no indication in the essay of where and how this could be improved. The indication on the rubric does not explain how the learner could improve the content nor does it state what makes good or appropriate content.

Clearly, the correction code and the rubric are not enough. The teacher still needs to introduce the human impact of discretion and give feedback that the rubric and the correction code cannot give. Wolcott and Legg (1998:177) argue that human markers ensure human interchange between the writer and the reader which is what "lies at the heart of communication". An advantage of being guided by the rubric and using the correction code to self-assess and to peer-assess is that it allows learners to understand more about the marking of their own assessments and to understand both their own errors and the expected quality required. As a result, the more the learners interact with the marking rubric and correction code, the more they

can improve their own writing. This, therefore, entails that the rubric should be even more specific so as to not only grade, but also teach. Unfortunately, this is not the case with the current rubric.

This study, therefore, seeks to look into these strategies, to uncover how teachers supplement the correction code and the rubric, to provide alternative marking suggestions and methods in addition to the mandated correction code and rubric.

While this chapter ascertained what is already known about feedback mechanisms in South African Sesotho essay writing in grade 10, the following chapter discusses the method used to collect data in this study to establish how Sesotho grade 10 teachers of the Metsimaholo District assess essays. It is then followed by the presentation of the collected data, and the discussion and the interpretation thereof.

## **CHAPTER 3 – METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented the theoretical basis of this study and an analysis of the documents of the Department of Basic Education pertaining to creative writing and its assessment. From the review of literature, it was concluded that the correction code and the rubric currently used in South African High schools for assessing creative writing in Sesotho home language are insufficient to produce the overall goal of teaching writing as stated in the SAGs.

Simply stating that the tools for assessment that are used are insufficient does not answer the question of how teachers assess, and as a result, more data is needed. This chapter presents the approach, the method and the process in which this study was conducted. Since this study is one of the first of its kind on Sesotho essay-marking, justification for every approach taken and every tool used are provided. An indication of how the data would be analysed is also provided. In an attempt to contextualise the study, participants are also described according to how they were selected and also, from where they were sampled. The aim is to situate the case study because not everything yielded from this study is directly applicable and true for all grade 10 teachers of Sesotho home language. The relevant stakeholders that granted permission for this study to take place are listed. A summary of this chapter is presented in the conclusion.

### **3.2 Study population**

#### **3.2.1 Sampling**

The permission of the DBE was requested. (See appendices G and I for the application letter and the approval to conduct the study). Schools in the Metsimaholo district were selected for this study because they offer Sesotho as a home language. Secondly, the schools are in close proximity to the researcher and ease of access raised the feasibility of the study. The sampling could therefore be described as convenience sampling.

In addition, invitation letters were sent to all eight schools that offer Sesotho home language at Grade 10 in the Metsimaholo district of the Fezile Dabi education district. All eight schools responded positively to the invitation. Despite the positive response from principals, it was a struggle to meet with the relevant teachers to start discussions about the project. These difficulties will be discussed further in the section that discusses the data collection below. For

the purpose of this section, it should be noted that nine participants from six schools in the end participated in the project.

The first requirement for participating in the study was that the participating teacher should be a current grade 10 Sesotho home language teacher because education policies and styles change regularly. As a result, former grade 10 teachers were not appropriate to participate. This was explained to the participating schools' principals beforehand, and they referred the researcher to the qualifying relevant teachers in their schools. The second requirement was that the participating teacher should be the one responsible for assessing essays and creative writing in grade 10 Sesotho home language as a subject. This was stipulated as a requirement because it is common practice in some schools for teachers to share the work load by dividing duties amongst themselves in accordance to their strengths and areas of specialisation, which means that as one teacher focuses on writing, the other one could focus on literature or language.

### **3.2.2 A pilot participant**

A pilot participant was approached from one of the participating schools. To avoid decreasing our participant population, the pilot was a current grade 12 teacher of Sesotho home language and a creative writing specialist in the chosen school. None of the information obtained from this pilot participation would be used for any of the data analysis. This is because the study focuses on grade 10 teachers marking grade 10 Sesotho creative writing essays. The study was conducted to ensure that the researcher would receive the necessary information to enable answers to the research questions. If a question arose that the pilot participant did not know how to answer, the participant flagged it by putting stars next to the question. The questions were then modified for better reading and understanding for the actual participants in the investigation.

### **3.2.3 Participants**

Sesotho home language is not only taught by home language speakers of Sesotho or mother tongue speakers. As a result, our participants were requested to state whether they are mother tongue speakers of Sesotho. Only one participant stated not being a home language speaker or a mother tongue speaker of Sesotho. One participant stated being a home language speaker of Sesotho but not a mother tongue speaker. The distinction between home language speakers and mother tongue speakers is based on the fact that due to specific reasons such as marriage and migration, people may be forced to adopt a language that is different to their mother tongue

for use at home settings. This complex issue (that one's mother tongue might not be one's home language) is common among African languages speakers and accepted as ordinary in African contexts by scholars, (such as Makoni and Pennycook, 2007).

Table 3.1 presents the biographical data of the participants. A total of seven females and two males took part in the study. The majority of the participants in the study were over 40 years of age and have been teaching for more than 10 years. Six of the participants have been teaching Sesotho for more than 10 years. Four of the participants reported specialising exclusively in Sesotho, meaning that they only teach Sesotho. Two participants stated that they also teach Social Sciences and History. Only one teacher stated teaching Sesotho home language with English and Life Sciences as the school where she teaches is very small and there is a shortage of teachers. One participant stated teaching Afrikaans and the other stated teaching Social Sciences in addition to Sesotho.

**Table 3.1: Demographic data for participants (n=9)**

Gender	Age			Years experience as a teacher					Years experience teaching Sesotho					Schools taught at			Highest qualification			Institution graduated	
	21-30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	0-3 years	4-6 years	7-10 years	10-15 years	15+ years	0-3 years	4-6 years	7-10 years	10-15 years	15+ years	1 -2 schools	3 schools	4 schools	Degree	Honours	MA	Technikon	University
<b>Female</b>	1	2	4	1	1		1	4	1	1		1	4	6		1	4	2	1	1	6
<b>Male</b>			2			1	1				1	1		1	1		2				2

It is worth noting that seven of the participants have been teaching in not more than two schools. This may be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, it could be that they have had time to practice and refine their own teaching preferences based on their learners' response to their styles because they have been in the same environment over a long period of time. The second interpretation may be that their views could be narrow because they have not been exposed to other environments to gather additional experiences from teaching in different contexts. However, their stable environment coupled with their vast years of experience makes up for their potential lack of experience at different schools or teaching conditions.

Six participants had a degree as the highest qualification and eight of the qualifications were received from university institutions. This means that participants might not be deeply grounded in theory of language teaching in general as they did not have the opportunity to further their

studies at the postgraduate level. As a result, their responses may not be “theory- based” when it comes to their reasoning for their marking habits. The teachers’ experience in teaching the subject qualified them for participation in the study.

### **3.3 Study approach**

This study followed a mixed-methods methodology/approach. The methods used for data collection include questionnaires, script (document) analysis and interviews. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected.

Creswell (2008:08) states that mixed-methods research is:

both a method and methodology for conducting research that involves collecting, analyzing, and integrating quantitative and qualitative research in a single study or a longitudinal program of inquiry. The purpose of this form of research is that both qualitative and quantitative research, in combination, provide a better understanding of a research problem or issue than either research approach alone.

According to Mack et al (2005: 01), qualitative research “seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population it involves”. This means that research questions in this study will be answered based on the perspectives of the participating teachers.

Aliaga and Gunderson (2002) explain quantitative research as “[e]xplaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analysed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics)”. In this study both the quantitative and the qualitative strands of data were collected using different methods and phases and a combination of concurrent and sequential procedures.

According to Creswell (2003:16) in concurrent procedures, “the researcher converges quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem.” According to Creswell *et al* (2011:77) this “convergent design occurs when the researcher collects and analyzes both quantitative and qualitative data during the same phase of the research process and then merges the two sets of results into an overall interpretation.” In this study, strands of qualitative and quantitative data were collected using the questionnaire, and the document analysis of marked scripts. Both data sets were collected at the same time. In sequential procedures, “the researcher seeks to elaborate on or expand the findings of one method with another method” (Creswell, 2003:16). In this study, elements from the qualitative

strand of the questionnaire were used to design some of the interview questions as a form of follow-up.

The explanatory mixed-method approach was used in this study. According to Creswell (2006:71) “[t]he explanatory design is a two-phase mixed methods design”. In the first phase, questionnaire data were gathered and a pre-analysis thereof was conducted. In the second phase, data from the questionnaire were used to formulate questions for the interviews to explain selected elements of the findings in the questionnaire better. Script analysis was conducted concurrent to the questionnaire and interview analysis. “In this model [explanations model], the researcher identifies specific quantitative findings that need additional explanation... the researcher then collects qualitative data from participants who can best help explain these findings.” This is aligned with what was done in this study. As such, the mixed-method approach used in this study is explanatory.

Data collection was triangulated. According to James (2007:81) “[t]riangulation is defined as using a variety of research methods to compare diverse sources of data pertaining to a specific research problem or question”. In this study, three methods of data collection namely, the questionnaire, the script (document) analysis and the interview were used to answer the question of how Sesotho grade 10 home language teachers mark creative writing essays.

### **3.4 Data collection procedure**

This section discusses the ethical considerations and permissions from stakeholders that were taken into consideration in the collection and usage of the data for this study.

#### **3.4.1 Ethical considerations and permissions**

Following a research proposal, this study was cleared for ethics by the North-West University ethics clearance committee (NWU-00424-15-8, see Appendix G). Permission to conduct the study was requested and approved by the DBE (see Appendix F). The study complied with the ethical requirements for conducting research in the Free State department of education (see Appendix H). Considering that the teachers that were sought would represent the schools and the district, the principals of the schools concerned were approached and requested to grant permission for their teachers to take part in the study (see Appendix I for the request letter). Principals of participating schools granted permission (see Appendix L). Study participants volunteered to take part and granted the researcher permission to use their contributed data (see Appendices J and K for the informed consent letter signed by participating teachers). No

consent from parents was requested because the teachers were requested to remove names from submitted essays because the focus of the study is on teachers' marking practices and not learners.

A potential ethical issue related to the reporting of the findings if requested by the individual principals. In order to protect the anonymity of the participants, no individual data would be reported to principals. Data will only be reported in aggregate form.

### **3.4.2 Gathering of the data**

Following the confirmation of participation by the principals, information letters were hand-delivered to the schools. They listed all the materials that the researcher needed from the participants and the ways of contact that the researcher required to have with the participating teachers. The information letters stated the intentions of the researcher and the overall aim of the study. Therefore, the study was conducted with total transparency. Upon agreement, the participants signed consent letters, which clearly stipulated their volunteering and their rights to withdraw at any point should a need arise. Teachers from eight schools were invited to take part in the study. Unfortunately, two schools had no volunteering participants and they were excluded from the study.

Due to administrative processes at the relevant Department of Basic Education, the signed approval letters that provided permission for the study to be conducted arrived late, after several requests by the supervisors and the researcher. The problem is not uncommon in education studies. However, the researcher received permission from the principals and the participating teachers before the data were gathered.

As part of gaining access, the questionnaires were hand-delivered to the teachers at schools. It was required that the teachers fill in the questionnaires (including written consent to participate) in the presence of the researcher. Nevertheless, due to work overload and an indication of a possible decline in the number of participants on grounds of time constraints, the teachers were allowed to take home the questionnaire to complete it in their spare time with an agreed date of submission. To assist them in the completion of the questionnaire, the teachers were allowed to flag the questions they found unclear by putting a little star next to the question and leaving it unanswered. This indicated that they did not leave them blank because they felt uncomfortable answering. These questions were discussed with the teachers when the researcher collected the questionnaires and the teachers were allowed to respond to them in the presence of the

researcher after clarification of the questions. However, the participants were allowed to skip any questions they did not feel comfortable answering.

Upon collection of the questionnaires, teachers were requested to also submit copies of nine learner essays for analysis. Preferably, teachers were asked to submit three marked scripts that obtained above average marks, three scripts that obtained average marks and three scripts that obtained below average marks. Following the analysis of the questionnaire responses and the scripts, interviews were conducted with the individual teachers. Below is a description of each of the instruments.

## **3.5 Data collection instruments**

### **3.5.1 Questionnaire**

The first tool that was used to gather data was the questionnaire. It was divided into six sections labelled A to F.

Section A focused on teachers' background information. The aim was to gather biographical data on gender, years of experience in the field and the highest qualifications of the participants. The DBE encourages teachers to upgrade their teaching certificates and diplomas to teaching degrees in the hope that they will become better teachers if they have higher qualifications. The case, therefore, might be that different education qualifications entail different assessment perspectives and different marking trends. Working in the area of specialty might also be a contributing factor. As such, teachers were asked to state if they teach Sesotho alone or other learning areas or subjects as well.

Section B gathered the general opinions of teachers on the usefulness of essays written in Sesotho. This is where teachers voiced what they believed are characteristics of a good Sesotho essay. Teachers were also given an opportunity to suggest the best grade for learners to start learning how to write Sesotho essays. In addition to explaining why they believe learners should write essays, they were also asked to suggest the topics/themes on which they believe learners should write essays. The aim in this section was to indirectly look into whether teachers believed essays should be written and if they agreed with the topics that the learners currently write essays on. It also sought to investigate whether Sesotho teachers based any of their beliefs in Sesotho essay writing on English essay writing. This was done by requesting the teachers to highlight differences between English essays and Sesotho essays.

Section C focused on the act of assessing essays. Teachers were requested to state what elements they considered most and least important in the assessment of essays and to motivate their choices. This would indicate what they focused on when they assessed essays. The participants were then asked to explain their marking process in terms of what they actually do when they start to mark essays. Possible options were provided for the teachers to choose from, based on general practices of assessors/markers. However, the teachers were given space to elaborate on their own practice should it not be identified with any of the suggested options. The intention here was to identify the most prominent trend in the practice of assessing essays so that its benefits would be discussed with the teachers in the subsequent interviews.

The marking grid or rubric prescribed by the DBE was then addressed. It sought to identify how teachers use the rubric for marking. Again, possible strategies of using the rubric were provided to the teacher in the form of a closed question. However, space was provided for teachers to define their own method should it not be identified with any of the suggested options. The aim here was to investigate whether the teachers use the rubric to do the actual marking or if they use it to simply grade essays.

Commenting on essays is no longer common practice in South African Sesotho home language Grade 10 classes. Rather, the use of the correction code to show learners where improvement is needed is promoted by the DBE. It should be noted that due to the limited sample of participants in this study, the results and responses to the question of using comments are not intended to be interpreted as a generalised practice. The responses pertain to this group of participants only. Participants were asked whether they use comments in their feedback and those that responded positively were asked to state what they commented on. Commenting may be time-consuming. As a result, most teachers might resolve to simply focus on the rubric and the correction code to save time. Teachers were asked to describe how they manage their essay-marking time and workload. This would help in understanding their marking practices in that it describes how to participating teacher deal with the marking workload.

To better verify the responses to how time can be managed, teachers were asked how many grade 10 students they received per year on average and how many grade 10 essays they mark on average per year. Participants were asked for recommendations for better management of essay-marking.

Learners are given options of essay topics to choose from when writing essays in examinations. The assumption here was that teachers mark examination essays differently to process writing essays throughout the four quarters of the academic year. Therefore, teachers were asked to

state the difference between examination setting essays and process writing essays that occur during the term. Generalised options of how they go about marking the different essays under the different topics were provided to them to choose from and if they did not identify with any of them, they were granted an opportunity to state how they do it.

Section 4 addressed perceptions of teachers about peer assessment. As stated in the previous chapter from the literature, peer assessment and self-assessment are mandatory for process writing. As far as could be researched for this study, peer-assessment in Sesotho home language creative writing has not been empirically researched for quality and positive effects. In this study, participating teachers were asked to rate their own learners' peer assessment. The postulation here was that not every correction suggested by a peer is correct. The aim thereof was to investigate how teachers handle incorrect suggestions of improvement. The other assumption was that the learners who suggest wrong improvements of essays are neglected. To investigate this, the participants were asked to explain how they deal with such learners as an issue in marking.

Section E highlighted issues in marking. Teachers were asked to generalise on teachers' marking by stating whether they think learners' behaviour (for example, in class) affect the way teachers in general mark their essays. Thereafter, issues of ability and potential were addressed, the postulation here was that once the teachers get used to learners, they stop marking them based on the assessment at hand, but they rate them overall, they track their performance and decide to grant marks according to improvement and abilities instead of simply assessing the current task. For example, they might decide to overlook spelling errors if they know that the particular learner struggles with spelling.

Teachers were subsequently asked to state whether they believe there are teacher biases that affect Sesotho essay-marking in grade 10, and then they were asked to name some of the biases and state where they believe they come from or what motivates the biases.

Section F looked at supplementing the rubric and the correction code. The proposition here as evidenced in the previous chapter was that the rubric and the correction code do not cover every aspect that the teacher or assessor needs to address in a creative writing essay. As such, the aim of this section was to unveil the practices of Sesotho home language grade 10 teachers in supplementing the two tools. Different questions relating to the inefficiencies inherent in the two tools of assessing and marking were asked. For instance, teachers were asked what they do when the sentence does not make sense. The other proposition here was that the correction code is turning teachers into editors in that they no longer suggest changes to learners, but

prescribe them. As a result, participants were asked to explain how they deal with instances where there are more than one ways of improving the text.

Deficiencies of the rubric were again highlighted by asking the study population what they would do to modify and improve the rubric for other teachers. The rubric gives an indication of how marks are to be awarded and for what they should be awarded. Teachers were, therefore, asked what meaning they attached to marks and what they think their learners believe marks mean. The questionnaire, is attached as Appendix E.

### **3.5.2 Analysis of marked scripts**

The aim here was to investigate whether there are errors that differentiate between good and poor essays. The mark allocation for different aspects of essays would inform us which aspects are used to decide which essays are good and which ones are poor. To investigate this, participants were requested to submit a total of nine scripts each, from their most recent essay-marking. In the end 86 scripts were submitted. However, one script could not be used for analysis because the teacher only indicated the final mark without the distribution of marks for the different rubric categories. The nine scripts were divided into three categories. Teachers' feedback on the essays was then investigated. First, the codes indicated on the correction code were looked at. Second, the mark categories indicated on the rubric were studied. And finally, the comments that the teachers provided were explored.

The correction code lists nine types of errors that should be indicated to learners. First, all the codes were counted on each script and the differences in frequencies between the three groups were investigated. For instance, the spelling mistakes were counted on each script and the totals from the above average, average and below average groups were investigated for by ascertaining if there are differences between the frequencies.

The rubric divides mark allocations into three categories which are: (i) content and planning, and (ii) language, style and proofreading and (iii) structure. The marks for each category were added for the beyond average, average and below average groups and the differences between frequencies for each category of marks were investigated.

Submitted essays were first interrogated to see whether the participant provided comments as feedback or not. Secondly, issues that the comments were used to remedy or highlight were identified.

### 3.5.3 Interviews

Interviews were conducted with participants about three months after their submission of the questionnaires and the scripts for the analysis of their marking. This allowed the researcher to analyse the questionnaire responses as well as the marked scripts in order to ensure that the design of the interview questions answered questions that arose from the analysis of the data that was collected up to that point. The questionnaires were filled in in April 2015 after the marking of the first quarter examinations and the interviews were conducted in July/August 2015 after the marking of the second quarter examination. The researcher discussed the preliminary outcomes of the questionnaire data with the participants to remind them of the questionnaire questions.

Individual interviews with study participants were conducted and recorded on a voice recorder. Unlike with the questionnaire, which was written in English, the participants were allowed to respond in either Sesotho or English and to mix codes if they felt the need. The researcher then conducted the interview in the participants' language of choice. The flexibility in the choice of language ensured a conducive atmosphere for sharing information. Similar to the questionnaire, the participants were reminded of their choice to withdraw or to ask that their responses to certain questions not be recorded. For example, if a teacher regretted saying something to the researcher, he/she was allowed to ask that it be off the record and he/she could supply a different response.

The interview was conducted to complement and clarify some of the questionnaire responses provided by participants. Interviews also allowed the participants to expand on their explanations of their marking practices. This process was undertaken following the reading, capturing and processing of the questionnaire responses.

In the interviews, the participants were asked to define both the element of creativity and the element of style in Sesotho home language essays. This followed their identification of the former as the most important element which counts for most marks and the latter as the least important aspect of essays and receiving the lowest number of counts in the questionnaire. In addition, participants were also requested to define the best introduction and conclusion to creative essays and to give their perception of the standardisation of essay-marking in grade 10.

### 3.6 Data analysis procedures

The literature review discussed the current practice in the feedback of creative essay writing in Sesotho home language grade 10. This empirical investigation focused on answering the question of whether the practice is standardised and if so, to what extent. This was determined by how our participants agreed with each other on marking aspects. A clear trend of how teachers provide feedback on creative writing essays was then identified. Furthermore, samples of marking were analysed to provide practical evidence on the marking practices of the participants. This in turn answered the question of what are regarded as good essay elements and bad essay elements.

Firstly, the responses to the questionnaires were captured into a Microsoft Excel document and tags were used to identify themes that emerged from every qualitative question. Similar themes were grouped together to find the overall perception of the participants. The main responses in the quantitative questions were determined using frequency measurements.

The script analysis data were categorised into three groups namely: the “above average group”, the “average group” and the “below average group”. The aim was to investigate whether there were any differences in the allocation of marks between the three groups. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests were carried out to test the difference. Kirkman (1996) states that for Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests:

in a typical experiment, data collected in one situation is compared to data collected in a different situation (let's call this the treatment group) with the aim of seeing if the first situation produces different results from the second situation.

In this study, the different situations are the three categories of marks. “If the outcomes for the treatment situation are “the same” as outcomes in the control situation, we assume that treatment in fact causes no effect” (*Ibid*). In this study, we investigated the extent to which the three categories differ in the allocation of marks.

Furthermore, Kirkman (1996) asserts that the outcomes of two different situations are rarely identical. As such, a question of how different the outcomes can be remains unanswered. However, statistics aim to assign numbers to the test results. The numbers are called p-values. They report if outcomes in the form of numbers differ significantly (*Ibid*). In this study, the statistical difference cut off point was set at  $p < 0.05$ , which according to Coetzee-Van Rooy (2000:153) is accepted by several researchers.

In this inquiry, the deviation of marks from the normal distribution was tested. Where the p-value was found smaller than  $p < 0.05$ , the data set was said to deviate significantly from the normal distribution. The p-values and the deviation were reported for each finding.

Different to the manual coding of the questionnaires, ATLAS.ti was used to code the interview data. ATLAS.ti is “a qualitative data analysis software program that enables you to manage, code, analyse, and output data in a variety of convenient methods, making your data more understandable,” (Mungal, 2009). In preparing the raw data, the interviews were captured into different word documents allocated to each participant. To allow the researcher to work on all nine documents as a unit; a hermeneutic unit was created. The ATLAS.ti version 7.1.4 program was used to generate an output of the coded quotations which were then presented in the results chapter. In addition, the frequencies of codes and the relationship between codes reputed from the instances of code overlaps, together with the final counts of codes from the different participants’ responses, were the output and analysed.

To ensure rater reliability, question four of the interviews (on the perceptions of participating teachers on creative conclusions) was first independently coded by the researcher and then coded by both the supervisor and the researcher. The themes and codes were discussed by both parties to ensure understanding and consistency in the coding.

The interview data were analysed together with the questionnaire data to provide more qualitative explanations of findings from the questionnaire and script analyses.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has explained how a mixed-method research approach comprising qualitative and quantitative approaches of gathering data were used. A description of the participants was provided. In addition, the tools used for quantitative data collection which comprised of the questionnaire, and script analysis were discussed. The questionnaire was described in detail and choices of questions that were asked the study population were justified according to the sub-aims of this study. The outline of the interview questions were discussed that form part of the qualitative instruments used in the study was discussed. The resultant data form the content of Chapter 4.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings from the empirical investigation discussed in Chapter 3. The results are ordered according to the order of collection of data. The questionnaire data are presented followed by the analysis of scripts and finally, the interview results are discussed. The aim of this chapter is to answer the question of how teachers assess creative writing essays in Sesotho home language grade 10 in South Africa. It looks at how they carry out their actual marking and explores the aspects of essays that they perceive as most important and report on the factors that are assumed to affect their marking. Their actual marking is then discussed based on the evidence observed from their selected marking samples. The prospect of creativity and standardisation is then viewed.

### **4.2 Results from the questionnaire**

There are six sections in the questionnaire. The demographic data captured as part of Section A were reported in Chapter 3. In this section, the data for Sections B to F of the questionnaire will be reported in separate divisions. All the data from the questionnaires are reported following the organisation of the questionnaire.

#### **4.2.1 Opinions about the general usefulness of essays written in Sesotho**

##### **4.2.1.1 Characteristics of a good essay**

The participants were asked to state what they consider as characteristics of a good essay. The following responses were stated by the participants. Participant numbers are provided in square brackets.

[P1] Language, Good sentence construction, punctuation. An essay which is divided into paragraphs, creatively. A mind map and style.

[P2] Essays must have introduction, it will be better if a learner has insight about what he/she talks about. Learners must be creative.

[P3] Drafting the mind map with facts that the essay will be based on. Understanding the topic of the essay. An interesting introduction that shows insight. Even-length paragraphs. A clear main argument. A clear conclusion with outcomes or consequences.

[P4] Clear language. Free of spelling mistakes. Understanding of the topic and well alignment thereof with the content of the essay.

[P5] The use of correct language. Logic. Correct punctuation. Creativity.

[P6] It must be creative. It must have punctuation. It must be grammatical and be structured in paragraphs.

[P7] Creativity, Well-structured, coherent and logical

[P8] Content, structure, language and structure

[P9] A good essay should comprise of a strong and attention-grabbing introduction, body/content that is in line with the topic, as well as content that has meaning and teaches something new to the reader, and a conclusion that summaries every but is still strong.

From the responses listed above, four themes related to good Sesotho essays were identified: (i) structure, (ii) language use, (iii) creativity and (iv) planning/drafting. The theme of structure covered comments about the introductions and the conclusions, paragraphing, logic and main arguments in the essay. The language use theme covered comments about the language, for example, as stated by Participant 1, 5 and 6. In addition, it also covered punctuation and spelling. The creativity theme covered comments about creativity as stated by Participants 2, 5, 6, 7 and 9. In addition, it also covered comments about insight as stated by Participants two, three, four and implied by Participant 9. Lastly, it incorporated the use of the appropriate style as implied by Participant 1. The fourth theme covered drafting and planning, which can be identified by the use of mind maps as Participant 1 and Participant 3 stated.

It can, therefore, be concluded that good essays are expected to be linguistically correct, follow the correct structure of an essay, exhibit creativity and be well-planned.

#### **4.2.1.2 Why learners should write essays**

In order to know how to assess learners, teachers need to know why their learners need to be assessed in a certain skill. Based on this assumption, teachers were asked to explain why they think learners should write essays. The following are their responses:

[P1] To express themselves, to see if learners can write Sesotho properly. The use of language.

[P2] It will be easier for them to write in their language about what they know and what they think.

[P3] Learning to narrate stories/essays following the logic and coherence of facts (or occurrences). Splitting words where needed. Learning to separate and to combine certain words as needed. Learning language in the correct manner. Punctuation is very important.

[P4] Yes. So that they can know their language and be proud of it. (*Ba ikgantshe ka yona*<sup>3</sup>)

[P5] To be able to do some research. Independent thinking.

[P6] They can be creative and it adds to their knowledge.

[P7] It is part of creativity and the learning experience if it is a home language for a learner; it is a way of expressing one's opinions in a proper way.

[P8] To express themselves in their own language since our language or languages (African) are affected. This will help them learn how to write and read.

[P9] For development, so that the learners familiarise themselves with written language not just spoken and so that the Sesotho language does not lose its value.

From the responses above, six themes can be identified. The first theme encompassed the notion that the writing of essays is important because it demonstrates one's ability to express oneself in the home language as identified from Participants 1, 2 and 8. The writing of essays in the home language is also seen as an opportunity to demonstrate the learners' ability to express their opinions. The second theme was that these essays demonstrate that learners could use correct grammar. This theme included writing properly as Participant 7 puts it, using the correct grammar, for example, splitting words correctly as Participant 3 states. It also covered writing to develop the language to not only survive as a spoken language, but also as a written language as Participant 9 put it. The third theme was the view that creative and independent thinking are important elements in essay writing. It can be observed from the responses of Participants 5, 6 and 7. The fourth theme related to research as participant five stated, and the addition of knowledge as Participant 6 stated. The fifth theme was the cultural aspect as participant four stated, the pride in the language and ensuring that the language does not lose its vale as Participant 9 stated. The sixth theme was the use and knowledge of the language. This theme can be identified from the responses of Participants 1, 2 and 6.

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<sup>3</sup> It translates to: "They should pride themselves in it."

In summary, it may be said that teachers believe that learners should write Sesotho home language essays to be able to express themselves, to use the correct grammar and to develop language in respect to the writing aspect of it and to elevate its status. Also, writing enhances creativity, independent thinking and exercises research skills while adding to the knowledge of the learners.

#### **4.2.1.3 Most appropriate grade to start writing essays**

Grade 10 marks the beginning of the Further Education and Training (FET) phase in the South African schooling system. As such, the foundation of the last phase of high school is laid by teachers of this grade. However, they lay the foundation on the ground levelled by teachers of lower grades. The participants were, therefore, asked to suggest a proper grade for learners to start writing essays in Sesotho home language. Three teachers suggested the foundation phase, which is comprised of grades one to three. One participant further reasoned that “even if it is just mini-essays in the form of book reviews” [P9], the other respondent stated that it should be grade one “where the child is taught to create his/her own sentences” [P3].

In total, four participants suggested the intermediate phase, two of which suggested grade four. One of the respondents further explained that at this grade, learners should be taught to write essays, “starting from pre-knowledge to abstract knowledge” [P2]. Two participants suggested grade five. Another two respondents suggested grade eight, which is in the senior phase and the first grade in the South African high schools from which our participants were sampled. In summary, the general agreement in terms of the most proper grade to start writing essays is in the intermediate phase (grades 4-7).

#### **4.2.1.4 Suggested topics for grade 10 essays**

The participants were asked to suggest themes for grade 10 Sesotho home language essays. The most prominent theme was ‘real life situations’. One teacher stated that learners should write about “topics that talk about the present life they are living” [P1]. Another participant stated that they should write about “topics that the learners can relate to; topics that are relevant to their life styles” [P9]. From one participant’s response, the desired effect of writing about matters affecting the lives of learners is explicated. She stated that learners should write about “those [issues] that affect the lives of children in general because it can give them light as to what goes on in life” [P4]. One participant stated that learners should write about “topics related to everyday life and also topics related to their grade level and their daily experiences/development” [P8]. This interpreted to mean that learners should write essays that

are appropriate for their grade, in that, lower grades should write about more clear or simpler topics than those in higher grades because the participant refers to grade level. One participant gives examples of everyday developments that can be written about, he lists “rape, abuse of women and children, sports, different branches of education or work, prostitution, STDs and STIs, municipal services and crime” [P3]. Now, the real life situations need not be restricted to locally relevant issues. One participant stated that learners should write “about things that are happening within our communities, country and world at large” [P5].

These responses of participants about the preferred topics for essays can be compared with the topics of essays submitted by teachers as part of this study. The topics of essays that formed part of the analysis are listed in table 4.2.1. A close equivalent translation into English by the researcher is presented as well.

**Table 4.2.1: The topics identified from essays submitted for analysis by participating teachers, with translations in the right column**

<b>Sesotho essay topics</b>	<b>Translations of the essays into English</b>
Lefu le sehlooho baneng ba batho	Death is cruel to people
Dikotsi tsa mebileng di siya malapa a mangata a itlhophere	Road accidents leave families in agony
Mmuso o ne o sa nepa ka ho kenya molao wa hore bana ba ntshe mpa	The government was not correct in passing a law that allows kids to abort
Bosiu ba difefo	The night of the tornado/heavy winds
Letsatsi leo nkekeng ka le lebala le kgale	The day I will never ever forget
Bofuma bo keke ba ema tswelopele ya motho ka pele	Poverty will not stand in the way of someone's success
Maikutlo ka tshehetso ya mmuso ho batswadi e nepahetse, empa e boetse e fosahetse	Opinions about the support of the government to parents is right, but again, wrong
Ha re a phela re tjhophotse	We did not live, we escaped
Batswadi ba lokela ho tlohella/kgethela bana moo ba lokelang ho kereka teng	Parents should allow/not allow their children to choose where they want to attend church
Tlotlo eo ke e kgolo ka ho fetisa eo nkileng ka e fuwa	That was the best appreciation I have ever received
Hoseng hoo ka phonyoha ditleneng tsa lefu	That morning I escaped the grip of death
Melemo le dimpe tsa bohahlaudi Afrika Borwa	The pros and cons of tourism in South Africa
Ngwana ke seipone sa lelapa leo a tswang ho	A child is a reflection of the home from which

Iona	he/she comes
Mmuso o thusa baithuti ka dintho tse ngata dikolong	The Government helps learners with a lot of things in schools
Botsotsi bo bongata malapeng a rona	Crime is high in our homes
Tsatsi leo ra phonyoha ka lesobana la nale	That day we escaped through the eye of a needle

The topics were in alignment with what the teachers suggested as topics for essay writing in grade 10. They look at real life events that learners face. Although the topics are not based on fiction, learners can create their own stories and present them as possible in the real world. In this way, we get an understanding of how learners think and understand how they see things.

#### 4.2.1.5 English vs Sesotho essays

As stated before, Van Der Walt (2010:325) asserts that in South Africa, “the difference between this curriculum [the generic curriculum statement for first additional language teaching] and other, particular language curricula, is small”. This observation is also true for the English first additional language and the Sesotho home language curriculum. “The divergences can be found mainly in examples rather than the substance of the curricula” (*ibid*). This might be advantageous to learners who study both English first additional language and Sesotho home language because they get to “translate” or “transfer” their knowledge from one subject to the other. As such, teachers were asked to state whether they believe essays written in the two languages are similar or different. Seven participants stated that they see no difference between essays written in the two learning areas (languages). Two teachers agree that the essays are similar in what they teach, one teacher stated that “it is not different at all as essays in both languages focus on the same aspects” [P9], and the other respondent stated that “... they are written in the same manner and they teach the same thing similarly” [P3]. Another respondent stated that “they are not different. Because in both languages, learners do mind maps and they write an essay in paragraphs and about the given topic” [P1]. In contrast though, two teachers believe that the essays are different, one of whom reasons that “each language has got its grid and rubrics and each language has got rules and regulations” [P7]. The discussion chapter engage with this perception. However, in general, participants deem English FAL essays similar to Sesotho home language essays. This puts learners studying the two learning areas or languages at an advantage.

## 4.2.2 Assessing essays

### 4.2.2.1 The most important aspect of essay writing

Upon scrutiny of the rubric used to assess and award marks for essays, grammar, punctuation, logic, coherence, creativity, style and narrative were deduced as the most important aspects of the essay. Assuming that the different aspects were considered as unevenly important by different assessors the participants were asked to rate them and single out the most important aspect and to motivate their choice thereof. The result was that creativity was rated as the most important element of a successful essay. It was stated by six participants. Two participants stated grammar whereas only one stated logic.

Reasons for creativity being the most important element of essay writing included the fact that essay writing in schools is covered under the umbrella of creative writing. One teacher stated that “an essay writing is a creative writing, learners should be creative. Creativity is a skill” [P8]. Another teacher stated that “all other aspects are included in it, it is not more important *per se*” [P5]. One teacher stated that when a learner is creative it means that “he/she can think on his/her feet and give believable facts” [P3].

The participants’ perceptions of the meaning of creativity in an essay is discussed in more detail in section 4.4.2 of this chapter.

In support of grammar as the most important aspect of an essay, one teacher stated that “it is important for a learner to use his or her skill to show how much they understand grammar. To use that language he/she acquired to write an essay” [P1]. The other participant in support of grammar stated that it is important “because a learner firstly needs to know grammar and be able to narrate a topic given to him/her” [P7].

It is clear that the majority of the participants regard creativity as the driving factor behind their judgement of what constitutes the most important aspect in an essay.

### 4.2.2.2 Rating the different aspects of an essay

After pointing out the most important aspect of essays, teachers were requested to rate all the seven aspects provided in the questionnaire in the order of most important to least important. Table 4.2.2 shows the ratings of different essay aspects by the participants, ranging from most important, labelled 1 and least important of the seven aspects labelled 7. Some teachers

deemed certain aspects as equally important and as such, granted the same rating to more than one aspect.

**Table 4.2.2: Ratings of important aspects of essays from the most important to the least important**

	Grammar	Punctuation	Logic	Coherence	Creativity	Style	Narrative
<b>P1</b>	1	2	1	7	1	2	6
<b>P2</b>	1	3	5	6	2	1	4
<b>P3</b>	6	4	3	5	1	2	7
<b>P4</b>	4	5	2	3	1	7	6
<b>P5</b>	3	4	5	7	1	6	2
<b>P6</b>	1	5	4	7	3	6	2
<b>P7</b>	1	6	4	5	3	7	2
<b>P8</b>	4	5	3	2	1	6	7
<b>P9</b>	3	4	2	6	1	7	5

**Key:** Most important = 1, Second most important = 2, Third most important = 3, Averagely important = 4, Not that important = 5, Second least important = 6, Least important = 7

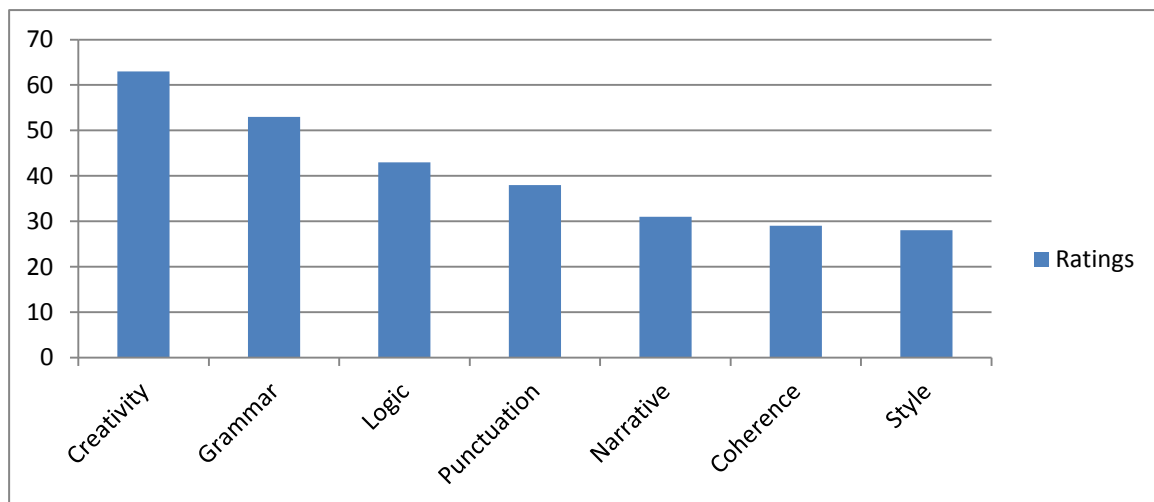
From table 4.2.2, it can be observed that only Participant 2 could not identify the least important aspect of essays. Only Participant 1 elected three aspects of essays that she regarded as equally important. Table 4.2.2 shows how many times each aspect of essays was rated by teachers on each level. Two pairs of participants rated similar aspects equally. The first pair was Participant 3 and Participant 8, who elected the narrative at seven, creativity at one and logic at three. The second pair was Participant 6 and Participant 7. They both elected narrative at two, creativity at three, logic at four and grammar at one. Other teachers rated the aspects of essays differently to each other. Table 4.2.3 presents the frequency ratings of the aspects of essays by the participating teachers. It presents the number of times that each aspect was rated at each of the seven levels.

**Table 4.2.3: Frequency of highest ratings to lowest ratings of the most important aspects of essays**

Essay aspects	Rating levels						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Grammar</b>	4		2	2		1	
<b>Punctuation</b>		1	1	3	3	1	
<b>Logic</b>	1	2	2	2	2		

<b>Coherence</b>		1	1		2	2	3
<b>Creativity</b>	6	1	2				
<b>Style</b>	1	2				3	3
<b>Narrative</b>		3		1	1	2	2

Figure 4.2.1 presents the ratings of the seven aspects in terms of points scored. The seven aspects were rated in table 4.2.3 in terms of the frequency at which each aspect was rated according to the seven levels. In calculating the scores presented in figure 4.2.1, the aspects rated at level 1, which is most important, were given seven credits, those at level 2 were given 6 credits, and the same procedure was carried out until those who were rated at level 7, which is least important, were given one credit. Thereafter, the numbers of ratings were multiplied by the number of their frequency to give an overall score. The scores could be regarded as an aggregate indicator that could inform us which aspect was rated most important and which aspect was rated least important. As evident from table 4.2.3, creativity was rated the most important aspect. Style was rated the least important and punctuation was rated average.



**Figure 4.1.1: The ratings of the seven most important aspects of essays as observed from the number of points scored**

In addition to motivating the choice of the most important aspect of essays, teachers were asked to motivate their reason for the least important aspect of essays. The results are reported below.

### **4.2.2.3 The least important aspect of essay writing**

Three participants rated style as the least important aspect of essays. One of the participants stated that “all other aspects involve the style” [P4]. Therefore, it is not important to point it out as it is embedded into other aspects. One participant claims that style does not count more when it comes to learning a language. According to one participant, “the style of how an essay is written means little marks. Yes it is important, but knowing the learners’ level of understanding is more important” [P9]. One participant stated that the narrative is least important because it is covered by the creativity aspect, “the story is already written when the facts are presented” [P3]. Another respondent stated that “creativity determines the narration of the story” [P8], as such, it is not important to single out narration.

From teachers’ reasoning, it is apparent that they may not be clear on what style in creative writing entails. As such, the aspect of style was explored in the interviews and the results are presented in section 4.4.2 of this chapter.

## **4.2.3 The marking of the script(s)**

### **4.2.3.1 The marking procedure**

Sometimes learners are presented with a number of choices for essay topics. Teachers approach the task of marking essays under such conditions differently. A majority of our participants comprising eight of our study population of nine, stated that they mark right from the beginning, they assess and mark each essay and then only move on to the next one. One participant commented: “I read each essay and I mark. I look for mistakes, I grade each essay, I assess it then give marks” [P1]. Only one participant stated that he/she reads and evaluates a few essays and assess them for certain aspects, they repeat the process for other aspects and then start grading, having ensured that all the aspects are covered.

Assuming that assessing examinations and tests is different to everyday marking, participants were requested to state how they assess examination essays. Four participants stated that they start grading from the first essay regardless of the topic, keeping to the same procedure as in marking the essays during the year. One participant stated reading a few essays just to understand the level at which most learners wrote and he/she then starts grading them one at a time in no particular order. One participant reported assessing essays of similar topics before moving to essays of a different topic. One respondent stated assessing the essays according to the strengths of the learners as demonstrated by their previous writing task(s).

In short, the finding here was that teachers generally mark from the first script regardless of the topics chosen by learners when multiple topics are provided. The following section discusses how rubrics are used by teachers in marking individual essays.

#### **4.2.3.2 The use of a rubric/marking grid**

It might be expected that teachers who have experience in teaching and assessing Sesotho are familiar with their marking rubrics. However, because the education system keeps improving the methods of teaching and assessing, this might not always be the case. Experienced teachers might still face the problems faced by novice teachers. Five of our participants reported marking each essay with their rubric in hand. One of the teachers expanded that “each learner gets different marks. So, I use my rubric to mark each essay, because learners too, write differently” [P1]. This means that the teacher will read the introduction and check the level of achievement in the rubric and then proceed referencing back to the rubric and then add up the final marks.

Four respondents stated that they mark focusing entirely on the story line and only consult the rubric after marking. One of the teachers added: “I mark essays one by one, and consult the rubric when I award marks” [P6]. This indicates that the rubric can be used only as a grading scale. It means that the teacher will have already decided on the total mark and he/she will consult the rubric to see how the marks can be distributed.

There are two views about the use of the rubrics from the data: five teachers mark with reference to the rubric and four teachers first determine a mark and then consult the rubric. As such, there is no dominant trend. Whether this owes to the fact that there is no prescribed method is not ascertained.

#### **4.2.4 Using comments as part of feedback**

##### **4.2.4.1 The use of teacher comments as part of feedback**

In addition to the marking rubric/grid, teachers often point out some aspects that need more elaboration in explaining the marks awarded or some unclear aspects of the essay that the learner needs to work on. Eight of our participants reported that they use comments. Only one participant claimed that the use of comments is not her standard procedure of providing feedback. She stated: “In some essays I do comment but I always give them feedback” [P9]. The feedback stated here refers to the rubric and correction code, which provide guidelines as to where the learner could have improved the text and queries unclear constructions.

Six participants listed grammar mistakes as the aspect they mostly comment on. Two participants stated that they comment on coherence in the text. Two participants stated focusing on both what learners could improve and the language and word choice. Only one participant reported commenting on what learners have done correctly, thereby praising them. According to teachers, comments are still part of feedback. Chapter 4.3.4 discusses the use or lack of comments on the essays obtained from teachers in the study.

#### **4.2.4.2 Perceived effectiveness and usefulness of teacher comments**

Eight of our nine participants claimed that they believe that their comments are effective. The remaining participant chose not to answer this question. One participant stated that he/she believes that the comments are moderately effective while another reported that they are greatly effective. The former stated that “it is not every learner that we [teachers] are able to reach but there are those that work at rectifying their mistakes and thrive for better understanding and marks” [P9]. This clearly points out the perception that not every learner benefits from the comments, and as such, it explains why the respondents stated that the comments are moderately effective. One respondent pointed out the perception that the comments do not fix all the mistakes at the same time, “I realise from subsequent essays that the learner has improved to writing better than before, and I continue to indicate mistakes to him/her” [P3]. This, therefore, means that although the comments are perceived as effective, there is the perception that they do not necessarily work the first time. In contrast, one participant stated that his comments are “highly effective because [his/her] learners do not repeat the same mistakes” [P4]. One participant who reported commenting on grammar mistakes stated that his/her comments are useful because “grammar is very important and it is vital to know how to use it correctly” [P6]. Aspects of essays that were reported as improving as a consequence of comments included: writing better than before, better essay structures, better understanding, less repetition of mistakes, improved grammar and higher marks.

In short, therefore, comments are perceived as effective by participants. Teachers, however, acknowledge that they are not a one-time fix. Also, only those learners who attend to the feedback can potentially benefit. As such, all comments about effectiveness are limited by the extent to which learners make use of the feedback.

#### 4.2.5 Time management and teachers' workload

Teachers' workload has direct impact on the amount of time they can devote to marking one single essay. As such, it is worthwhile to consider teachers' workload in order to understand what motivates their marking practices in addition to what the DBE prescribes to them.

##### 4.2.5.1 How teachers manage their marking time

Teachers employ different strategies to cope with the workload they receive. The responses to coping strategies were classified into three different themes. Two themes were solution based and the third was an indication of a need. The most prominent theme was that of commitment, which includes "...marking even when I am home," [P2]. Commitment also incorporated working even on non-paid days, for example, one participant stated: "it is all about going the extra mile, by doing work even on weekends and holidays" [P5]. The second prominent theme was that of allocating time targets to marking, one participant stated that she allocates time for each script, one stated setting a deadline to finish marking and working hard to beat it. However, two participants indicated that time is the biggest constraint in marking, one respondent stated: "it is still a problem every time I mark" [P8]. This clearly indicates a need for a recommendation of coping strategies for such teachers that do not yet have a coping mechanism.

##### 4.2.5.2 Participants' average workload of essay-marking for grade 10 Sesotho home language learners

Different assessment styles and procedures are motivated by the workload that each teacher handles. As such, it is important to note the workload that teachers handle in order to understand their marking procedures and their coping strategies. Table 4.2.4 shows the average of learners per participant. As a coping strategy, teachers were also asked whether they accept assistance with assessing essays.

**Table 4.2.4: Average grade 10 Sesotho home language learners and essays each learner writes in a year and an indication of whether the teacher accepts assistance with marking**

	Participants (P)									
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	Average
<b>Average number of learners per year</b>	200	200	180	225	155	200	180	215	263	202
<b>Accepts assistance with marking</b>	NO	Yes	NO	NO	NO	NO	Yes	NO	NO	Yes: 2 No: 7

It can be observed from table 4.2.4 that on average, teachers have 202 learners, the lowest being an average of 155 learners and a maximum of around 260 learners. The numbers recorded in table 4.2.4 are based on the averages reported by teachers. Learners write three formative assessment essays and four test and exam essays. If the teacher has 202 learners, this would translate to the teacher marking 1 414 essays per year. When we add the first draft of the term essays, which would total to 606 drafts, the teacher then marks 2020 grade 10 essays per year. It is also clear from table 4.2.4 that the majority of the teachers do not accept assistance with their marking. The next section discusses the workload management mechanisms suggested by teachers.

#### **4.2.5.3 Recommended workload management strategies**

When asked to recommend coping strategies to deal with the workload handled by teachers in assessing creative writing, the participants provided five strategies that they believe would help. The first strategy is that of giving yourself time to assess essays. This response was provided by three respondents, one of whom stated that “giving yourself time to mark is the only strategy” [P1]. Self-allocating marking time may include “staying at school after school hours to mark” as Participant 6 recommends, and “working during holidays and weekends” as Participant 3 suggests. The second strategy is of ensuring that you mark daily, which is similar to that of giving yourself time to mark. One teacher recommends spending “at least 4 hours marking each day” [P3]. Another participant suggests that teachers should “start the marking process the same day as the submission date of the essays” [P9]. The third recommendation is that of focusing on different aspects at a time. One teacher recommends “marking each (essay) fully, and then, focusing on mistakes thereafter” [P4]. The fourth recommendation is “marking the essays bit by bit and taking time to relax in between” [P9]. The fifth and last recommendation was that the Department of Basic Education should reduce the work load of teachers by employing markers. The main finding is that teachers perceive planning their marking as an important strategy for managing the load.

#### **4.2.6 The difference between marking formative and summative essays tasks**

Five respondents believe that there is no difference between formative essay assessments and summative essay assessments. One participant stated that “essays written during the term are supposed to be taken as seriously as the ones during the examination” [P5]. As such, there need not be any difference noted. One teacher specifically stated that “in terms of grading there is no difference” [P7]. Participant 9 clarifies that there is no difference because she uses the same criteria, “I use the same criteria so that my learners get used to the marking procedure as

well as what is expected of them during the examination,” he/she stated. However, there were concerns that the teachers pointed out, the most prominent one was the aspect of marking time. The views on this aspect were split between the teachers concerned by it. Three teachers reported that it is the duty of the teacher to ensure that he/she has enough time to mark. One teacher stated: “a teacher has to give him or herself time to mark as essays require teachers’ concentration” [P1]. In contrast, two teachers state that the allocated time is just not enough. One teacher stated that “during the exam, there is no time due to work load and more papers that need to be marked” [P2]. In agreement, one teacher stated that it is not easy to focus on one grade, “there are lots of papers and other grades are there waiting for you to mark them” [P6]. It is clear that teachers perceive both formative and summative essay assessment as equally important. The quality of the marking is perceived as not impacted by the time constraints. We see this in the way teachers make a case for giving themselves time for planning marking. The same criteria is used and the same codes are used in the summative as in the formative assessment.

#### **4.2.7 Non-graded forms of assessment**

Before the teacher assesses and grades the final draft of an essay, learners produce a few drafts of the essay. The teacher assesses one such draft but does not grade or record marks for it. It is used to indicate how the learner can improve his/her essay. The learner then produces a new draft of the essay and then submits it for peer assessment. Please refer to Chapter 2.3.6 for an in-depth discussion on process writing and peer assessment.

##### **4.2.7.1 Peer assessment**

One of the steps in process writing involves peer assessment. Unfortunately, some of the peer suggested changes are not necessarily correct. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the learner to ensure that he/she incorporates correct editions. Some learners, however, incorporate suggested editions without questioning whether they are correct or not. As such, it is important for teachers to look at such matters in assessing learners and ensuring improvement. The participants were asked how they deal with such instances. Five participants reported that they indicate on the final draft that the correct form was the one in the earlier draft. Three participants stated that they mark the incorrectly edited text because the learner should have known better than to incorporate wrong corrections; it simply means that he/she also did not know the correct forms. One teacher indicates marking it as correct on the earlier version; it is not the learner’s fault.

Following dealing with the errors introduced in the essay, is the issue of assisting the learner who suggests wrong editions into the essay of his/her peer. Only two respondents reported assisting with the learner by calling the learner and discussing the matter with him/her in private, one of the teachers stated: "I call them in a group, asking them questions so that they can understand" [P2]. This means that the teacher remedies such instances as a collective instead of individual sessions. Consulting with individual learners may be time consuming.

Consequently, there are more teachers who neglect peer-induced errors as opposed to those that do follow ups. Seven participants reported not responding to such learners because there are too many learners and they do not get the time for follow ups. This might be based on how good teachers perceive their learners' peer assessments to be. The participants were asked to rate learner peer assessment. Five levels ranging from 1 to 5 were provided, scaling from (1), they cannot do it at all to (5), they are exceptionally good. Four out of nine participants seem to believe that learners are trying (3), two participants believe that learners are good (4) whereas two participants rated their learners as bad (2) and one participant had no comment on the matter. Therefore, the majority of our participants perceive that learners are not good at peer-assessments.

Following rating how good (or based on the results in the previous paragraph, how bad) learners are at peer-assessment, teachers were asked to rate the importance of peer-assessment. The five-point scale was used again, rating from (1) not important at all to (5) it is vital. Six participants reported that peer assessment is helpful in the improvement of learner essays. Two participants believe that it only contributes to a certain degree. However, one participant stated that it is not helpful. The majority of our participants, therefore, agree that peer assessment is important.

#### **4.2.7.2 The first draft of the essay**

Learners submit their first drafts to their teachers. These drafts are often submitted with the final draft in a portfolio. Four participants reported looking at it to check whether there were errors introduced during the revision process or not, of these participants, one teacher commented: "I check whether the topic is the same and the mistakes are corrected in the final draft" [P8]. Two teachers reported marking it, one of whom reported: "I mark it to see if there are spelling language and mistakes" [P6]. Two teachers reported reading it in comparison to the final draft. One teacher stated: "I read the first draft so that I can make sure that a learner can realise his/her mistakes" [P3]. In general, the first draft of the essay is revisited for comparison with the final draft of the essay, what differs is the focus of the teacher.

## **4.2.8 Factors affecting or influencing marking**

### **4.2.8.1 Influence of learner behaviour**

Teachers often get to learn their learners' behaviours and traits, as such, in some cases, marks awarded to learners and the attitude of teachers towards the marking of the learners' assessment tasks may be affected. The participants were requested to comment on factors that might affect how teachers assess learners' essays.

Seven participants believe that learner behaviour has no bearing on how the teacher assesses his/her essays. One teacher comments that "we must not mark according to his/her behaviour even though they are not good. We still support them so that one day they can change" [P2]. This statement is supported by another teacher's comment that "there are many factors influencing bad behaviour, like growing up without parents, etc." [P4]. As such, teachers do not judge their learners' performance based on their behaviour. In contrast, two participants believe that learner behaviour does affect the way in which the learner's essay is assessed. One teacher comments that "if you know the learner that you are marking, it is often easier to relate or to comprehend as to why the learner tackled the essay in the way he/she did" [P9]. This means for instance, that, if you know the religion of your learners, you will not be surprised by their resistance to supporting a given essay topic that opposes their beliefs. One teacher stated that since teachers use assessment tools which make no provision for their own personal discretions, it is hard for teachers to be influenced by external aspects which have nothing to do with the current task. Therefore, in total, eight participants believe that learners' behaviours have no effect on the assessment of their essays.

### **4.2.8.2 Influence of learner ability**

One other external influence on essay marks may be learners' abilities. Sometimes, top-performing learners may be expected to perform better than those that usually perform at the lowest levels. Even so, according to five respondents, learners' abilities have no influence on how they are marked. One participant stated that "a learner's ability must not affect the way a teacher marks the scripts. The teacher has to mark learners' essays equally and fairly, using rubrics" [P1]. Another participant stated: "As a teacher, I mark objectively; I am not affected by circumstances" [P8]. This means that even when a learner had personal problems which hindered the usual performance level, the teacher will be indifferent and mark objectively based on the current performance and not the previous ones. One teacher stated that "I honestly do not believe that the learners' ability has any bearing but in some cases depending if you know

the learners' weakness, it somehow affects the marking process in a way" [P9]. To this problem, one teacher suggests that "the teacher has to mark without checking whom they are marking. The teacher has to mark fairly and without favouritism because essays are still going to be moderated by the head of department and the learning facilitator from the provincial office" [P3]. However, two teachers believe that teachers pay more attention to high-performing learners' essays as opposed to those who perform poorly. One teacher stated: "learners' ability may motivate a teacher to read more and encourage that learner to be more creative" [P7]. Two teachers however, believe that high-performing learners expect high marks, as such, when the teacher marks their scripts and award low marks, they need to account for them. One teacher stated that learners "want to improve and know what they are supposed to do" [P2]. Learners' abilities are exhibited by tasks already completed and previous achievements.

In summary, it may be concluded that teachers believe that the use of rubrics standardises their marking and that the subsequent evaluations of their assessments forces them to be fair in their marking. However, teachers admit that high-performing learners' essays get more attention than low-performing learners' essays when teachers mark subjectively by marking learners instead of their essays.

#### **4.2.8.3 Influence of previous achievements**

Teachers were also asked to comment on the potential influence of previous achievements on the way teachers mark essays. Three respondents believe that previous achievements should have no influence on the current task, and as such, teachers should not base their assessments on them. This is in line with what was previously stated about teachers being responsible for their learners' success and lack thereof. One teacher stated that "it is the responsibility of the educator to help and motivate learners. So, if a learner is always failing to write essays correctly, previous essays must not affect the way the teacher is going to mark a child's new essay" [P1]. One other teacher stated that "the teacher has to work fairly and without favouritism because the essay is still going to be moderated by the HOD (Head of Department) and the LF (language facilitator) from the provincial office" [P3]. Four teachers are not ignorant of the fact that improvement is expected, by both the teacher assessing the essay and the learner who receives the assessed essay, "the teacher is expecting to see some improvements," stated Participant 5. One participant stated that previous performances indicate to the teacher whether the learner does his/her own work or if someone else does it for him/her, he stated that it is "because sometimes they did not write it by themselves, so it clicks to you when their marks fluctuate" [P6]. One teacher stated that "if he/she (the learner) performs very lowly, I make

follow up trying to understand the cause of the dropping. This I do every time there is a change in performance levels” [P8].

In summary, it may be concluded that improvement is expected by both the teacher and the learner, and the responsibility lies with both stakeholders. However, they also perceive that each assessment should be handled on its own because teachers’ assessment is evaluated by a higher authority. Teachers should also be cautious to ensure that improvement is not caused by plagiarism in that learners do not get other people to write their essay for them.

#### **4.2.8.4 Learner effort**

Although learners show a level of dedication and effort by presenting a written essay, the level of effort is not always uniform. The participants were asked to report on whether they believe learner effort has any bearing or not. Six teachers responded that learner effort has a positive influence on how his/her essay gets marked. One teacher stated that “it positively affects you (the teacher/marker) when a learner has done proper research and planning on the topic” [P7]. Another teacher stated that “if a learner’s essay is good and the marker sees that the child has put more effort in writing the essay, the child will get good marks” [P1]. However, if the learner has put in too little effort and gets low marks, “the learner will ask what went wrong and the teacher will then explain what went wrong,” stated Participant 3. One respondent stated that “essay-marking is controlled by the rubric, the effort the learner put in, will make him/her stand a chance of getting high marks” [P8]. In summary, the effort the learner puts in, has a direct bearing on how the teacher grades the essay.

#### **4.2.8.5 Weighing the marks against the overall class performance**

Participants were asked whether they believe that learners’ achievements are weighed against the whole class. Two participants refrained from responding to this question. Four participants stated yes. Their reasons involved as one teacher stated: “learners/students tend to mix copying and discussing, they could discuss among themselves and end up writing the same essay” [P7]. Another participant states that “competition is healthy and other students would want to achieve more” [P4]. Two participants stated that teachers do not weigh learners’ performance against the whole class; one teacher stated that “teachers weigh learners according to their ability” [P3]. Another teacher stated: “No! We treat every essay individually” [P8]. Only one teacher was not sure, she stated that “the class average is of some importance but if a learner has shown exceptional work ethics and achieved more than the others, then he/she has achieved their own mark” [P9].

In summary therefore, it is not clear whether the learners' essays are weighed against each other or not, even though the majority of the responses stated yes, not all participants offered an opinion on this matter. However, should the number of participants who stated yes had been above five, we would have had a conclusion.

#### **4.2.8.6 When a learner receives marks below the usual average**

Sometimes learners underperform for various reasons. As such, the participants were requested to report on their methods of handling such an issue. Seven participants reported that they grant a second opportunity. Two participants stated that they only grant such an opportunity if there is time and if it is possible. One participant stated that she asks them to "write again, showing them what/how they are supposed to write" [P2]. One teacher stated: "I ask him/her his reasons. If he/she was at the doctor's, I ask for proof and then grant him/her another opportunity." [P3]. However, two teachers reported not granting the second opportunity, one teacher stated that "I [the teacher] encourage them to do better" [P4], and another teacher stated: "I ask them what went wrong" [P6]. Therefore to these two teachers, following up on the decline in performance levels is a procedure used to remedy future assessments instead of the current performance. Even so, in general teachers grant a second opportunity to learners who underperform when possible.

#### **4.2.8.7 When best is not enough**

Unfortunately, a personal best does not necessarily mean a pass mark. Our participants were asked whether they would fail or pass the learner if he/she performs to his/her best ability in comparison to previous achievements but still fails to make the pass mark. If they would employ a different solution, they were asked to state how they would handle the matter. Three participants responded that they would fail a learner who writes to his/her best ability but still does not make the pass mark. Two participants stated that they would pass the learner and three participants stated that they would handle the matter differently. One teacher who reported that the learner would be failed stated: "I will encourage the learner to try harder the next time. I will do this in order to oblige and align myself with the requirements of the policy from the Department of Education" [P3]. Another teacher stated that "you get what you have worked for, we [teachers/markers] give a true reflection" [P8]. This means that if the learner attains higher marks but he/she does not reach the pass mark, the teacher cannot help him/her.

In contrast, one teacher who opted to pass the learner stated that "if the child has written a good essay as a teacher, I will think it is due to improvement, the child has improved, so I pass the

student” [P1]. Another teacher reasons that the learner is passed “because it shows that he/she has potential” [P5]. Four respondents reported dealing with the matter in a different manner. The first one stated that “I ask the management to give him/her a second opportunity, but if nothing changes, I fail the learner” [P2]. The second one stated “asking the learner what went wrong and trying to remedy the situation” [P4]. The remedy was not defined. The third method was granting the learner a second opportunity. The fourth method as suggested by one teacher is giving them extra work and looking at the policy documents to see what it says regarding this matter. In general, however, it may be said that the student who works to his/her level best but still does not manage to pass is given a second opportunity to gain the marks.

#### **4.2.9 Supplementing the correction code**

##### **4.2.9.1 What if the whole sentence does not make sense**

Sometimes learners write sentences. That are not clearly constructed. This may be as a result of too many errors in one sentence. At times, it is because of lack of punctuation to separate ideas in one complex sentence. Sometimes sentences do not make sense because of the wrong word choices made. Teachers sometimes do not know what to mark as errors in the sentence and they sometimes find it hard to use the correction code to explain to the learner what needs improvement. The participants were asked to report on how they deal with such instances. Only one participant reported not doing anything about such a sentence, he stated: “I just ignore it” [P5]. Three participants reported providing solutions in a way of rewriting the whole sentence for the learner. One teacher stated: “I underline it and provide a better construction” [P6]. Another teacher stated: “give it wrong and therefore correct it” [P2]. One respondent reported involving the learner in the remedying process, he stated: “I will ask the learner to explain what he/she was trying to say and then try to help him/her” [P3]. One participant reported indicating it as a linguistic error. He stated: “I write *puo*<sup>4</sup> [language] and underline the sentence as an indicator that there are grammatical mistakes” [P8]. This is the same sign that was reportedly used when there are more than one possible ways to improve or correct the text. This is in line with what another participant stated: “indicate an error using the correction code” [P7]. One participant stated that she underlines the entire sentence and indicates that it does not make sense, whereas another participant stated that: “I tell the learner that it is irrelevant” [P4]. In summary, most teachers work towards finding a better construction for the sentence, either by correcting it for the learner or by working with the learner to fix it.

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<sup>4</sup> The usual convention here is the use of “P” to indicate incorrectly used language or unusual language choices instead of writing out language.

#### 4.2.9.2 Indicating editing options for the learner

Sometimes errors can be fixed with more than one possible solution. Therefore, the teacher may be forced to choose the most appropriate way in which the learner can improve the text. Unfortunately, sometimes what the reader [teacher] considers as improvement might actually be regression. As such, the participants were asked to report on their own marking by stating how they deal with instances where more than one solution can be applied to improve the text. Three participants reported correcting the error for the learner. One of whom stated that “I correct it and show where they made a mistake” [P2]. The other two teachers simply stated that they correct it by writing the correct word or phrase. Three participants claimed indicating the mistake to the learner. One teacher stated: “I underline the mistake with a red pen, and then write P<sup>5</sup> on top of the mistake to indicate that there is a problem with the language so that he/she (the learner) chooses the language he/she thinks is correct before writing” [P3]. Another teacher stated: “I follow the DoE’s instructions. Learners should be shown that it is incorrect, however, those codes do not help” [P4]. This is interesting because, although the teacher admits that the codes do not help, she still relies on them. In agreement, two other participants indicated using the codes in the correction codes. One participant stated indicating with question marks.

#### 4.2.9.3 Teachers’ perceptions of issues missing from the correction code

In Chapter 2, it was explicated that the correction code is insufficient for providing feedback to learners. Even so, three participants in this study find the correction code to be flawless. However, six participants listed the flaws in their opinion and the following list was compiled:

- a) Indicating incomplete work
- b) Indicating missing mind maps (planning).
- c) Missing indication of total words used/written.
- d) Unequal/Uneven paragraphs.
- e) Unnecessary punctuation marks.
- f) Explicit indication of incorrect constructions.
- g) Split sentences.
- h) Positive comments.
- i) Indication of duplicated or copied work.
- j) The rubric must allow for subtraction of marks for penalties such as late submission.

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<sup>5</sup> As stated in the correction code attached as Appendix A, “P” is used to indicate incorrectly used language or unusual language choices.

From the list above, it is clear that most teachers participating in this study are not satisfied with the correction code as it is. An interesting finding here is the fact that teachers raised macro-issues (indicating incomplete work, paragraph lengths, missing proof of planning, and positive comments) as missing from the correction code. Only three micro-issues were raised; unnecessary punctuation, explicit indication of incorrect constructions and the indication of missing indication of total words written. The issue of subtraction of marks is coded here as a discipline issue.

Chapter 5 will address the interpretation of these findings. However, the issue of praise was raised with the teachers to a certain extent in the questionnaire. The results are discussed below.

#### **4.2.9.4 Incorporating praises**

Since there are no codes for praises in the correction code or open blocks for them on the marking rubrics, praises are generally indicated in terms of comments in the essay. One teacher phrases it as “short messages” [P6]. Participant 9 stated that he/she incorporates praises “by writing words of encouragement or congratulatory praises where it is due,” (in other words, she uses positive comments). This means that the teacher will indicate areas where the learner wrote exceptionally well as she reads instead of waiting to write them “at the end of the essay”, as Participant 1 reported. The examples of positive comments teachers reported using included (i) “You performed well. Work harder than this when you return the essay,” [P3] and (ii) “well done, keep it up or, this is poor or fair” [P5]. However, one teacher stated that she follows “the DoE’s instructions, no praises!” [P4]. Therefore, even though the teachers know and understand that the practice is not required by the Department of Basic Education, they continue doing it for the benefit of their learners, but the practice is not standardised.

#### **4.2.10 Supplementing the rubric**

##### **4.2.10.1 Misaligned aspects on the rubric**

In the rubric attached as Appendix B, punctuation, language, word choice, style, tone and length share the same mark. Participants were given a scenario where these aspects were not of the same quality in a learner’s essay. They were asked to state how they deal with such instances. Two participants refrained from answering this question, stating that they are really not sure what the right answer is. Four participants reported that they would stick to the mark indicated by the rubric. One of the teachers further stated that “the marks for style and other aspects such as planning that were not present in the essay will result in the depletion of marks” [P3]. One

teacher explained that if the language is flawed, the learner will receive low marks, “because essays are all about language” [P5]. As such, one teacher stated that she would grant marks in the lower level of the rubric, whereas Participant 9 stated that she would grant “marks that are suitable for the satisfactory part” of the essay.

#### **4.2.10.2 Issues missing from the rubric**

In contrast to the correction code, where a total of ten flaws were identified by our participants, in rubrics, five respondents stated that they would not add anything to the rubric as one teacher stated: “The rubric has all the aspects needed for assessing essays” [P3]. Conversely, one participant stated that she would fix the “rating levels because they are sometimes incorrect” [P6]. One teacher stated that she would add “space for allowing extra marks for extra effort and best performance in a given aspect or area of expertise” [P1].

#### **4.2.10.3 What marks mean to teachers**

Teachers often change their teaching and/or assessment approaches to cater for the needs of their learners. With that in mind, the participants were asked to state what marks mean to them and what they think marks mean to their learners. The complexity of grading was explicated and discussed in Chapter 2.

Teachers were asked to state what marks mean to them. Participant 9 abstained from answering this question. The following responses were stated.

[P1] It is an indication of how good learners are performing.

[P2] It shows learners that they must take their work seriously.

[P3] Whether the child knows the job or not yet well enough.

[P4] They show learners' competency.

[P5] Good or bad performance by the teacher/ Excellent or poor work by the teacher.

[P6] It means a lot because I want my learners to pass.

[P7] Encourage learners and motivate them to perform at their best ability.

[P8] The level of performance of the learner and to improve wherever necessary.

From these responses, it may be concluded that to teachers, marks are an indicator learners' level of performance, the teachers' teaching quality and the learners' dedication. Participants 1, 2, 4 and 8 believe marks indicate the level of understanding that their learners have. They perceive a direct relationship between their learners' marks and their level of understanding. To Participants 2 and 7, marks are a tool used to indicate to learners where they are in terms of achievement, and it is used to motivate them to take their work seriously and perform at their best. Participant 5 introduces a different perspective into the meaning of marks. He/She takes responsibility for the marks that his/her learners receive. This is in line with what Participant 6 states. Both participants indicate that better marks for learners are a responsibility of the teacher.

Therefore, in summary, it may be said that marks indicate to teachers how well they are performing as teachers and how dedicated their learners are.

#### **4.2.10.4 What marks mean to learners**

To learners, teachers believe that marks "mean a lot because they all want to pass," [P6], another teacher explains that marks "show them that they are passing or failing" [P1]. Participant 9 explains that "it means achievement and advancement to the next stage," but further questions if it is worth it, she stated: "...but what does it matter when they lack proper understanding?" [P9]. Teacher 8 stated that marks indicate strengths and weaknesses to learners. One teacher explained that they indicate "either that the learners understand the tasks or that they are not yet well learned in writing essays" [P3]. One participant stated that marks "encourage them [learners] to work more" [P4]. One participant believes a lot of marks indicate "achievement" to the learners because "they realise that they know better" [P7]. One respondent further explains that if the marks indicate bad performance, it shows learners that "they need to read a lot of books in order to know or learn how to write Sesotho well" [P3].

The length of the essay counts for marks in the rubric. However, sometimes, to make a point, learners can take longer or shorter than expected. Therefore, in terms of grading the essay, participants were asked to state what they find more important: the content or the length of the essay? Seven participants consider the content of the essay more important, only one participant stated that the required 300 to 350 words restriction is important. One participant however, stated that "both of them are very much important because the marks are influenced by both of them" [P8]. In general, this, therefore, indicates that content is perceived to be much more important by the teachers than the length of the essay.

#### 4.2.11 Conclusion

The main aim of this study is to investigate how teachers mark grade 10 Sesotho home language creative writing essays. The main finding of this section is that teachers mark for creativity as the most important aspect followed by grammar and that style is focused on the least. What will only be clarified in a later chapter is the description of what is meant by creativity and by style.

Teachers perceive that their marking of individual assessments is not affected by external factors such as ability and behaviour. However, effort has been indicated as having an influence on the marks awarded for essays. Post-assessment evaluations were named as one of the factors that force teachers to mark fairly and to focus on individual assessments. Teachers reported that they mark both formative and summative essay assessments alike. They listed things such as making time for marking essays to ensure quality and better management of time and the use of the same criterion as basis for their perception that they mark both assessments similarly. In addition, workload management strategies were suggested.

When marking, teachers report that they mark from the first script regardless of the topic chosen by the learner. There was no generalised trend for using or consulting the rubric during essay assessment. Five teachers stated that they consult the rubric while marking, and four participants reported that they only consult the rubric after reading the whole essay in order to grade.

Teachers were asked to rate their learners' abilities and competence in providing peer feedback, and the result was that teachers perceive their learners' peer assessment to be poor. A surprising finding was that teachers generally do not address peer-induced errors and learners who introduce errors on their peers' essays. Contrary to this finding, in general, teachers perceived peer feedback as important.

Participants identified ten issues as missing from the correction code. Five of these issues are concerned with macro-issues while four are concerned with micro-issues and only one looks at discipline issues, specifically penalties. With regard to the rubrics five participants indicated total satisfaction with the rubric. Suggestions were made for the addition of the provision for extra marks and the adjusting of the rating levels. The following section discusses the results from the script analysis.

## 4.3 Findings from the analyses of the essay scripts

In this section, the results of the essay script analysis<sup>6</sup> are presented.

### 4.3.1 Selection of scripts for analysis

An important issue to note in this analysis is that the nature of the request to teachers for the selection of creative writing essay scripts is a potential strength of the analysis. Teachers were requested by the researcher to please submit three scripts that they regarded as the “below average” essays, “average” essays and “above average” essays at a specific time. The teachers were not given marks to operationalise their selections. The motivation for this request was to: (a) ensure that the selection of essay scripts reflects the ordinary distribution of the range of marks in the categories “below average”, “average” and “above average”; (b) to limit the selection to about 90 essay scripts to ensure that the analysis is feasible for the scope of a study of this nature; and (c) to analyse the teachers’ interpretations of essays that they regard as “below average”, “average” or “above average” in terms of marks.

The major advantage of this strategy for the selection of essay scripts is the range of the marks of the essay scripts collected should potentially represent the ordinary distribution of marks across the “below average”, “average” and “above average” ranges. If one did not request scripts in this way, teachers might have only selected “above average” or “average” scripts and that would have limited the strength of the analysis that aims to investigate what the characteristics of more effective and less effective essays are in the opinion of the participating teachers. One could also have asked teachers to send all the essay scripts for a given period to be included in the analysis, but that would have made the analysis too big for a study of this nature.

The selection of essays, therefore, represents the teachers’ perceptions of the “below average” essays, “average” essays and “above average” essays. In this regard, the analysis of the scripts that captures how the teachers marked and how marks relate to their impression of more and less successful essays is regarded as a selection of typical essays that the participating teachers receive that they regard as “below average”, “average” and “above average”. The results of this analysis could therefore be regarded as descriptive of essays across this range of marks because it ensured that all the ranges were included in the analysis. In summary, one needs to keep in mind that the distribution of the marks for the essay scripts would potentially

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<sup>6</sup> In other words, the analysis of the marking done by the teachers on the scripts of essays written by grade 10 learners.

be fairly ordinary with an equal distribution of marks in the “below average”, “average” and “above average” ranges which might not reflect the reality of marks awarded when all scripts are included in the analysis.

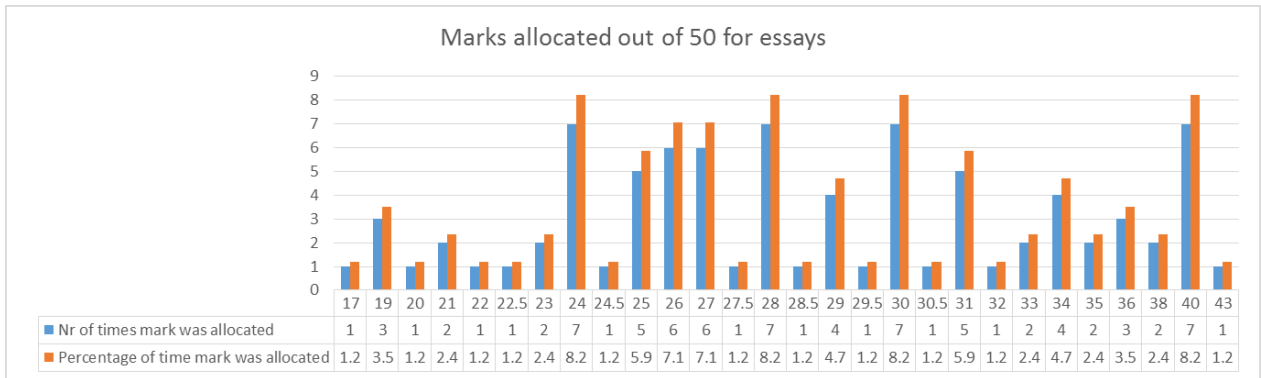
The selection of essay scripts in this way obviously also holds limitations for the analysis. Based on this data, one can make no inferences about the general spread of marks allocated to creative writing essays by the participating teachers, because the invitation for the selection of scripts requested teachers to select essays that they regard specifically as “below average”, “average” and “above average” to represent the range of marks they usually allocate to scripts. However, the aim of this study was to investigate how teachers mark grade 10 Sesotho creative writing essays and what they regard as more successful and less successful essays. The selection of scripts from at least these three ranges enables this analysis.

In this section, the descriptive results related to the marks as allocated on the rubric used for this purpose of the selected scripts are presented. Secondly, an analysis of the marking done by the teachers based on correction code is presented and interpreted. The aim of this section is to answer the question of how teachers mark essays by exploring the two instruments used to provide feedback to learners (the rubric and the correction code) and by investigating the relationship between the two instruments (the rubric and the correction code), the marks awarded and how this information relate to the participating teachers’ impressions of “below average”, “average” and “above average” essays. This section seeks above all to describe how teachers award marks to essays from different bands of strength in general, and to investigate the relationship between the final mark on the rubric and the correction code.

#### **4.3.2 Descriptive results of marks allocated on rubrics for the selected essay scripts**

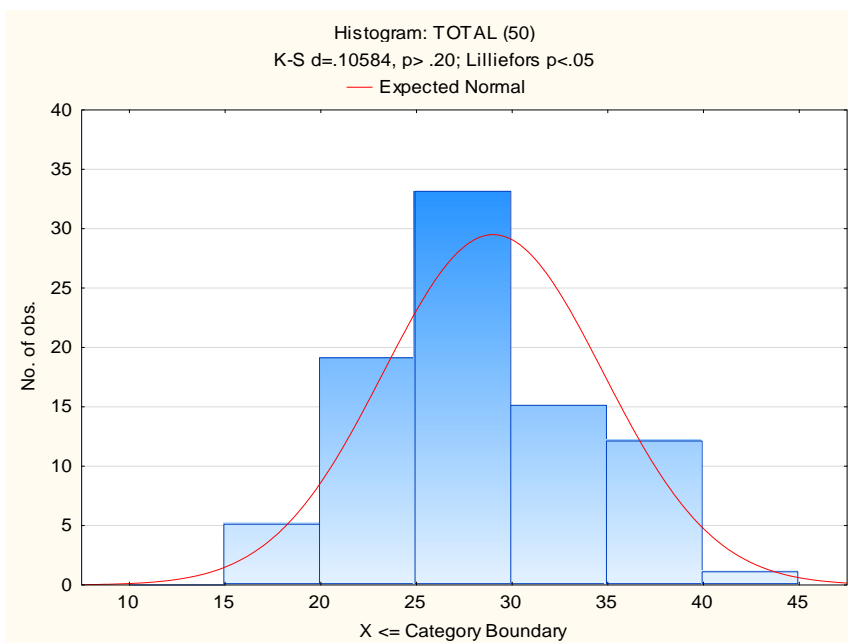
A total of 85 scripts selected by nine teachers are included in the analysis. Some teachers submitted more than the requested nine scripts while others handed in fewer than the requested nine scripts. The descriptive statistics reported in this section will first of all work with the final marks allocated for scripts on the rubric as a way of understanding the general impression teachers have of essays that are “below average”, “average” and “above average”. Secondly, the breakdown of marks on the rubric is analysed to see how the different sections of the rubric relate to the final mark and the different bands of essays. The frequencies of final marks allocated on the rubric to the 85 essays that formed part of the analysis are presented in table 4.1 in Appendix 4D.

A graphic representation of the marks allocated for essays out of 50 is presented in figure 4.3.1 below.



**Figure 4.3.1: Marks allocated out of 50 for essays**

An exploratory data analysis was conducted to determine if the marks for essays allocated out of 50 were normally distributed. Results for the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality indicated that the essay mark distribution does not deviate statistically significantly from a normal distribution ( $D = 0.105842, p > 0.2$ ). A graphic representation of the distribution of the overall scores awarded to essays is presented in figure 4.3.2 below.



**Figure 4.2.2: Graphic representation of distribution of total marks awarded to essays (out of 50)**

The descriptive statistics for the marks allocated out of 50 are presented in the table below.

**Table 4.3.1: Descriptive statistics for marks of essays allocated out of 50**

Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum	N
29	5.7	17	43	85

The average mark achieved across all essays is 29 out of 50 (or 58%) and the standard deviation is 5.7 which is fairly small or narrow. The lowest mark achieved was 17 out of 50 (or 34%) and the highest mark was 43 out of 50 (or 86%).

When one re-categorises the marks for scripts allocated out of 50 into three groups, it is clear that marks in the “below average” and “above average” groups are not represented well, and that the marks in the “average” group make up the majority of the marks. Group 1 of the re-categorised data contained the essay scripts where the teachers’ final marks on the rubric indicate that the writing was above average. This was operationalised as all scripts, which achieved 35 or more marks out of 50 (or 70% and above). Eighteen out of the 85 scripts (21.18%) belonged to this group. The second group of scripts contained all the scripts, which achieved a final mark between 20 and 34.5 marks out of 50 (or 40% to 69%) on the rubric. This group was labelled as the average group. A total of 62 scripts out of 85 (72.94%) was categorised into this group. The scripts that achieved between 19.5 or below out of 50 (or 39% or below) as final mark on the rubric were labelled as below average and a total of 5 out of 85 scripts (5.88%) was allocated to this group.

**Table 4.3.2: Total number of scripts per teacher and the distribution across the three categories of achievement**

Category	Markers									Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
<b>Above average</b>	3	2	0	0	2	2	0	7	2	<b>18</b>
<b>Average</b>	7	7	10	9	8	9	6	0	6	<b>62</b>
<b>Below average</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	<b>5</b>
<b>Total no. of scripts</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>85</b>

**Key:** *Below average = 0-19.5 out of 50*

*Average = 20-34.5 out of 50*

*Above average = 35+ out of 50*

From this analysis it is clear that although the scores awarded out of 50 indicate that the data are normally distributed, the “below average” group is under-represented in the selection of scripts presented by the teachers. The under-representation of the scripts in the “below

average” group is noted because it could be seen as an indication that there are very few scripts in this band in general. That could be why teachers did not include more scripts from this band in their selection of essays. The above average group is also under-represented, but not to the same extent as the below average group. Overall, one gleans from this analysis that the teachers mark in a very narrow “average” band. This could also be a function of the fact that “final essays” were included in the analysis, i.e. one would expect fewer essays in the below average band because learners had opportunities to edit and improve. On the other hand one could also expect more essays in the above band. A discussion and interpretation of these matters will be conducted in the next chapter.

In summary, from this analysis of the marks awarded by the teachers it is clear that: (a) the overall marks awarded out of 50 by the 9 teachers display a normal distribution of marks as expected from the instructions given to teachers for the selection of essays; (b) the lower sections of marks (16 and below out of 50) are not used by the markers, even when they are requested to select “below average” essays by the researcher. This could be because the essays represented final work; (b) the higher sections of the marks (35 and above) are also not represented well in the essays identified by the teachers; and (c) in general, the marks cluster in the “average” group and the standard deviation indicates that there is a very narrow band within which the teachers allocate the overall mark out of 50 on the rubric.

An analysis of the marks awarded on the rubric for different aspects of essay writing is the focus of the next section. The rubric requires each essay to be marked out of 50. The marks are awarded for three different aspects which are presented with their weights on the rubric in table 4.3.3.

**Table 4.3.3: Mark distribution for different aspects of essay writing on the rubric**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Mark</b>
Content and planning	<b>30</b>
Language, style and proofreading/editing	<b>15</b>
Structure	<b>5</b>
<b>Total marks</b>	<b>50</b>

The rubric, therefore, awards 60% of the marks to the aspects of content and planning, 30% to the aspects related to “language” and 10% to the aspect of the “structure” of the essay. The marks awarded by each participant teacher were calculated for each of the three sections of the

rubric. Although it is required that each essay be marked out of 50, Participant 1 had marked out of 55. Upon following up, the category of “content and planning” and the category of “language, style and proofreading/editing” were allocated the right amount of marks. Only the “structure” was marked out of ten instead of five. Therefore, upon agreement between the participant and the researcher, the marks were adjusted accordingly. Meaning, the incorrect mark out of 10 for structure was adjusted to a mark out of 5 by dividing the structure mark with 2. As such, the essays from participant one are included in the calculations as they were converted to 50 following the stipulations of the rubric after the correction of the structure marks. Table 4.3.4 shows the means for each of the three categories of marks as calculated from individual participants’ submissions.

**Table 4.3.4: Means of marks for essays out of 50 per marker**

Item on rubric	Markers								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Content and planning (30)	16.80	17.44	16.60	17.33	19.65	17.09	14.56	23.43	15.00
Language, style and proofreading/ editing (15)	12.15	10.33	7.20	7.11	10.05	9.27	5.89	10.29	9.40
Structure (5)	3.80	3.33	2.40	3.56	2.70	2.55	2.11	4.29	3.00
<b>Total (out of 50)</b>	<b>32.75</b>	<b>31.11</b>	<b>26.20</b>	<b>28.00</b>	<b>32.40</b>	<b>28.91</b>	<b>22.56</b>	<b>38.00</b>	<b>27.40</b>

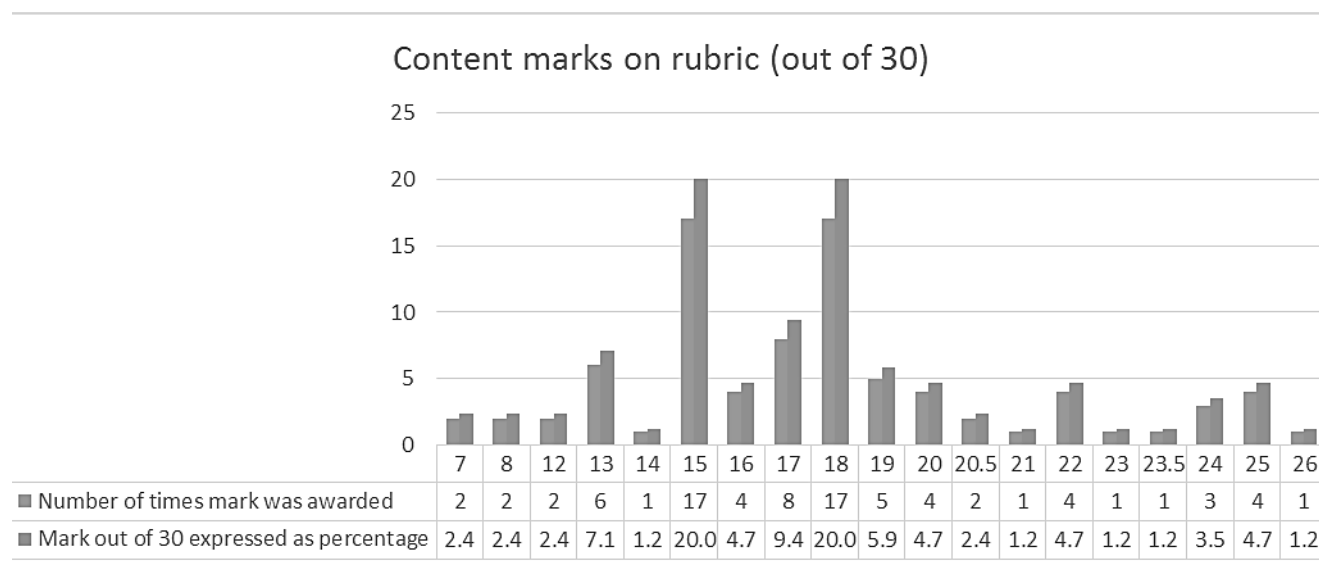
From the means of marks for all essays reported in table 4.3.4, it is clear that the average mark provided for essays is around 60%. This is also illustrated in table 4.3.5 where the descriptive statistics is reported. The average mark for essays for these participants is 29.70 out of 50 (or 59.41%). For each of the sections in the rubric, an average percentage of around 60% is awarded.

**Table 4.3.5: Summary of means per item in the rubric**

Items in the rubric	Means	Means expressed as percentages
Content and planning (30)	17.54	58.48
Language, style and proofreading/editing (15)	9.08	60.51
Structure (5)	3.08	61.62
<b>Total (out of 50)</b>	<b>29.70</b>	<b>59.41</b>

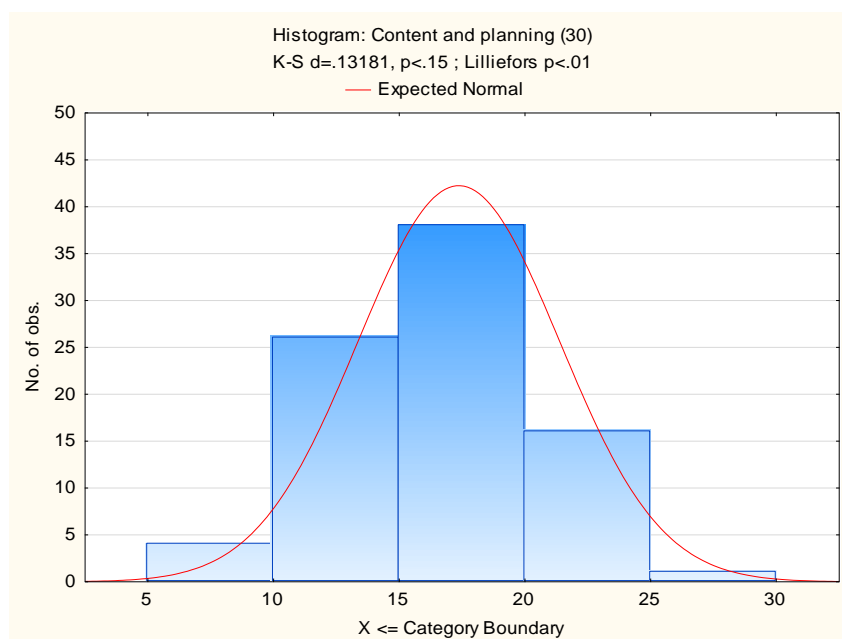
The individual marks (raw data) for sections of the rubric awarded by the markers for the essays that form part of this analysis are presented in Appendix 4A. In summary, these analyses indicate that the individual markers award very similar marks overall and for the different sections of the rubric and the marks cluster around 60%.

The frequencies of marks allocated by teachers for content on the rubric is presented in table 4.2 in Appendix 4D. A graphic representation of the content marks out of 30 on the rubric is presented in figure 4.3.3 below.



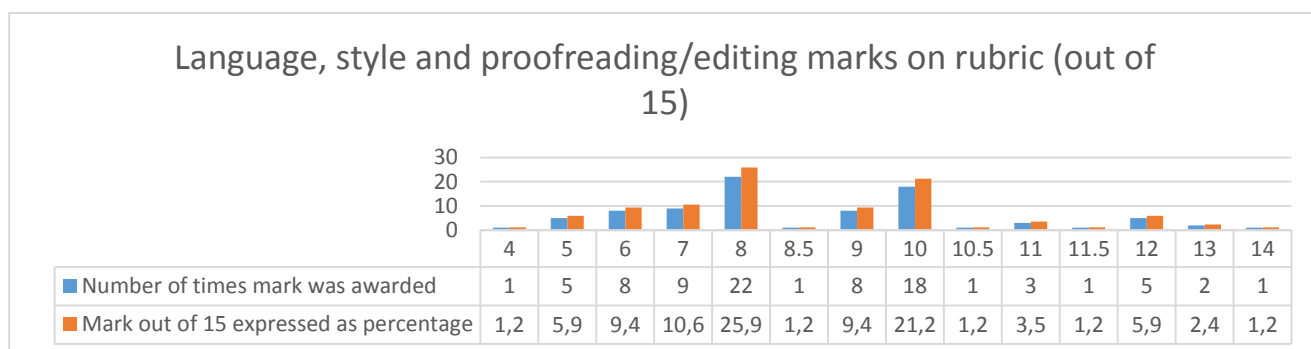
**Figure 4.3.3: Graphic presentation of content marks out of 30 awarded by participating teachers**

An exploratory data analysis was conducted to determine if the marks for content on the rubric out of 30 was normally distributed. Results for the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality indicated that the mark distribution for the content section on the rubric does not deviate statistically significantly from a normal distribution ( $D=0.13181$ ,  $p<0.15$ ). A graphic presentation of the distribution of content marks by the participating teachers is presented in figure 4.3.4 below.



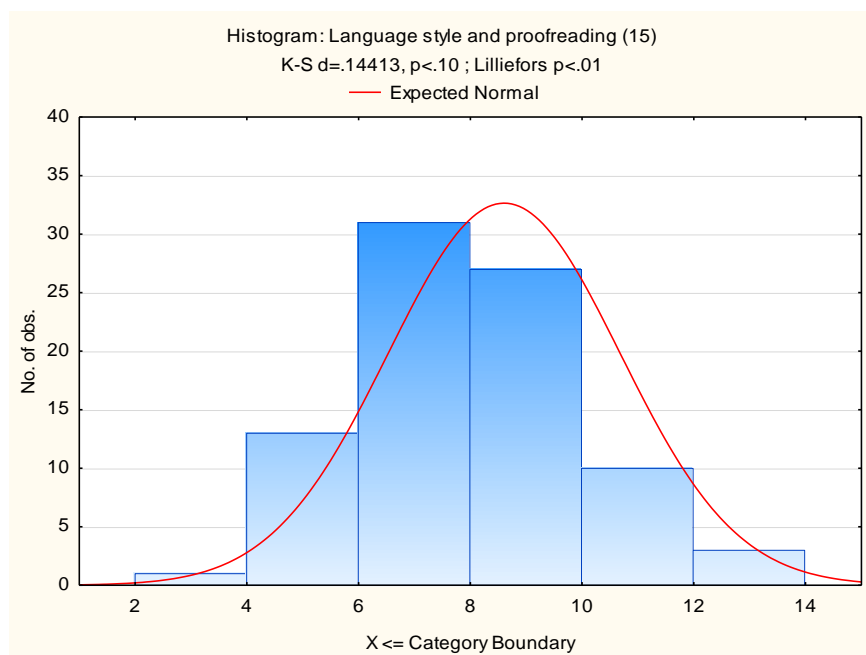
**Figure 4.3.4: Graphic representation of distribution of content marks awarded to essays (out of 30)**

The frequencies of marks allocated by teachers for language, style and proofreading/editing on the rubric are presented in table 4.3 in Appendix 4D. A graphic representation of this data is presented in figure 4.3.5 below.



**Figure 4.3.5: Graphic presentation of language, style and proofreading/editing marks out of 15 awarded by participating teachers**

An exploratory data analysis was conducted to determine if the marks for language, style and proofreading/editing on the rubric out of 15 were normally distributed. Results for the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality indicated that the mark distribution for the language, style and proofreading/editing section on the rubric does not deviate statistically significantly from a normal distribution ( $D=0.13313$ ,  $p<0.1$ ). A graphic presentation of the distribution of language, style and proofreading/editing marks by the participating teachers is presented in figure 4.3.6 below.



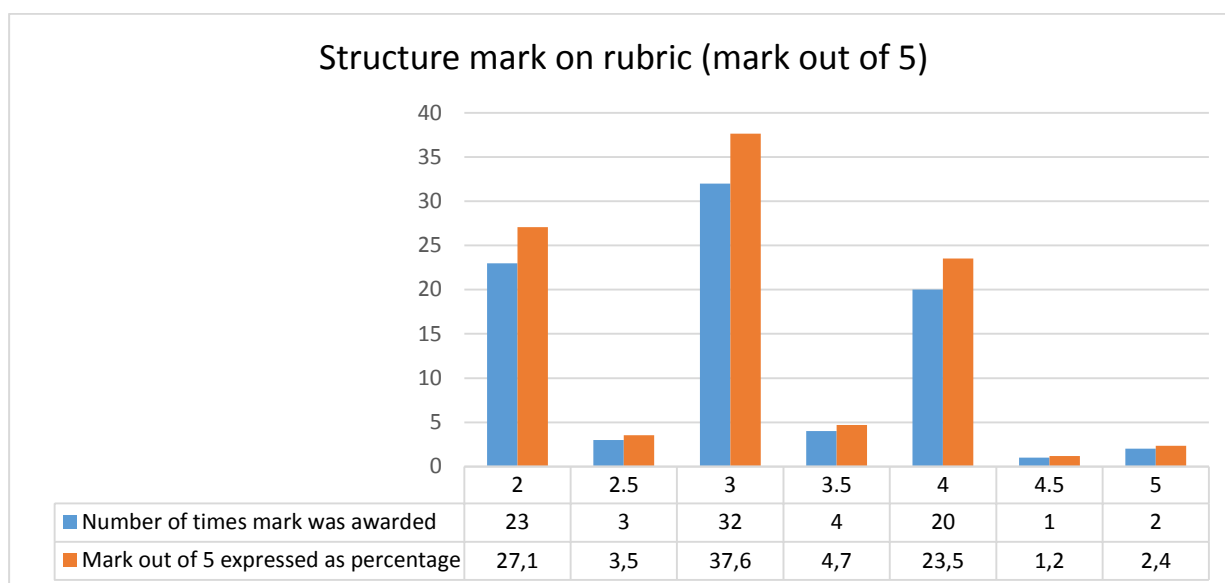
**Figure 4.3.6: Graphic representation of distribution of language, style and proofreading/editing marks awarded to essays (out of 15)**

The frequencies of marks allocated by teachers for structure on the rubric is presented in table 4.3.6 below.

**Table 4.3.6: Frequencies of marks out of 5 on the rubric for structure**

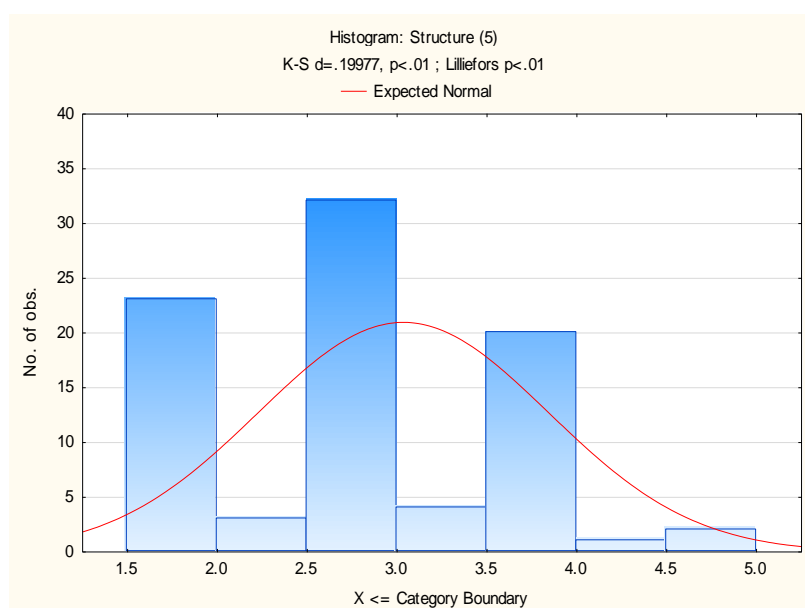
Mark out of 5	Number of times mark was awarded	Mark out of 5 expressed as percentage
2	23	27.1
2.5	3	3.5
3	32	37.6
3.5	4	4.7
4	20	23.5
4.5	1	1.2
5	2	2.4

A graphic representation of this data is presented in figure 4.3.7 below.



**Figure 4.3.7: Graphic presentation of structure marks out of 5 awarded by participating teachers**

An exploratory data analysis was conducted to determine if the marks for structure on the rubric out of 5 were not normally distributed. Results for the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality indicated that the mark distribution for the structure section on the rubric deviates statistically significantly from a normal distribution ( $D=0.19977$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). A graphic presentation of the distribution of content marks by the participating teachers is presented in figure 4.3.8 below.



**Figure 4.3.8: Distribution of content marks by the participating teachers**

The deviation from the normal distribution in this case is explained by the lack of use of ½ marks by the markers (as is clear from figure 4.3.8 above).

As such, it can be garnered that teachers generally award average marks for every category on the rubric.

#### **4.3.3 Analysis of the nature of the correction code and how the correction code is used by participating teachers**

In addition to using the rubric in providing feedback, a correction code prescribed by the Department of Basic Education is used to indicate errors on all grade 10 Sesotho home language essays. The correction code is used by teachers to provide feedback on all drafts of the creative writing essays. Therefore, this is the most “visible” feedback that learners receive on their scripts.

The correction code as prescribed by the Department of Basic Education is provided in Appendix A. The following is a list of all the errors reflected on the correction code that were identified from the scripts that form part of this analysis. The markings/codes used by teachers to indicate the relevant errors on essays are provided in the brackets.

- a) Split words (/)
- b) Combine words (+)
- c) Orthography (Mn)
- d) Spelling (Mp)
- e) Punctuation (Mt)
- f) Capitalisation (Mt)
- g) Word choice (P)
- h) Missing items (Λ)
- i) Unnecessary items (Circled/Underlined)
- j) Unclear constructions (Circled/Underlined)
- k) Split paragraphs (||)
- l) Re-order paragraphs (↺↻)

The first four codes on the correction code (splitting and combining words, orthography and spelling) relate to how words are written, as such, they can be clustered into a category of orthography. Punctuation and capitalisation can be clustered under punctuation because the correct capitalisation may be directly dependent on the correct use and understanding of punctuation. Word choices and the aspect of missing items, together with the addition of

unnecessary items, cluster under the category of lexical matters. All these items focus on micro-elements in the essay.

Micro-elements are overrepresented in the correction code, the list is extensive with micro-elements while the macro-elements are kept to the minimal. The macro-elements in an essay are indicated by items such as unclear constructions and the structural matters (basically looking at re-ordering and splitting of paragraphs). Due to the focus on micro-level issues the correction code does not address any issues of content appropriateness and the ideas are not reviewed for coherence, logic and adherence to the topic.

In this analysis, the researcher documented all the categories from the correction code as they were allocated to individual essays by the individual markers on the 85 scripts selected by teachers for this analysis. The summary of the raw scores that indicate the number of observations for each category on the correction code is presented in Appendix 4B. As is clear from Appendix 4B and Appendix 4C, the most prominent correction code used by markers, is the “split word” code. The second most prominent code used by markers is “spelling”. The correction code for “re-ordering of paragraphs” was awarded only 1 observation in total.

If one analyses the correction code observation data, it is clear that the focus of markers is on micro-elements in the essay. From table 4.3.7, it is clear that 98% of the correction code observations made by teachers relate to micro-elements in essays like orthography, lexical matters and punctuation. Only 2% of the correction codes observed relate to more “macro-elements” in the essay: including unclear constructions (at sentence level) and references to paragraph structures.

**Table 4.3.7: Summary of correction code data per individual marker**

Marker	Micro-elements in essays (punctuation, letters or words) [98% of correction code observations]			Macro-elements in an essay (sentences, paragraphs) [2% of correction code observations]		TOTALS
	Combined score for orthography (split words, combine words, orthography, spelling)	Combined score for lexical matters (word choice, missing items, unnecessary items)	Combined score for punctuation (punctuation, capitalization)	Unclear constructions	Combined score for macro structure (split paragraphs, re-order paragraphs)	
1	103	11	27	5	0	146
2	217	35	7	4	0	263
3	169	27	37	0	0	233
4	501	65	77	1	0	567
5	335	98	37	18	0	488

<b>6</b>	253	18	8	7	1	287
<b>7</b>	267	67	38	5	16	393
<b>8</b>	66	3	6	0	2	77
<b>9</b>	173	6	31	3	1	214
<b>TOTALS</b>	2084	330	191	43	20	2668

The correction code is used to provide feedback to learners on all drafts that form part of the writing process. The rubric is only used to provide feedback on the final draft. From this knowledge and the data in table 4.3.7 one can, therefore, infer that the main impression that learners get from the feedback on their drafts, is that they need to pay attention to the micro-elements of the essay.

This practice may be explained in two possible ways, the first being that the structure of the correction code affects what teachers deem as more important. The first codes on the correction code focus on micro-issues while the macro-issues are put at the end. In addition to the ordering of micro- and macro-elements on the correction code, the number of items related to micro-issues in the essay by far outnumber the macro-issues. The sheer number of items that focus on micro-elements in essays could leave the impression at teachers that these are the most important matters to attend to when they mark essays. The overall impression from this analysis is that teachers focus on micro-elements in essay writing when they use the correction code to provide feedback on errors to learners.

It would have been ideal to conduct a linear mixed-model analysis to determine how the markers' use of the correction code relate to the sections in the rubric and the final marks that are awarded. However, if one considers the nature of the correction code and the spread of data from the analysis of how the participating teachers used the correction code (Table 4.3.7 and Appendix 4B and 4C), it is clear that the nature of the data does not permit such an analysis. First of all, the elements included in the correction code are skewed towards an over-emphasis of micro-elements related to orthography. The under-representation of macro-elements related to the structure of the essay hampers any modelling attempts. If a linear mixed-model analysis is planned, a newly developed correction code would have to be designed and attention should be paid to include a balance of correction code elements in the instrument. Secondly, the over-use of the combined scores for orthography and lexical items and the absence or under-use of the categories macro-structure, unclear constructions and punctuation by the participating teachers further makes this analysis impossible. It is clear from this study that in order to investigate this relationship statistically, a much bigger number of

teachers should be involved, and teachers should preferably mark a large number of the same essays to enable an analysis of the effect of the marker to be included in the linear mixed-model analysis. Neither the nature of the data collected for this study nor the nature of the correction code elements enable this type of analysis.

#### **4.3.4 Comments on scripts**

In the questionnaires, teachers reported using comments as one of the tools for providing feedback to learners. According to the scripts analysis in this study, this perception mentioned by teachers is not true. Only Participant 1 wrote corrective comments on essays. This was observed at only two occurrences. The following are the two comments observed from scripts:

*'Polelo e qalwa ka tlhaku e kgolo'*

[Sentences are started with capital letters]

*'Mongolo o kopaneng'*

[Combined words]

The teacher gave comments together with the feedback from the correction code and the rubric. The comments provide no new information to the learner: the comments confirm the attention to micro-elements in the essay.

Since only one teacher used comments and only on two essays, which received average marks, it may be concluded that teachers in general do not provide comments on individual essays. Comments are not standard procedure in the assessment of Sesotho creative writing essays and teachers explained as part of the questionnaire that it is difficult to provide comments due to workload. As such, the lack of comments on the marked essays does not prove teachers as faulty or incompetent. It only disproves their report that they provide comments.

#### **4.3.5 Conclusion**

In summary, four observations were made from the results of this part of the investigation. The first one is that the participating teachers selected essays that are representative of the “below average”, “average” and “above average” ranges of marks on the rubric as they use it and this corpus of data is normally distributed (as was expected keeping the nature of the request to teachers in mind). Secondly, if one re-categorises the overall marks awarded to essays on the rubric with operationalised marks as cut-off points, it is clear that the “below average” category is under-represented in the marks awarded. The “above average” essays are also under-

represented in the distribution, but not as much as the “below average” essays. A third observation that follows from this finding and the data reported in this section is that generally, the participating teachers’ marks display a trend to cluster in the “average” bands. Generally, marks around 60% are awarded as overall marks and marks for the individual sections on the rubric. In addition to this trend, there is a narrow band of marks awarded in general.

The analysis of the correction code prescribed by the Department of Basic Education indicates that the micro-elements of essay writing (e.g. all elements related to orthography) are over-represented in the code and the macro-elements (e.g. referring to the structure of the essay) are under-represented. In the analysis of how the participating teachers used the correction code, it is clear that orthography, lexical matters and punctuation receive the most attention from the teachers. Phrased differently, the feedback that learners receive on drafts of their essays would clearly communicate to them that orthography, lexical matters and punctuation are important matters that should receive the most attention from them when they revise their essays. Due to the scope of the study, the nature of the correction code and the data collected for this study, it is not possible to investigate the relationships between the overall marks, sections of the rubric, the correction code and the possible differences in how teachers mark further. This is an important element that should get attention in future studies.

#### **4.4 Interview results**

From the questionnaire results, it was clear that creativity was the main focus of our participants in assessing creative writing grade 10 Sesotho home language essays in South Africa. It was also clear that style was voted least important in an essay. Structured interviews were conducted with participants to answer the following list of questions:

1. What is creativity in grade 10 creative Sesotho creative writing essays?
2. What do participating teachers perceive as style in creative essay writing?
3. What do the teachers consider as creative introductions to essays?
4. What do the participating teachers consider as creative conclusions to essays?
5. Do the participating teachers consider the rubric and correction code as a way to assist them in assessing essays similarly or in a standardised manner?

The results from the interview are presented following the same structure as the interviews.

#### 4.4.1 The meaning of creativity in essays

In the questionnaire, participants were asked to choose the most important aspect of essays that would be an indicator of what teachers regard as most important when they assess essays. Most responses were positive for creativity. The rubric is silent on the aspect of creativity. As such, teachers may hold different notions on the meaning of creativity in essays. They may be looking at different aspects of essays when they assess creativity. This section presents the themes derived from the responses of our participants in answering what creativity means to them during the interviews. Participants' responses were coded according to themes. Four main themes were identified, the first one had to do with what is expected in the content of the essay in terms of the ideas presented, the second main theme focused on what is created in the essay, the third theme related to the language used in the essay and finally, the fourth theme linked to the structure of the essay. The main themes and sub-themes with definitions are presented in table 4.4.1.

**Table 4.4.1: Clusters of themes related to the definition of creativity in grade 10 Sesotho creative writing essays that emerged during the interviews**

Sub-themes	Descriptions of codes used in the analysis
<b>Cluster 1: Content</b>	
<b>Code</b>	Definition
<b>Content</b>	The ability of the learner to present certain facts and information according to what the heading requires.
<b>Expression</b>	In essays, learners are given an opportunity to express certain feelings and thoughts on given topics and discussions. This code covered all mentions of expression, including self-expression.
<b>Factualness</b>	The content of the essay should also be factual. Sometimes learners are expected to picture themselves in situations that they have never experienced and provide believable facts. This code therefore covers all mentions of providing facts.
<b>Imagery</b>	This is the picture that learners are expected to draw with their narration. If the essay is supposed to make you cry, it should, if it is supposed to make you laugh, it should accomplish that response.
<b>Logic</b>	All mentions of logic, which refers to information that is clear to follow and flows step by step.
<b>Planning</b>	This is mainly done in terms of mind maps that show how the essay will be presented or is structured and how the information flows from one fact to the

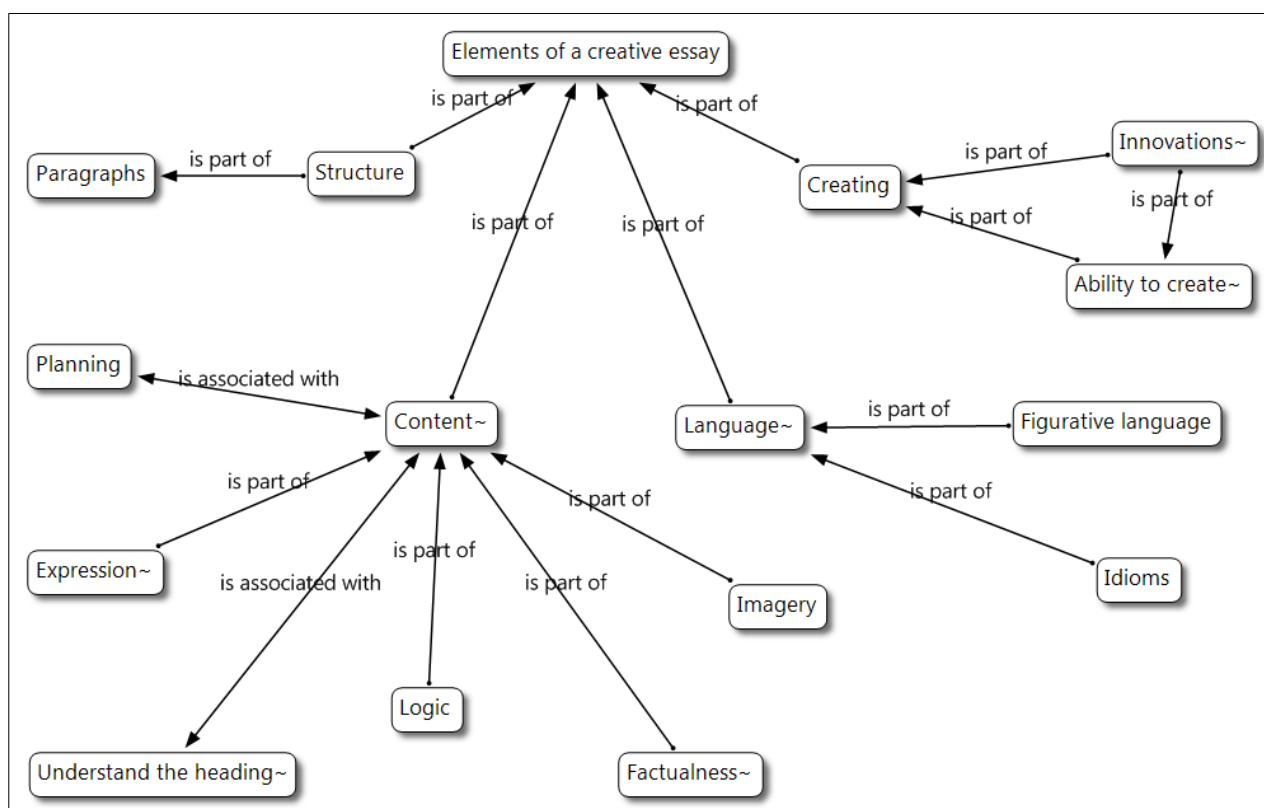
	other. This code also covers mentions of how the mind map should correspond with what is discussed in the essay.
<b>Understand the heading</b>	Learners are expected to break down the topic and understand it before they write. Teachers therefore look at whether the facts discussed in the essay correspond with what is required by the topic. As such, all mentions of understanding the heading are clustered under this code.
<b>Cluster 2: Creating</b>	
<b>Code</b>	Definition
<b>Ability to create</b>	This code covers what teachers term the ability to create a story ( <i>bokgoni ba ho iqapela</i> ).
<b>Innovations</b>	The new things that learners come with, solutions to existing situations. On the other hand, it may have to do with using what has been heard or seen and pretending convincingly that it happened to the author or it has been imagined by the author, with application.
<b>Cluster 3: Language</b>	
<b>Code</b>	Definition
<b>Figurative language</b>	Explicit mentions of figurative language or figures of speech were clustered under this code; participants denote the use of language where what is expressed is not necessarily what is stated.
<b>Idioms</b>	Although idiomatic language falls under figurative language, in the interviews teachers mention idioms separately from figurative language. As such, this code covers all mentions of idioms and the way they are expected to be used.
<b>Language</b>	It covers spelling, orthography, punctuation, spelling, beautiful language and word choices, the difference between written and spoken language, mentions of parts of speech and the way in which teachers look at language use in an essay. It also covers how language is used to impress or spark interest in a reader.
<b>Cluster 4: Structure</b>	
<b>Code</b>	Definition
<b>Paragraphing</b>	All mentions of paragraph formats were clustered under this code.

Table 4.4.2 presents the totals per theme and per individual teacher. The codes are ordered in a descending order from the theme with the highest total count which is the “ability to create” to the theme with the least total count, which is “punctuation”.

**Table 4.4.2: The total observation counts of each theme per participant and the total observation count for each theme**

CODES	PARTICIPANTS									TOTAL OBSERVATIONS
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
<b>Ability to create</b>	0	3	4	1	0	3	6	0	6	<b>23</b>
<b>Understand the heading</b>	2	1	0	2	5	0	0	3	2	<b>15</b>
<b>Figurative language</b>	1	1	0	0	6	1	2	0	0	<b>11</b>
<b>Language</b>	5	2	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	<b>10</b>
<b>Idioms</b>	1	1	0	5	0	1	1	0	0	<b>9</b>
<b>Innovations</b>	0	2	1	0	0	0	3	0	3	<b>9</b>
<b>Expression</b>	6	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	<b>8</b>
<b>Content</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	<b>6</b>
<b>Factualness</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	<b>4</b>
<b>Imagery</b>	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	<b>3</b>
<b>Logic</b>	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
<b>Paragraphs</b>	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
<b>Planning</b>	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>107</b>

A visual representation of the network of themes is presented in figure 4.4.1.



**Figure 4.4.1: Network of the themes and clusters of themes related to the definition of creativity in creative essay writing**

The most prominent themes are discussed in more detail below. The less prominent codes will follow and will be discussed in less detail. The prominent themes are those with a total observation count above ten while those with less than a total of ten observations are considered less prominent.

The most prominent theme was the ability to create stories. This theme was coded a total of 23 observations by six participants. The ability to create was defined in this discussion to cover all instances of being able to or showing the ability to create stories using imagination. It overlaps with the code of “innovation”, which was restricted to instances of using imagination to put oneself in someone else’s shoes and recreating events that have already been experienced before and placing themselves in these events. The theme of the “ability to create” was derived from the following responses:

- P 2: When writing an essay, he/she has to create a story of his/her own and narrate it.  
 The child (learner) has to make up a story.  
 Or it may be something that he or she has made up.

P 3: The new things that the learner creates for him/herself. He/she can make up his/her own events. The made up events then make up a story. I will say it is the learner's ability to create.

P 4: It is being able to create on your own.

P 6: To come up with it or invent for him/herself. Creativity is being able to create.

As such, he/she has to know how to independently create. I look at the ability to independently create.

A learner has to be able to create a story on his own. To come up with it or invent for him/herself.

P 7: Creativity is when a learner is able to create or invent stuff, right?

Innovations, his/her creations, things he/she will have made up and his/her ability to motivate them

It is being able to create ... creativity.

The learner must be able to make stuff up and be able to motivate his/her points with creativity and the abilities he/she has.

And, maybe, things that might be new.

P 9: Uhm, for example, if they are given a topic, for a child to place themselves or to imagine themselves in such a situation and to create elements surrounding what is required of him/her. I think that is creativity.

For them to show me that, I can use my imagination that "I am at Durban" whereas he/she has never even been to a beach. For them to take whatever they hear from other people, and utilise it in their lives, and write about it, you see?

The ability to use their minds to imagine themselves in certain situations.

For instance, let us say the learner is required to imagine having had a car accident.

You might find that the learners you teach have never even been in a car before.

Or being able to imagine yourself in a situation, which you have never been in, to produce good results or what is required of you.

From the above quotations it is clear that teachers want to see how well learners can make up stories and narrate them as though they are real. Participants 7 and 9 provide examples of creativity through creating stories. Participant 7 presents an example of a learner who is able to give more specific details instead of giving basic general sweeping comments. She then adds that the learner should be able to motivate the points that he/she makes up. Participant 9 on the other hand provides an example of a learner who creates a story of his/her own personal experience from information gathered from other people's experiences. Participant 6 stresses

the fact that the learner should be able to create the story independently, which means that the learner that Participant 9 describes should not tell someone else's story but make it his/her own. By doing that, he/she will have created a story.

As can be observed from table 4.4.2, the second most prominent code was "understanding the topic". The code was observed a total of 15 occurrences by six participants' responses. It only makes sense that the level of understanding the topic should be important. Without understanding what is supposed to be written, learners will provide irrelevant information. The code is illustrated by the following quotations:

P 1: Also, if he/she understands the heading.

He/She is given a chance to talk. Maybe he/she chose a topic right? Yes. With it, he/she is able to express his/her feelings or opinions. Right?

P 2: But it has to go hand in hand with the topic that he/she has chosen.

P 4: When he/she has used idioms in his/her essay, those idioms must correlate with the essay.

...understanding of the topic

P 5: We use figures of speech to make our language beautiful and nice/glossy. Now, you cannot just use it without looking at what the topic requires.

It goes hand in hand with the topic, not just glossed language.

You can find that the learner uses figures of speech, but when you read the essay, you find that they do not connect at all.

When using figures of speech, he/she must look at the topic.

Now the important thing is the topic.

P 8: That will show creativity because if he/she has facts, he/she can answer the topic of the essay.

Eh, when we say a child [learner] is creative, when he/she writes an essay, he/she must have fact for his/her topic of choice.

He/She must have facts/points for writing under that topic,

P 9: Uhm, for example, if they are given a topic, for a child to place themselves or to imagine themselves in such a situation and to create elements surrounding what is required of him/her. I think that is creativity.

A topic, his/her ability to break it down, you see? To discuss it thoroughly, and when we look at the content, it must contain what the topic requires.

It is clear that even though learners are expected to use idioms and figurative language, they are required to use them in alignment with what the topic requires as Participant 4 states. Therefore, if the learner can understand the topic, he/she will be able to provide relevant facts as Participant 8 and Participant 9 argue. Participant 5 goes as far as stating that the most important thing is the topic. As such, without proper alignment with the topic, every other indicator of creativity is lost.

The third most prominent theme that arose as indicated in table 4.4.2 is the use of figurative language. This theme was noted from the responses of five participants and amounted to a total count of 11 observations. As illustrated in the discussion on understanding the topic, figurative language is expected to be directly linked to the understanding of the topic. In their responses, teachers separated idioms from general figurative language. As such, in this discussion, they are presented as separate. The following examples illustrate perceptions about the use of figurative language:

P 1: So, we check whether they have used figures of speech.

P 2: ... idioms, paragraphs, punctuation, idiomatic expressions and figurative language.

P 5: When we come to figures of speech, we check whether it correlates. A learner should not simply use figures of speech that do not correlate or that do not go hand in hand with the topic.

When using figures of speech, he/she must look at the topic. So that he/she may not drift from it. That is how figures of speech should be used because this is where you make the language nice/glossy and beautiful.

Yes. We use figures of speech to make our language beautiful and nice/glossy. Now, you cannot just use it without looking at what the topic requires.

Now the important thing is the topic. In terms of figures of speech, we have to use the appropriate or correct forms.

It goes hand in hand with the topic, not just glossed language

You can find that the learner uses figures of speech, but when you read the essay, you find that they do not connect at all.

P 6: ... Idiomatic expressions, metaphor any figure of speech

P 7: We look at the language, creativity and perfection he/she uses.

It is being able to create, figurative language, idioms and proverbs.

Teachers check whether learners used figures of speech as Participant 1 states, and together with figures of speech, they check idioms, paragraphs, punctuation and idiomatic expressions as Participant 2 states and they check amongst others metaphors as Participant 6 states. They check whether the figures of speech correspond with the topic. Correct or appropriate forms of figures of speech are expected to be used by writers. Just like Participant 2 and Participant 7 demonstrate; idioms and figurative language are treated as separate by our teachers even though idioms are a form of figurative language.

In addition to figurative language, general language use was also identified as an important theme. The theme is illustrated by the following quotes and a total of 10 observations were made:

P 1: Creativity is how they use their language when writing... spelling is the first thing.

We look at ... eish! What is "mt" again? Language, spelling, we also check the parts of speech in the essay, right.

Then we know that this means that the learner used suitable words, the language is of correct wording.

The way in which he/she writes is not the same as the way he/she speaks. You speak Sesotho, but when you write, you cannot write what you speak as it is, you see?

P 2: And he/she must use vocabulary.

P 5: When you use language, it has to interest/impress the reader ... when we look at language, like a Sesotho teacher, we have to look at those things. When you use language, it has to interest/impress the reader.

P 7: We look at the language, creativity and perfections he/she uses.

From the quotes, punctuation (expressed by the correction 'mt' which denotes punctuation in addendum 1), spelling, word choice and vocabulary are highlighted as important language features that mark language. Participant 1 makes the distinction between written and spoken language. According to Participant 5, language use should be impressive. One other way of glossing language is the use of idiomatic language briefly discussed below.

Below is a short discussion of the less prominent themes (with total counts below ten) in the description of creativity in creative essay writing.

Idioms were identified a total of nine observations by five participants. The main argument here as Participant 4 states, is that when looking at the use of idioms, "[t]he child [*learner*] must know how to use idioms, and also know what they mean. When he/she has used idioms in his/her

essay, those idioms must correlate with the essay.” Idioms are listed as one of the figurative forms of language that teachers look for in essays. For instance, Participant 6 states: “[w]e look at idioms, phrases, metaphors any figure of speech.”

Innovation was identified in a total of nine observations by four participants’ responses. An illustration of innovation would be Participant 7’s statement: “... and, maybe, things that might be new, what do we call them? Innovations, his/her creations, things he/she will have made up and his/her ability to motivate them.” For learners to be innovative, they have to create essay content that is based on the correct understanding of the topic. They also need to contextualise their facts so that they do not simply list points without motivating their relevance.

In addition to being innovative, learners are expected to use the essay to express their points of view. Expression was coded in a total of eight observations by three participants. According to Participant 1, in creativity, “a child [learner] is given an opportunity to express his/her feelings. He/She is given a chance to talk. Maybe he/she chose a topic right? Yes. With it, he/she is able to express his/her feelings or opinions.” Participant 5 on the other hand states: “We [teachers] are looking at the ability of the learner, to write what the learner is thinking about.” As such, expression can be anything from feelings, opinions, suggestions and thoughts, any point that the learner is trying to get across. The content of the essay is based on what the learner is trying to create.

Content was coded in a total of six observations by three participants’ responses. A good example here would be Participant 9’s statement:

A topic, his/her ability to break it down, you see? To discuss it thoroughly, and when we look at the content, it must contain what the topic requires. For instance, let us say the learner is required to imagine having had a car accident. You might find that the learners you teach have never even been in a car before. But through the things they see on TV or wherever, the learner can say; “No, I was in a car accident, this and this happened, we left from point A and this happened and there was this and this a problem with the car,” without even knowing. That is how I see it, from the content.

It is clear from the above quotation that the content of the essay is expected to correlate with what the topic requires. Believable facts should be provided to make the essay creative. Factuality was coded a total of four observations by two teachers. Participant 8 states the following about factuality:

Eh, when we say a child [learner] is creative, when he/she writes an essay, he/she must have facts for his/her topic of choice. He/she must have facts/points for writing under that topic, from newspapers that he/she has read, the media, TV, the knowledge gained from attending seminars, workshops, maybe church workshops. The information that he/she has will help him/her in answering the topic. That will show creativity because if he/she has facts, he/she can answer the topic of the essay.

This, therefore, means that for creative essay content, learners need to use the information they acquire from their everyday life experiences. They then need to narrate what they know. The learner must construct an image with what he/she is narrating. The code of imagery was observed a total of three times mentioned by two participants.

P 3: Creativity also incorporates imagery, which is the image that the learner will have drawn on his/her own, so that whoever reads the story or the reader can be drawn into the world that the learner has made up... when a learner is able to create an image that the reader can clearly follow with understanding, he/she shows creativity [*o bontsha bonono*].

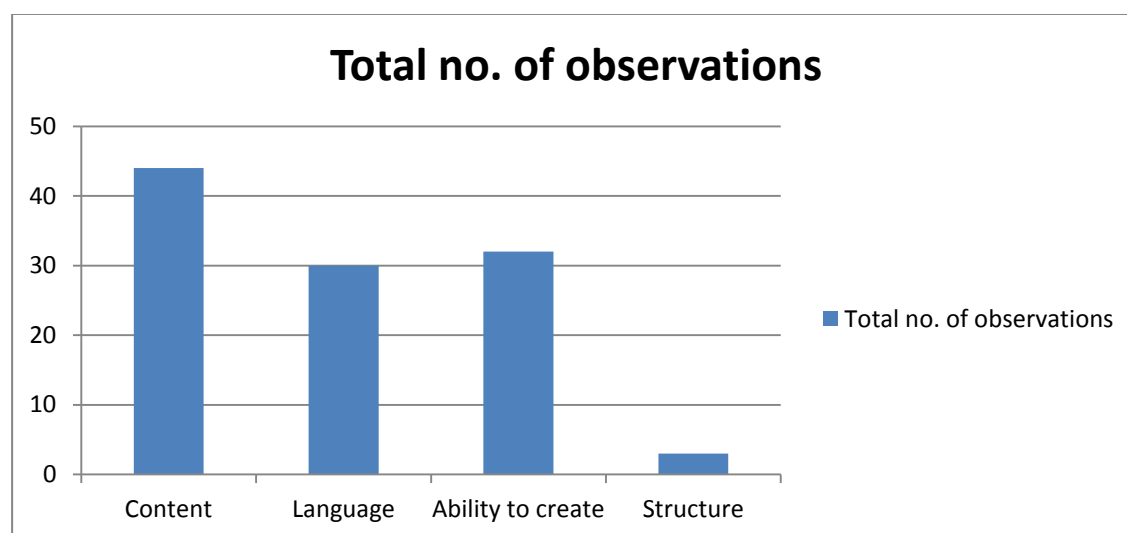
An example is provided by Participant 8 in the following quotation:

P 8: Eh, let me say for instance, the topic that he/she chose will discuss something sad, as he/she writes, you have to hear/feel the pain with which he/she writes. To an extent that if it makes you cry, you cry. If maybe it is amusing, it must make you laugh, the time it amuses you or makes you feel entertained, this means that the situation of the discussion, if it is funny, entertaining, painful, you have to feel exactly that. You must hear from the learner's essay, we will say a learner is creative if he/she manages to do that from the topic.

This means that when learners describe events or recall stories, the reader should be in a position to somehow understand and picture what was happening. This, however, cannot be achieved without logic. Logic was also a code with a total of three observations by two teachers. Participant 5 states that in creativity, "we [teachers] are looking at the ability of the learner, to write what the learner is thinking about. We basically first look at the mind map. The learner must plan before writing the essays, therefore, that is where the logic will come from." This shows the participant directly links logic to planning. Planning was also observed a total of three

occurrences by two participants' responses. Although essays are expected to be written in paragraph format, only one teacher mentioned looking at paragraphing. This, therefore, means that in creativity, paragraphing is the least of the participating teachers' concerns.

In conclusion, the content of the essay counts the most in defining creativity. It constitutes 42 (39.3%) out of the total of 107 observations. The ability to create constituted 32 observations, which amounted to 29.9% of total observations while language was coded a total of 30 times (28.0%). Structure on the hand amounted to three codes which constituted 2.8% of total observations. This is illustrated by figure 4.4.2.



**Figure 4.4.2: Total number of code observations per cluster of codes**

This, therefore, tells us that in defining creativity, participating markers of creative essays in this study believe that content counts the most. This is because the ability to create stories corresponds with the quality of the content of the essay. As such, together the content and the ability to create make up the biggest part of what teachers look at when they assess creativity. The aspect of language comes second.

#### **4.4.2 Style in essays**

In the questionnaire, participants were asked to elect the least important aspect of effective essays. Teachers elected style as the least important aspect which receives the least attention. To ascertain what the teachers meant; they were then asked in the interviews to explain the aspect of style. A total of 12 codes were identified from teachers' responses. Their descriptions are presented in table 4.4.3:

**Table 4.4.3: Themes and subthemes related to the definition of style in creative essay writing in grade 10 Sesotho home language**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Language</b>	
<b>Code</b>	Definition
<b>Figurative language</b>	Teachers often separate this kind of language from other uses of language. This covers the use of figurative language. Expressions used to mean something other than what is said.
<b>Idioms</b>	Idioms are generally part of figurative language, however, teachers seem to separate it from the rest of the general understanding of figurative language.
<b>Language</b>	This code covered all mentions of word choices, all mentions of language, spelling, register, combining and separating relevant words.
<b>Learner's preference</b>	Learners are said to be in charge of choosing which ways they gloss their writing. This code, therefore, covered all instances where the teachers state that it depends on the learner's preference of language features.
<b>Punctuation</b>	In most cases, punctuation is either wrong or right. This code covered all mentions of punctuation.
<b>Style of writing</b>	The way in which the essay is written, whether there has been the use of certain figures of speech, certain physical structures, etc.
<b>Structure</b>	
<b>Code</b>	Definition
<b>Coherence</b>	Coherence in this instance refers to the flow between sentences.
<b>Logic</b>	Essays are expected to have logic; facts are expected to be supported with valid evidence. In addition, examples that the learners give should be in line with what is discussed. This code also covered mentions of ways that learners are expected to keep the essay as one unit.
<b>Paragraphing</b>	Paragraphs are a standard structure of writing essays in Sesotho grade 10 home language. This code covered all mentions of paragraphs.
<b>Planning</b>	Planning is usually evident through the use of the mind map in Sesotho grade 10 home language essays. If there is no mind map, there is no proof of planning.
<b>Sentences</b>	Generally, teachers seem to be concerned with bad sentences, as such, this code looked at mentions of sentence constructions.
<b>Structure</b>	In addition to the use of paragraphs, essays are expected to have introductions, body content and conclusions.

	<p>This code therefore, mentioned:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. parts of the essay</li> <li>2. how an essay should physically look</li> <li>3. how an essay style is obvious</li> <li>4. how it is indicated in the essay</li> </ol> <p>In addition, it also covered conceptual structures.</p>
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Codes were counted for each teacher and then totals of codes were added. Total counts for each teacher are presented in table 4.4.4. Participant 2 touched on most themes and had a total number of 17 code observations. Participant 4 on the other hand only touched on the theme of language and had the fewest observations.

**Table 4.4.4: Observations of codes per teacher and the total observations of codes**

CODES	PARTICIPANTS									TOTAL OBSERVATIONS
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
<b>Language</b>	1	2	3	4	2	0	3	2	9	<b>26</b>
<b>Paragraphing</b>	1	3	2	0	0	4	3	0	1	<b>14</b>
<b>Logic</b>	2	5	0	0	4	2	0	0	0	<b>13</b>
<b>Structure</b>	3	2	0	0	2	4	2	0	0	<b>13</b>
<b>Planning</b>	0	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	<b>6</b>
<b>Style of writing</b>	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	2	<b>6</b>
<b>Idioms</b>	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	<b>4</b>
<b>Learner's preference</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	<b>3</b>
<b>Punctuation</b>	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	<b>3</b>
<b>Sentences</b>	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	<b>2</b>
<b>Coherence</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
<b>Figurative language</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>08</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>08</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>92</b>

A network that relates to the themes described above is displayed in figure 4.4.3. In the network, idioms, figurative language, punctuation the style of writing and learners' preference are clustered under the main theme of language. Under the major theme of structure, planning, sentences constructions, logic and paragraphing are grouped together. Although the style of writing is mainly dependent on the individual learner's preference and choice to use certain language features to gloss up his/her writing, it is indirectly a product of planning, where the learner consciously decides which features of language to use.



The way in which learners use words, for instance, a learner may use slang language and use it as though it is official. When a learner wants to say money, he/she may use a slang equivalent.

You can notice style through the use of language.

P 4: We are looking at the use of language.

Most especially because we are close to Gauteng. Our language differs from that of places like QwaQwa, it is not the same. As such, we are looking at the use of the correct/appropriate language or the expected language, which is not unnecessarily mixed/contaminated.

The learner's language must be clear, but most of the time we find that we get such things, a learner will have borrowed and naturalised them, that is not the correct style.

You can even hear when the language is incorrect. For instance, he/she can talk about the prosecutor's office and refer to it as a court.

P 5: And then there is the use of language too.

Whether the language is correct, is the expected Sesotho used, did he/she use loaned words from other languages? In language use, we can check whether he/she did not combine words that are separated or separate words that are supposed to be combined.

P 7: They now write WhatsApp language, a learner might use "*bth*" [ppl] instead of "*batho*" [people].

They use non-standard language,

Another will use colloquial language instead of the more formal language. [a learner will write "I wanna go" instead of "I want to go"]

... they do not even know the use of punctuation marks.

P 8: ... the way in which he/she spices up language.

Language, yes, we look at idioms, figures of speech, vocabulary, and then we also look at the combining of words, whether he/she combined correctly, where they should be combined, and separated them where they should be separated, and whether the spelling is correct.

P 9: ... we have the use of language.

... when we talk about language and register, we have the use of language. Uhm, let me say, we cannot separate them you see, they refer to the word choices.

Does the language he/she chose make sense? Can we understand what the writer is trying to say? Did he/she combine words or not? They do not separate, they go hand in hand.

Just like when we go to the issue of combining words, to combine words that should be separated and to separate words that should be combined.

Like as he/she writes an essay, that essay, the words he/she used, are they acceptable or not?

Spelling falls under the category of language and style

... you cannot separate language and style, ever! They go hand in hand

... it is language choice, to see which words were chosen and whether those words are acceptable or not, did he/she use the correct language or not?

So, according to how he/she wrote, I will then see his/her style and the register, to see whether the person used the correct language or not, I judge from that.

The most logical reason for language to be the main focus of teachers in assessing style may be as Participant 9 reasons that “you cannot separate language and style, ever! They go hand in hand”. As previously defined in table 4.4.3, language covers all aspects that have to do with language. The most prominent subtheme under language would be “word choices”. It was observed from Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 9. Closely related to word choices is the notion of expected language, Participants 3, 4, 5, 7 and 9 touched on this theme. The focus here is on whether learners unnecessarily contaminate their language or not. This is clarified by Participant 4. Another subtheme emerging is the one of language formality. Participants 3, 7 and 9 look at this aspect. Participant 3 points out the use of slang instead of the formal language, on the other hand Participant 7 is concerned with the use of WhatsApp language and Participant 9 is concerned with the acceptability of words, all these focuses tie back to the theme of word choice. The unacceptability of words differs from the incorrectness of language, it means that the words are not necessarily incorrect, but used in either an unacceptable context or manner. Participants are also concerned with orthography issues, apart from the use of WhatsApp language which is mainly characterized by the exclusion of vowels in words, splitting and combining words are another language problem. In Chapter 4.3.3, it was demonstrated that they are the most prominent errors marked by teachers. Participants 5, 8 and 9 note this issue of splitting and combining words as part of style.

The second most prominent theme that arose was the theme of paragraphs as observed from table 4.4.4. This theme was identified from the responses of six participants. The following are quotations from which the codes were identified:

P 1: Others write short paragraphs, you may tell one that when you write an essay, write on this whole page, write three paragraphs or two and then turn to that side and

write three paragraphs. You will find that he/she might still write about ten paragraphs in one page, writing two-line paragraphs.

P 2: When writing his/her essay, paragraphs should be made up of five or six lines you see? You find that he/she makes them 10, on one page we might have two paragraphs instead of having maybe four. He/She may make one paragraph contain 10 lines, this means his/her style is incorrect.

His/her lines should be 5, 6 or 7, he/she should not write three lines and then call it a paragraph.

Sometimes a learner may not even use paragraphs at all, he/she will simply mix everything together.

P 3: You can also see it through his/her paragraphs.

You may find that a learner has written three lines in the first paragraph, and in the second and the fifth he/she writes about twenty paragraphs. That style is not correct. Paragraphs should be of almost the same length.

P 6: In regards to style, a learner must write according to paragraphs right?

... and you will find that another learner did not use any paragraphs at all while another's are too long.

That is style, to show that he/she cannot write in paragraph format.

But if they are the right length, it shows that he/she can write in the correct essay style.

P 7: It covers the style of writing, it also covers for instance, how he/she presented a mind map, and also his/her paragraphing.

Or maybe even paragraphs of about five to six lines. I do not pay much attention to it, but I make a comment for the learner to write paragraphs of about five to six lines.

... he/she will have written in paragraphs but they would not be standardised and consistent in length of about seven lines, most of the time we do not pay much attention to whether it is correct or not.

P 9: I also check if his/her paragraphs cohere.

According to Participant 2, paragraphs are incorrect when they are not the standard length. According to Participant 3 and Participant 7, paragraphs should not only be standard in length, but also try to be consistent in length. Unfortunately, there are learners who still refuse to use paragraphs as Participant 6 notes. According to Participants 3 and 7, paragraphs should be around the length of 5, 6 or seven lines each. On this issue of paragraphs, Participant 9 introduces the only mention of the "coherence" code. According to her, paragraphs should cohere.

In summary, teachers check whether learners use paragraphs or not, if they use paragraphs, they check whether they are consistent in length, and whether there is coherence between them. This in turn tells the teachers whether the learner is competent in writing in the correct style. Consistent with the notion of style being the least important aspect of essays, Participant 7 explains: “I [the teacher] do not pay much attention to it [paragraphing], but I make a comment for the learner to write paragraphs of about five to six lines.” She further on explains that it is not only she who does not note whether it is used correctly or not; “... most of the time we [teachers] do not pay much attention to whether it is correct or not”.

The third most prominent theme was logic and structure. Logic is discussed first. It was noted a total of 13 observations from a total of four participants. The following are quotations from which the codes were noted:

P 1: The examples he/she provides, does it correlate with what he/she is discussing?  
Hence we call it language and style.

Do the idioms go hand in hand with what is written, do idiomatic expressions correlate with what is discussed?

P 2: ... he/she should not begin with facts that should be at the end and then end with facts that should be at the beginning.

I must hear that what the person said is aligned with what he/she is trying to mean.  
He/she should choose words that suit the mood or context of the essay.

When he/she is trying to amuse he/she must choose funny words, when he/she is lamenting, lamentation words should be chosen.

When someone is narrating something funny, he/she has to choose funny words, not words that will make you cry.

He/she cannot say “Ouch! That person is making me laugh”. What kind of an “ouch” is that? In style, a learner has to choose words that are appropriate in the sentence that is written.

P 5: We have an introduction, body and conclusion, yes, the way in which he/she wrote them, we look at whether the learner did not mix them up.

You may find that this was supposed to come on top or that he/she was supposed to start with this and end with that.

The logic of the discussion.

In style, we look at the order with which the discussion is presented, how he/she unfolds the events.

P 6: He/She must write his/her points logically.

And when he/she does not have a mind map and simply writes, we are unable to check how his/her points were supposed to follow each other.

The first concern with logic is structural. In order for an essay to have logic, it has to follow the introduction – body – conclusion structure. This is explicitly argued by Participant 5, who argues that in style “we [teachers] look at the order with which the discussion is presented”. The order here relates to the physical positioning of essay sections. Participant 2 also states that there should be logic in that facts should be accordingly ordered and the essay should not begin with facts that should be at the end or end with the facts that should have begun the essay. According to Participant 6, logic can be achieved through the use of mind maps because they give an overall structure of the essay, clearly showing what will be discussed and the order with which it will be discussed. The second concern with logic is the alignment of what is discussed with the topic and the relevance of facts provided. Participant 2 gives examples of what is acceptable in terms of content based language use and word choices and what is not acceptable. On the other hand Participant 1 also discusses the importance of aligning examples and idioms used, with the overall discussion. Structure was also noted a total of 13 observations, however, unlike logic, it was observed from a total of five participants. The following are quotations from which the codes were noted:

P 1: Structure, the way in which when you look at a learner’s essay you can clearly see that this is an essay. Some write as if they are writing poems. You see?

You already check that if he/she wrote an essay, that the structure of his/her essay is correct. Others write short paragraphs, you may tell one that when you write an essay, write on this whole page, write three paragraphs or two and then turn to that side and write three paragraphs. You will find that he/she might still write about ten paragraphs in one page, writing two line paragraphs. That clearly shows you that it is not an essay. That is not how essays are written.

P 2: Style goes hand in hand with structure.

We indicate style by using paragraph division codes, or by the use of “P”, which shows word choices. When writing his/her essay, paragraphs should be made up of five or six lines you see? You find that he/she makes them 10, on one page we might have two paragraphs instead of having maybe four. He/She may make one paragraph containing 10 lines; this means his/her style is incorrect.

P 5: We have an introduction, body and conclusion, yes, the way in which he/she wrote them, we look at whether the learner did not mix them up.

... the way in which a learner has written.

P 6: In regards to style, a learner must write according to paragraphs right? I look at that structure of his/hers. The manner in which he/she writes.

His/Her style has to go hand in hand with structure, just like the use of a mind map and paragraphing.

Style is obvious, a learner knows how he/she is supposed to write an essay. It is the way in which an essay is written.

P 7: We know that in structure [we ask], does it have an introduction, a body and a conclusion? It is more concerned with structure.

With regard to structure, teachers showed concern for the physical structure of the essay; as Participant 1 states you can just look at an essay and clearly see that this is an essay. Paragraphs are a concern when it comes to structure. Participants 1, 2 and 6 discuss the importance of structuring essays in terms of paragraphs. Participant 6 relates the manner of writing with the use of paragraphs, which may also explain what Participant 5 means with "... the way in which a learner has written". According to Participant 2, structure in essays is indicated through the use of correction code "P", which is the paragraph division code (see Appendix A). As such, paragraphing is directly related to structure. As with logic, a concern here is also the introduction – body – conclusion structure. Participants 5 and 7 note this. Although Participant 7 only mentions that she checks whether they are present or not, Participant 5 expands to look at whether they were correctly written in that they are placed where they ought to be placed and whether they are not mixed up.

Below is a discussion of less prominent themes in the definition of style in creative essay writing. They include planning, idiomatic language, learners' choice, sentences, coherence and the use of figurative language. The codes are discussed following the order of frequency.

Planning, which is mainly indicated by the use of mind maps, (for instance, Participant 2 states: "[!]et me say for instance, he/she wrote an essay without a mind map how are we going to know which facts he/she will discuss?") was coded a total of six times, which was equal to the code of style of writing, which included observing how the learner wrote.

The use of idioms was coded in a total of four observations. One instance of this was Participant 1's statement that she checks: "... did he/she use the correct idioms at the right time?" With one observation less than idioms is learners' preferences which were coded a total

of three observations. Here, the learner is allowed to make his/her own choices in making the essay readable and interesting. Participant 8 advocated this theme by stating:

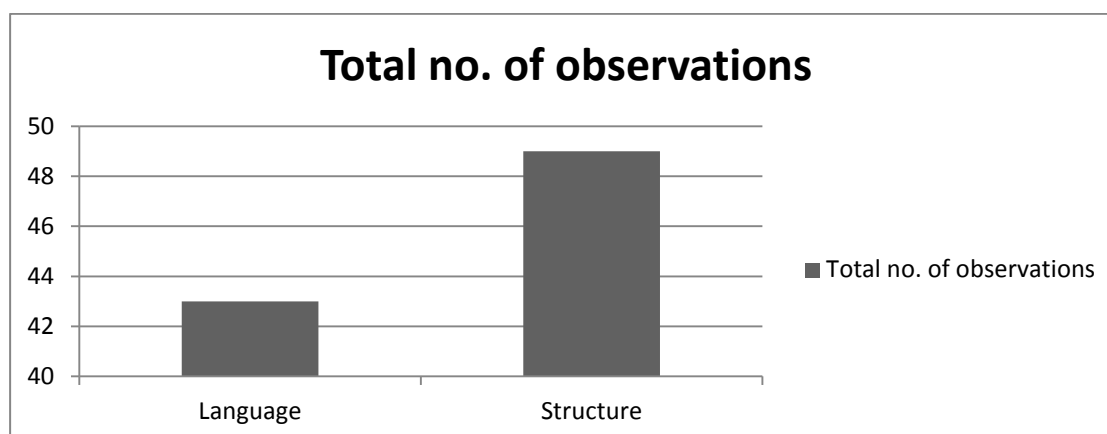
P 8: Eh, if maybe he/she used idioms in his/her language, let me say for instance, for every fact he/she discusses, he/she throws in an idiom, and also using the figurative language here and there, that would be his/her style, the way in which he/she spices up language.

A learner may write a good essay without the use of idioms, only having used simple Sesotho, the essay is readable but when you look, he/she did not use idioms but the essay is good. The other essay is good and it is made even better by the language used, idioms and figurative language, vocabulary and so on.

You may find that another learner simply used vocabulary, another one only used figures of speech without using idioms, whereas another learner incorporated all of them. That, therefore, is language and style.

From Participant 8, it is clear that learners have a choice in deciding how to make their essays interesting and readable. In this regard, we may look at style as a learner's choice of language features in an attempt to glossing his/her writing. This is because Participant 8 states that learners choose which features of language to use, for example, figures of speech and idioms. Punctuation was also coded a total of three observations. The overall impression here was that learners are struggling with punctuating correctly. One instance of this is Participant 7's statement that "... they [learners] do not even know the use of punctuation marks." Other concerns were directed at sentence construction. Participant 6 states that sometimes learners write sentences that are too short and Participant 7 complained that learners use connectives to start sentences. Coherence and figurative language on the hand were simply noted by one observation each. Clearly making them the least important themes that contributed to style.

If we return to the network of codes presented in figure 4.4.3, we find that style in creative essay writing is more concerned with structural issues. This is illustrated in figure 4.4.4 where structure constitutes 53.3% of all the codes observed in answering what style entails and what it means while language constitutes 46.7%. The code of language was however observed more times than any other code. It constituted 28.8% of the codes on its own. As such, it may be said that although in aggregate, structure is observed as a prominent theme, the individual aspect looked at the most is language.



**Figure 4.4.4: Total number of observations for major themes in describing what style means**

In conclusion, when teachers consider style in an essay, they review the physical structure, the style with which the essay is written and the language that is used to write the essay. In contrast to the definition of creativity in writing, which is what teachers report as most important in essays, style is observed to be more concerned with structure than with language. Paragraphing was noted here as the second most prominent code. Paragraphs are listed under 'structure' in the rubric. Under style, the rubric lists register, tone and style. As such, although style and structure are separated in the rubric (see Appendix B), in marking, teachers actually regard them as one unit.

**Table 4.4.5: The category of language, style and proofreading/editing in the current rubric used for assessing grade10 Sesotho home language creative writing essays**

Sesotho rubric	Translation into English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• O bontsha kelohloko e itseng ya matla a puo;</li> <li>• Puo ya hae ha e bonolo.</li> <li>• Matshwao a puo a lekane;</li> <li>• Kgetho ya mantswe ke e lekaneng.</li> <li>• <b>Setaele, sehlo le rejisetara</b> di tsamaelana le sehloho.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows a certain degree of language abilities.</li> <li>• Language not too simple,</li> <li>• Punctuation adequate.</li> <li>• Choice of words adequate.</li> <li>• <b>Style, tone, register</b> generally consistent with topic requirements.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moqoqo o ntse o na le diphoso tse mmalwa le ha o lekotswe botjha ho hlaola diphoso.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Text still contains few errors following proofreading, editing.</li> </ul>

From table 4.4.5, it is clear that style is supposed to go hand in hand with the tone and the register of the essay. However, teachers claim that language and style cannot be separated, as such, teachers incorporate language matters such as punctuation in the definition of style. What is surprising in this definition of style is the fact that there is no mention of structure in the category of language, style and proofreading/editing. This may in turn mean that teachers are

not clear on what constitutes style in the essay. Although they have captured the use of language correctly, their interpretation of structure as style may not be optimal.

#### 4.4.3 Creative introductions

Creative introductions is one of the factors that influences whether someone will read something. Introductions are one of the ways in which interest can be sparked. This in turn makes introductions to essays important. In the rubric, introductions and conclusions are grouped together with the aspect of structure. Teachers are required by the rubric to decide whether the introductions and the conclusions correspond with the rest of the essay content. As such, teachers were asked to describe creative essay introductions according to their assessment thereof. Table 4.4.6 presents the codes and themes that were identified from teachers' responses, together with their descriptions as used in this study.

**Table 4.4.6: The descriptions of codes used to describe creative introductions to essays**

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Description of code</b>
Language	In this section, language refers to the type of language that the learner uses to catch the attention of the reader. It is restricted to cover aspects of figurative and idiomatic language.
<b>Functions</b>	
Define/explain topic	This code covers all mentions of explaining and defining topics and showing understanding of the topic.
Introduce discussion	The points of discussion may be presented in the introduction just to hint what will be discussed to the reader. Please see "summary".
Introduce topic	Apart from simply writing the topic at the top of the essay, learners may be expected to introduce the topic to the reader. This may be done through stating what the topic is, or showing an understanding of the topic.
Introduce type of essay	The type of essay will determine how the introduction is constructed and what is incorporated in it. This code looks at how the type of essay is (expected to be) introduced.
Trigger interest	According to Participant 4; "[w]hen you read a learner's introduction and then wish the essay would just end there, that introduction is not good." This code covers all mentions of grabbing the reader's attention and triggering interest in the reader, making him/her want to

	read further.
Summary	This code is closely related to the code of introducing the discussion in that it covers all mentions of the need to provide an overall summary of the essay before presenting the actual essay discussion.
<b>Structure</b>	
Length	This code covers mention of the length of the introduction, which then has a direct impact on the structure of the essay in that the length will affect the overall structure. For instance, we cannot have introductions that are longer than body contents.
Genre	Different genres of essays require different approaches. This code covered all mentions of genre specific introduction requirements.

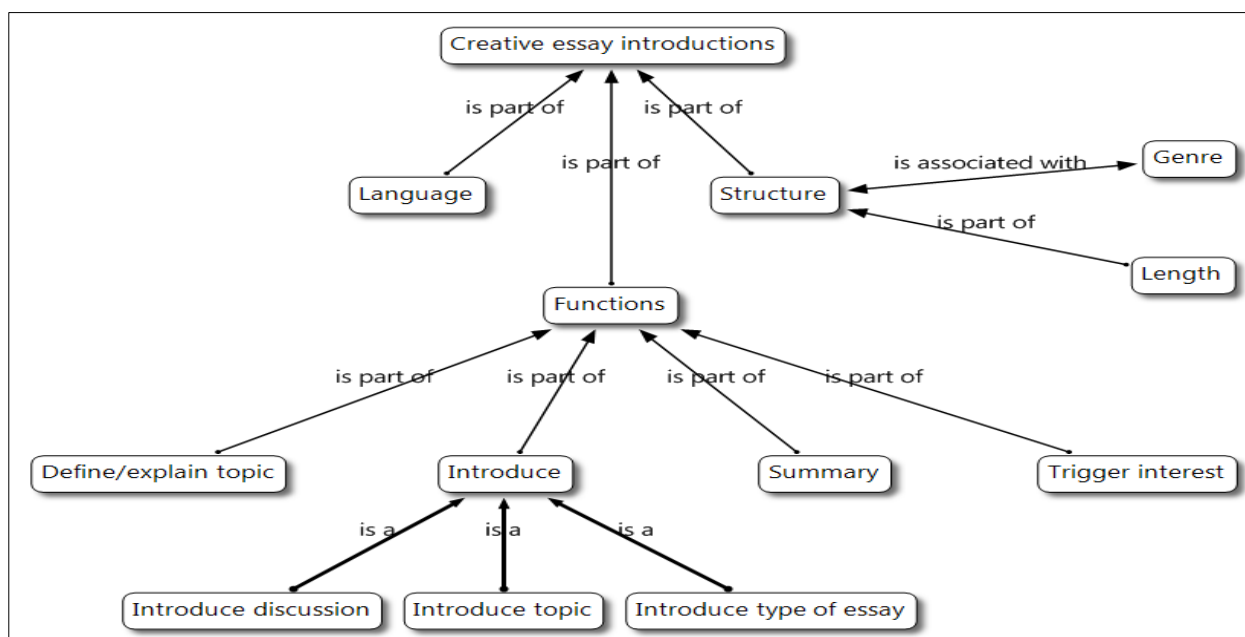
The total code observations per participant and then as an aggregate are presented in table 4.4.7 following:

**Table 4.4.7: Total code observation counts per teacher and per code observed**

Code	Participants									Total observations
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Trigger interest	0	0	3	2	4	1	1	2	3	16
Introduce discussion	0	0	2	2	3	1	1	1	1	11
Define/Explain topic	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	8
Genre	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
Summary	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	4
Introduce topic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Language	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Introduce type of essay	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Length	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>49</b>

The codes are presented in a network in figure 4.4.5. From the network, language as an independent theme can be seen with two major clusters of themes namely (i) structure and (ii) functions of introductions. Genre is indicated as being associated with structure. This is because the content and the structure of the introduction will depend on the genre of the essay. As explained in table 4.4.6, length also plays a role in structuring the introduction in that it restricts what can be included in the essay. Under the function cluster of themes, we find four subgroups. The first is defining/explaining the topic, first with an attempt to clarify to the reader,

what will be talked about, and secondly, to show the teacher that the writer understands what he/she is writing about. The second one is introducing. Three aspects were identified as being introduced in creative essay introductions: the discussion, the topic and the type of essay. Thirdly, we have the summary function, where the writer gives a summary of the essay before discussing specific points and finally, we have the function of triggering interest.



**Figure 4.4.5: A network of codes used to describe creative introductions to essays**

As indicated in table 4.4.6, triggering interest was coded the most, with 16 observations from seven participants. It was coded from the following list of quotations:

P 3: It must attract the reader.

It must trigger some interest to read further.

Through it, the reader must wish to know the ending of the discussion or the explanation thereof.

P 4: It is when you read the learner's introduction, you must wish to read further.

... a learner can start his/her introduction and you find yourself interested in knowing what happened, and what followed. As such, it has to grab your attention.

P 5: I expect the introduction to grab the attention of the audience.

It must be an interesting one.

... it must be interesting,

Then the readers will want to understand and stay at attention.

P 6: ... and then try to make us have interest to read what is being discussed.

P 7: Most of the time for me to say that an introduction is interesting, it has to be attention-grabbing and interesting enough for you to want to read further.

P 8: ... to grab our attention because he/she has not yet started with the discussion right?

You get interested in knowing/hearing what will be discussed in the body of the essay.

P 9: I prefer that when I read a learner's introduction, I may be left to ask myself questions like what happened? Why is he/she like that?

Or, figurative language, maybe he/she can exclaim "oh no! I found myself in trouble or surrounded by problems", you see? That little thing already captures my mind, I am already asking myself questions.

He/She does not present the content here, what he/she does is grab my attention, to make me find the essay interesting, you see? So that I can want to read further.

The preceding quotations show that teachers expect to be intrigued by the introductions and they want to have interest in reading further and filling up the gaps of information left by the writer in the introduction of the discussion. As such, Participant 9 states that she prefers to be left with a few questions which could only be answered by reading the essay. She illustrates this by giving an example where the outcome is presented in the introduction and the reader has to read to understand what the cause was. Participant 5 repeatedly mentions that introductions should be interesting. This means that to him/her, the main objective of an introduction is triggering interest.

The second most prominent theme was introducing the discussion. It was observed a total of 11 observations from seven teachers. The quotations from which it was coded are presented below:

P 3: it is the introduction, a nice one that contains the points of discussion.

To introduce his/her discussion nicely. In other words before I start marking, I already know what to expect from this learner's essay.

P 4: And it must also include the facts that he/she will be discussing.

In other words, he/she has to introduce the points that he/she will be discussing.

P 5: For it to be interesting, it is whereby he/she presents the points in a hidden manner. This means that it is not something that the readers can clearly understand.

As time goes by, he/she starts to present the discussion, but when introducing, he/she presents the points in a hidden way, trying to make the reader wish to read further in an attempt to find out what the reader wants to say. And then they will give him/her a chance to present his/her discussion.

P 6: The writer should inform us of what he/she will be discussing,  
... it must be obvious that the person is introducing something.

P 7: You must clearly hear that this person is introducing you to what will be discussed  
and it must be aligned with the topic.

P 8: What will be discussed, introducing the essay,

P 9: And then in the introduction, all the details must be provided.

According to Participant 5, the reason behind introducing the points of discussion in the introduction is “trying to make the reader wish to read further”. Participant 6 states that it must be obvious that the writer is introducing something, and informing the readers of what will be discussed is one way of ensuring that the introduction is clearly an introduction. Participant 7 further on states that the introduced discussion must be aligned with the topic. That was the only mention of the relation of the introduction to the requirements of the topic, as such, alignment with the topic was not coded as a separate code. Teachers addressed this issue in the definitions of conclusions and not here in the description of creative introductions. The concern here was the ability to explain or define the topic.

The third most prominent theme identified was defining or explaining the topic. This code was observed a total of eight observations from three participants. The quotations from which the codes were identified are listed below:

P 1: For example, let us say the topic is: “My trusted friend has let me down”. That is the heading, the first thing in an interesting introduction is whether the learner knows what a friend is? It’s the first paragraph, he/she explains to me what a friend is. So that I may have an idea of what he/she will be discussing, what is a friend?

An example of what I am talking about, a learner may explain that a friend is such and such a person, for instance it may be the one with whom we share secrets. Who does this and that, you see?

The topic, to show an understanding of what he/she is talking about. Yes. That is an introduction.

Yes, he/she is talking about a friend. He/she explains and provides an example, “A best friend”.

... show an understanding of what a friend is, what he/she is talking about, have you seen?

P 8: He/She must explain the topic, meaning that in the introduction, he/she must explain the topic.

He/She is still clarifying the topic that will be discussed.

P 9: In an explanative essay, he/she has to start with, what is it? His/her topic, explain what it means, or what he/she will be discussing in the essay, you see? Without giving me reasons

It is clear from the quotations that the alignment of the discussion with the topic is evaluated by analysing how well the writer defines the topic. Participant 1 stated that the learner can provide examples of what he/she is defining, to ensure that the reader understands. What will be discussed must be clear to the reader. Participant 9 stated that this is what is expected from explanatory essays.

As previously stated, the genre of the essay will decide what goes into the introduction and does not. Genre was observed a frequency of four observations. Participant 9 stated the following about genres and specific introductions:

P 9: Or most of the times in these Sesotho essays, they are instructed to imagine themselves in certain situations, he/she must inform me if it is a narrative because essay types differ.

So, it depends on the essay. In an explanative essay, he/she has to start with, what is it? His/her topic, explain what it means, or what he/she will be discussing in the essay, you see? Without giving me reasons.

Alternatively, there is an argumentative type of essay where he/she presents his/her standpoint, whether he/she agrees with something or opposes it. The introduction is where he/she will tell me whether he/she agrees with the topic that says this or not.

If it is a narrative, he/she must start by maybe informing me that “on this day of this year in that month, we once went here and there”, you see? And then in the introduction, all the details must be provided. He/She does not present the content here, what he/she does s grab my attention, to make me find the essay interesting, you see?

Participant 9 stated that in narrative essays, the attention of the reader is grabbed by the provision of plots and background information, such as dates and places. In explanatory essays however, she expects the definition of the essay topic. In an argumentative type of essay, the learner is expected to present his/her standpoint and state whether he/she agrees with the topic or not. As such, the content of the introduction will depend on the genre of the essay. A summary of important discussion points is generally expected from introductions. The code of summaries was observed at a total of four observations by four participants. The quotations from which it was derived is presented below:

P 2: We know that the introduction is a way of starting to narrate. Let me say like, when you are going to narrate to us, you must start where everything starts. We should not have questions. We should not ask ourselves what you were trying to say.

P 3: To introduce his/her discussion nicely. In other words before I start marking, I already know what to expect from this learner's essay.

P 5: When introducing, he/she presents the points in a hidden way, trying to make the reader wish to read further in an attempt to find out what the reader wants to say.

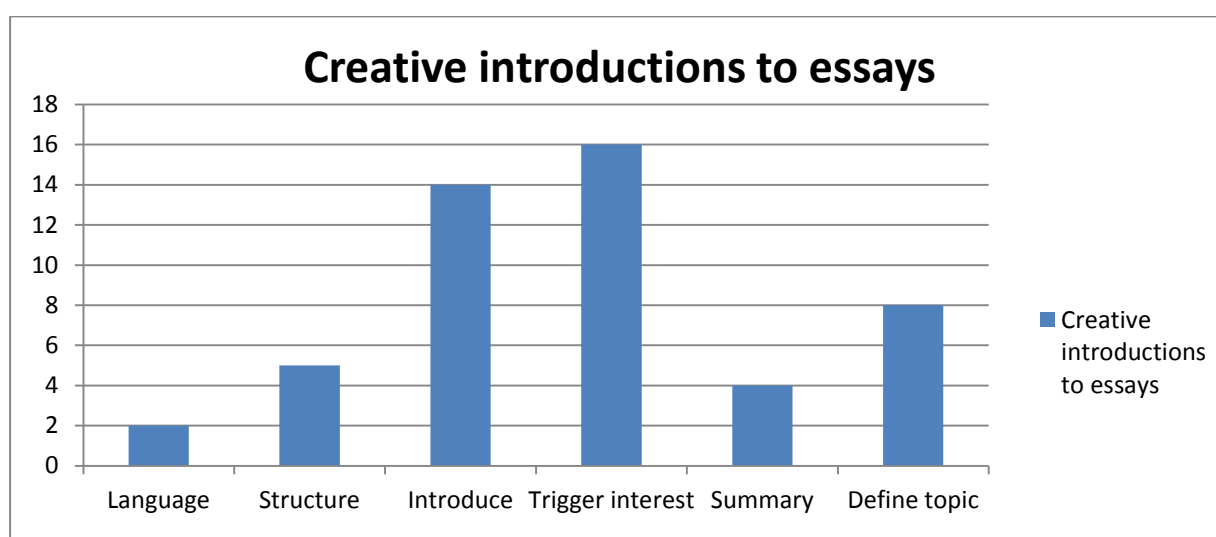
P 9: And then in the introduction, all the details must be provided. He/She does not present the content here, what he/she does is grab my attention

Participant 3 stated that before he marks, he should already know what to expect from the essay. This makes providing a summary of the discussion points important. This is consistent with Participant 9's statement that the content is not yet presented in the introduction, but all the details are expected. As such, as the reader reads, he/she is filling in the gaps left by the writer in the introduction. Participant 2 states that the writer should start where things start, to avoid confusing the readers. According to her, readers should not be left asking themselves questions, everything should be clear. This statement was coded as a summary because it is the only way of answering all the questions in an introduction. According to Participant 5, the discussion points should be presented in a hidden way so that the reader may still be interested in finding out what is meant. One way of achieving this is the use of language features such as idiomatic language and figurative language. Participant 9 stated: "I prefer that they introduce the topic and use a few idioms, you see? Or, figurative language, maybe he/she can exclaim 'oh no! I found myself in trouble or surrounded by problems', you see?" As such, language can help to present information in a secretive way. Only two observations of language as a code were observed because in their interviews, teachers list figures of speech and idiomatic language as separate language features, as such, they were both coded separately and then put under the cluster of language and labelled as language.

The least coded themes were introducing the type of essay and the length of the introduction. Participant 9 stated: "... most of the times in these Sesotho essays, they are instructed to imagine themselves in certain situations, he/she must inform me if it is a narrative because essay types differ." The concept of essay genres has been discussed previously under the code of genres. Participant 1 stated: "Yes. It is a small thing but it can amount to five marks or five lines. But it should not be longer than five lines. At other times he/she does not need to write five lines, he/she can write three lines." This shows that Participant 1 believes in short

introductions and that introductions are all about the content in the essay, but they should not be too lengthy.

In conclusion, it may be said that the main concern of participating teachers with regard to creative introductions is the ability of the learner to grab their attention and make them feel interested to read further. As stated in table 4.4.6, Participant 4 stated that “[w]hen you read a learner’s introduction and then wish the essay would just end there, that introduction is not good.” As such, the main focus here is the ability of the learner to trigger interest in the reader. This is illustrated in figure 4.4.6.



**Figure 4.4.6: Graphical representation of the themes used to define creative introductions to essays**

In figure 4.4.6 the length and the genre codes are combined under the cluster theme of structure as previously demonstrated in table 4.4.6. The sub-themes of the function cluster are presented separately. This is because the functions are different from each other even though they all define what should be present in the content of introductions. In addition to grabbing the readers’ attention, introductions are expected to introduce the topic, the discussion and the type of essay. The code of introducing was coded as the second most prominent cluster theme. The topic should also be defined to ensure that the writer understands what will be written and that the reader follows what the author is communicating. The use of language does not seem to play a significant role in assessing introductions. What is surprising is the fact that in the rubric average the introductions are said to be satisfactory and in line with the needs of the essay (see Appendix B). The finding here, however, is that teachers do not look at the correspondence of introductions with topics, contrary to perceptions about conclusions. The following section discusses creative conclusions in Sesotho creative essay writing.

#### 4.4.4 Perceptions of creative conclusions to essays

Conclusions are also grouped together with the structure of essays, introductions and the length of essays by participants. Participating teachers were asked to describe creative essay conclusions. From their responses, a total of 14 codes were identified. The codes are defined in table 4.4.8 following:

**Table 4.4.8: Codes and clusters of codes used by teachers to describe creative conclusions to essays**

Code	Description of codes
<b>Function</b>	
Solution	Sometimes learners identify problems in the community, for instance, they may be instructed to give their views on the prevalence of HIV infections. In the conclusion, learners then suggest solutions to the problem. This code covers such instances where teachers mention the need for solutions.
Advice	One other way of providing a solution may be through giving advice. For instance, learners can advise other teenagers on how to deal with unplanned teenage pregnancy.
Teach	Through an essay, the learner may identify a certain problem and then as a solution, teach people how to avoid such situations. For instance, a learner may write about drugs and crime in the community, and in the conclusion, he/she may teach citizens how to identify possible suspects. This code, therefore, covers such themes.
Self-expression	Learners are required to express their feelings on some topics. They may be required to discuss how something currently is and then voice their views on it. This code covers all mentions of the need to voice personal thoughts and feelings.
Question	The learner may choose to end the essay with a question. This code covers all mentions of closing the discussion with a question. The function of leaving readers with a question may be said to prompt the reader to think.
<b>Finishing</b>	
Finishing	Teachers mention that conclusions should be used to show that an essay is ending, that the learner is finishing the discussion. This code, therefore, covers all instances of the mention of finishing the discussion

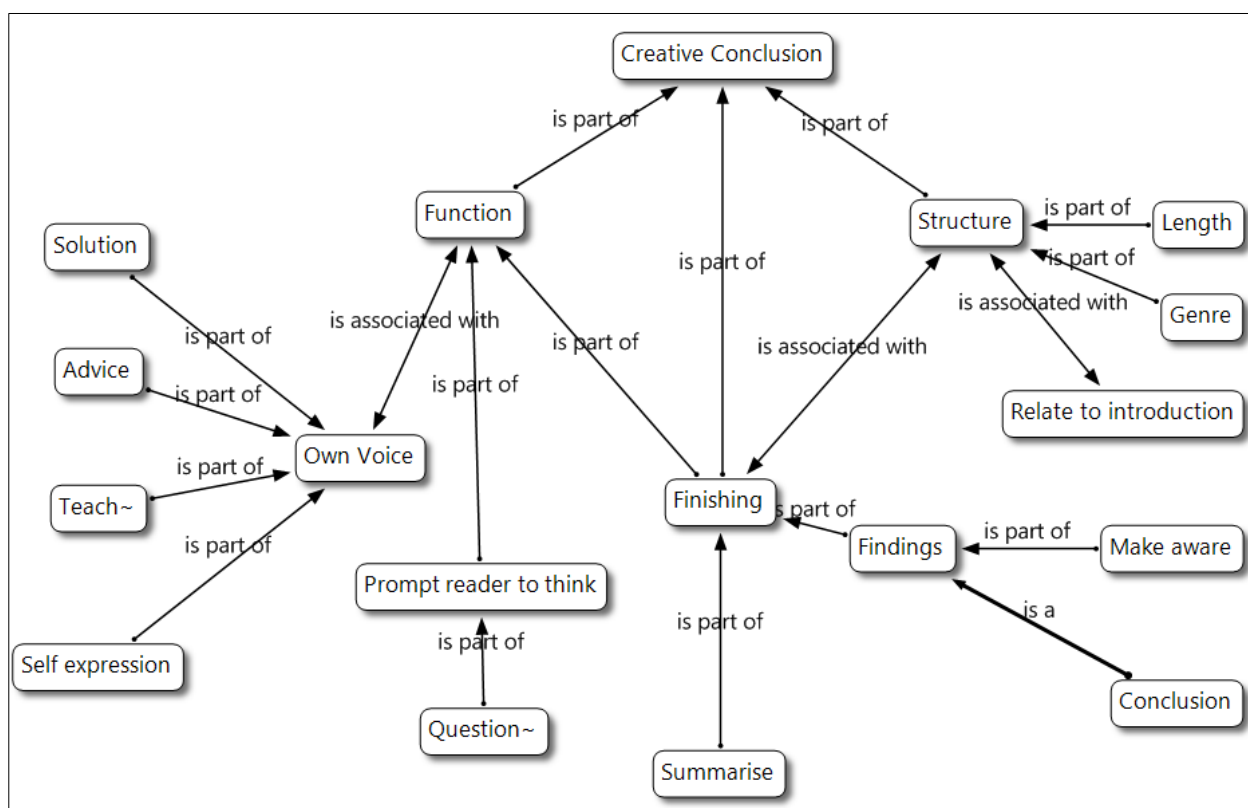
	or essay.
Summarise	Summaries of facts that were discussed in the essay may be provided as a way to recap or to highlight the main arguments or the main points in an essay. This code covers all mentions of summarising the essay points.
Findings	The results of the essay may be some findings after a discussion of certain topics. Typically, in grade 10 Sesotho creative writing, learners do not write research based papers, they focus on creativity. As such, findings in this discussion are limited to discursive creative writing findings.
Conclusion	This code is related to the code of finishing, in that a certain conclusion is reached at the end of the essay.
Make aware	Sometimes the learner may decide to highlight a certain issue as being important or worthy of note for the community. This code covers such comments.
<b>Structure</b>	
Length	Participants then mentioned the acceptable length of conclusions. This code covers such suggestions.
Relate to introduction	Participants mention that the conclusion should be linked back to the introduction. This code refers to a relation of the conclusion to the introduction. It also covers recapping what the writer promised to discuss and checking whether it was done or not.
Genre	Depending on the genre of the essay, the conclusion may contain different contents. This covers the mention of essay genres as deciding factors as to what is needed in the conclusion.
Structure	The code covers among others, the differentiation of the conclusion from the introduction and the body content, clearly pointing out the difference between the two parts of essays. Structure also covers the cognitive structure that the reader will come to realise while reading the essay. Such as relating back to the topic and correlation with the body content.

The frequency of codes per teacher and totals of each code are presented in table 4.4.8.

**Table 4.4.9: Teachers' perceptions of the nature of conclusions to essays**

Code	Participants									Total observations
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
<b>Self-expression</b>	2	0	2	1	0	0	2	2	0	9
<b>Finishing</b>	2	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	1	7
<b>Relate to introduction</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	7
<b>Structure</b>	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	4	6
<b>Solution</b>	0	1	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	5
<b>Advice</b>	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	4
<b>Conclusion</b>	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	4
<b>Question</b>	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	4
<b>Findings</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3
<b>Summarise</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
<b>Genre</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
<b>Length</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
<b>Teach</b>	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
<b>Make aware</b>	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>59</b>

The codes are clustered in a network in figure 4.4.7. In the network, conclusions are indicated as having three main functions, which are firstly, prompting the reader to think matters through by asking questions. Secondly, under the function of “own voice”, we find solutions, advice, teaching and self-expression. Third, “finishing” the essay by presenting a summary of findings that presents conclusions and that makes readers aware of something. Finishing is associated with structure in that the way an essay is “finished”, distinguishes the conclusion from the rest of the essay and brings attention to the structure of essays.



**Figure 4.4.7: A network of teachers' perceptions on creative conclusions**

As can be seen in table 4.4.9, the most prominent code that emerged from the data was the ability of learners to express themselves and their views in an essay. This code was observed in the case of nine instances and mentioned by five participants:

P1 When he/she finishes off, it is either he/she exclaims about what the friend did or exclaims disapproval about it. [*for example*] "Wow! My friend has indeed betrayed my trust".

P 3 There, it is about the feelings and opinions of the learner in his/her own perspective.

P 4 That is where we find the learner's feelings/opinions, from his/her perspective.

P 7 It is when he/she manages to express his/her thoughts and feelings, you might find that a learner reveals his/her opinions as a suggestion.

P 8 He/She expresses his/her feelings/thoughts or expresses his/her feelings on the matter.

The second most prominent code was that of "finishing" or completing an essay. These examples related to all the ways in which an essay can be ended and what is needed to show that an essay is ending. The following is a list of how an essay can be ended. As observed from table 4.4.8, this code was identified a total of seven occurrences by five participants:

P 1: Statements like; it is better to trust a stone than a friend, being sarcastic. Or asking, what kind of nature is a person? That is a conclusion, you show that you are finishing... he/she[the learner] exclaims.

P 5: The conclusion will not be like the introduction because we are finishing. In the conclusion, the writer or speaker, to show that he/she is finishing, he/she must put it in such a way that he/she makes the readers aware of something.

P 6: He/She [*the learner*] can conclude for us...

P 8: ...he/she [*the learner*] must finish.

P 9: He fortifies it and wraps up.

Relating the conclusion to the introduction was identified as a code seven times. This notion (that the conclusion is related to the introduction) is a specific way to perceive “finishing” the essay. This notion was identified by two participants in the following quotes:

P 8: Now in the conclusion, what was explained in the introduction, what he/she discussed in the body, what does he/she do now...

P9: He/She then reminds of the introduction and the points/facts...

As a reader, I will have read the introduction and the facts so that they convince me that what the person says is really true.

And he/she must repeat the topic for me that it was this and that and I say this and that.

In a discursive or argumentative type it is where he/she reminds me that he/she had stated agreeing or disagreeing with a certain thing, and that he/she still stands by that decision due to the reasons given in the essay

... it is where I am reminded about what he/she promised to discuss.

... this is where he/she reminds of the topic.

Relating the conclusion to the introduction can also be viewed as a code that depicts the structural issues in an essay. If the two codes were to be combined in the analysis, they would represent the most prominent theme as answer to this question. Structure was identified a total of six times by three respondents:

P 5: The conclusion will not be like the introduction because we are finishing.

P 8: Now in the conclusion, what was explained in the introduction, what he/she discussed in the body, what does he/she do now?

P9: He/she then reminds of the introduction and the points/facts.

... this is where he/she reminds of the topic, it is where I am reminded about what he/she promised to discuss.

As a reader, I will have read the introduction and the facts.

...repeat the topic.

One other way in which an essay can be finished is through provision of a solution for the issue discussed. The theme of “solutions” was identified by four participants and a total of five observations were noted.

P 2: The writer can leave you with a question, a solution or give the ending of the story/discussion..

P 3: at the end of the discussion, what is his/her solution?

What is the solution to the issue?

P 4: at the end of the discussion, what is his/her solution?

P 7: And also give... at other times, you might find that a learner reveals his/her opinions as a suggestion, which means he/she provides a solution.

From the quotes, it is clear that suggestions and answers to the main question asked in the essay make up solutions. The notion of presenting solutions to the reader is categorised as belonging to the code “self-expression” in this analysis, because the nature of the advice provided at the level of grade 10 learners would fundamentally be an expression of their experiences, in other words, based on their personal views. For instance, Participant 3 stated: “What is the solution to the issue or what is his/her advice?” from this statement, it is clear that advice is not researched but based on what the learner thinks. The code of advice was identified a total of four times from three participants.

The function of conclusion covered the notions of summaries and presenting the findings reached at the end of the essay. Participant 9 states that in conclusion, it “...is where a certain conclusion is made.” This code was identified a total of four times from two respondents. In addition to presenting summaries and findings, the participants also mentioned that prompting the reader to think by sometimes leaving the reader with questions or leaving the reader to assume his/her own conclusion, are other strategies they expect learners to use to perform the function of a conclusion. The code of “conclusions” was noted a total of four times from two teachers. Participant 6 for instance, stated that “he/she [the learner] can conclude for us [readers] or leave us with questions and then the reader will conclude on his/her own.”

Findings and summaries were identified a total of three times each. The code “findings” was identified from three respondents while summaries was identified from one. Participant 9 stated the following:

As a reader, I will have read the introduction and the facts so that they convince me that what the person says is really true and when it is an argumentative type, I must agree with what is argued. To say yes, what is being practised is wrong or right according to his/her topic.

The teacher further stated that a “[c]onclusion is the ending. The ending, is where he/she puts together, what can I say he/she does? It is a summary of the whole essay, this is where he/she reminds of the topic, it is where I am reminded about what he/she promised to discuss.” This means that the reader should simply get the main idea of the essay through reading the conclusion. However, the writer should remain conscious of the length restrictions for conclusions.

The structure or physical arrangement covers codes like the length of the conclusion, the relationship between the conclusion and the introduction and the genre in which the essay was written. Participant 9 stresses the importance of adhering to the demands of specific genres, he/she states the following about different genres and how appropriate conclusions relate to different genres:

This is where a certain conclusion is made. For instance when we talk about the narrative type, here the learner narrates what happened right? He/She reminds us of whether what happened to him/her was a good or a bad thing. He fortifies it and wraps it up.

In a discursive or argumentative type; it is where he/she reminds me that he/she had stated agreeing or disagreeing with a certain thing, and that he/she still stands by that decision due to the reasons given in the essay. It is not a big thing, I do not think it should be longer than ten lines.

And when it is an argumentative type, I must agree with what is argued. To say yes, what is being practised is wrong or right according to his/her topic. And he/she must repeat the topic for me that it was this and that and I say this and that.

It is clear from Participant 9's response that the structure and the content of the conclusion are decided by the essay type or genre. In general however, the codes identified and presented in the discussion are integrated into essays.

In conclusion therefore, the participants regard the voice or expression of personal views by the writer as the most important functions of conclusions in creative essays written in Sesotho at the grade 10 level. This theme accounted for 23 observations out of the 59 codes identified from the responses of teachers. The second most prominent theme for the participants was the function of indicating that the essay is finishing (represented by 18 observations of the identified codes). Participants also viewed the physical structure of the essay (indicated by how the introduction relates to the conclusion) as an important theme (it accounted for 17 codes out of the 60 that were identified). The participants in this study generalise between different essay types. Only one participant (Participant 9) holds clear views about the different structures related to essays from different genres. This is an indication that the participants do not differentiate between essay types, but work with a general idea that seems to inform their expectations for the conclusions as present in all types of essays.

#### 4.4.5 Teachers' perceptions on the standardisation of essay-marking

Standardisation in this instance is used to denote the similarity and consistency of marking between teachers and across different assessment tasks. Participating teachers were asked whether they believed that rubrics and correction codes make them mark similarly to each other. Seven participants stated that they believe that using the rubric and the correction code standardises their marking. Two of the participants further stated that the rubric and the correction code standardises their marking only to a certain extent. Two out of the nine participants stated that they do not believe that the rubric and correction code standardise their marking. The reasons for the participants' perceptions about the potential of the rubric and correction code to standardise essay-marking were analysed qualitatively, assigning codes to each reason. Table 4.4.10 contains the codes that were assigned and their definitions.

**Table 4.4.10: Codes and definitions of codes assigned to participants' perceptions about the potential of the rubric and the correction code to standardise their essay-marking**

CODE	DEFINITION
<b>Codes used by participants who believe that the rubric and correction code help to standardise their marking</b>	
Complicates feedback	The finding here is that the correction code that is used makes work much easier for teachers but in turn makes understanding feedback difficult for learners.
Issue of marks	Two views are expressed in this code, on one hand it is believed that rubrics help teachers award marks similarly, on the other hand the

	opposite is believed. This code covers the theme of grading.
Similar aspects	This code is restricted to similar rubric categories.
Simplicity	Rubrics were said to be making marking less complicated in that it directs what teachers should mark instead of burdening teachers with creating their own criterion.
Understanding the rubric	The way the teacher interprets and understands the rubric dictates how the rubric is used by the teacher. As will be evidenced in the discussion, measures have been put into place to try and ensure that teachers interpret the rubric similarly. This code covers all mentions of understanding of the rubric.
<b>Codes used by participants who believe that the rubric and correction code do not help to standardise their marking</b>	
Different learners	Teachers have to deal with the fact that learners differ. They have to come with ways to assess them according to their standard. This code, therefore, covers instances of the mention of the difference between learners.
Teachers' expectations	Based on the standard of learners and what the teachers have already taught them, expectations are formed. This code covers the notion that marking is not standardised because teachers focus on different expectations.
Teachers' focus	This code is greatly related to the code on teachers' expectations but differs based on the fact that this code looks more into teachers' preferences. For instance, a teacher may decide to focus on content if he/she is trying to get his/her learners to produce more creative essays in terms of content.

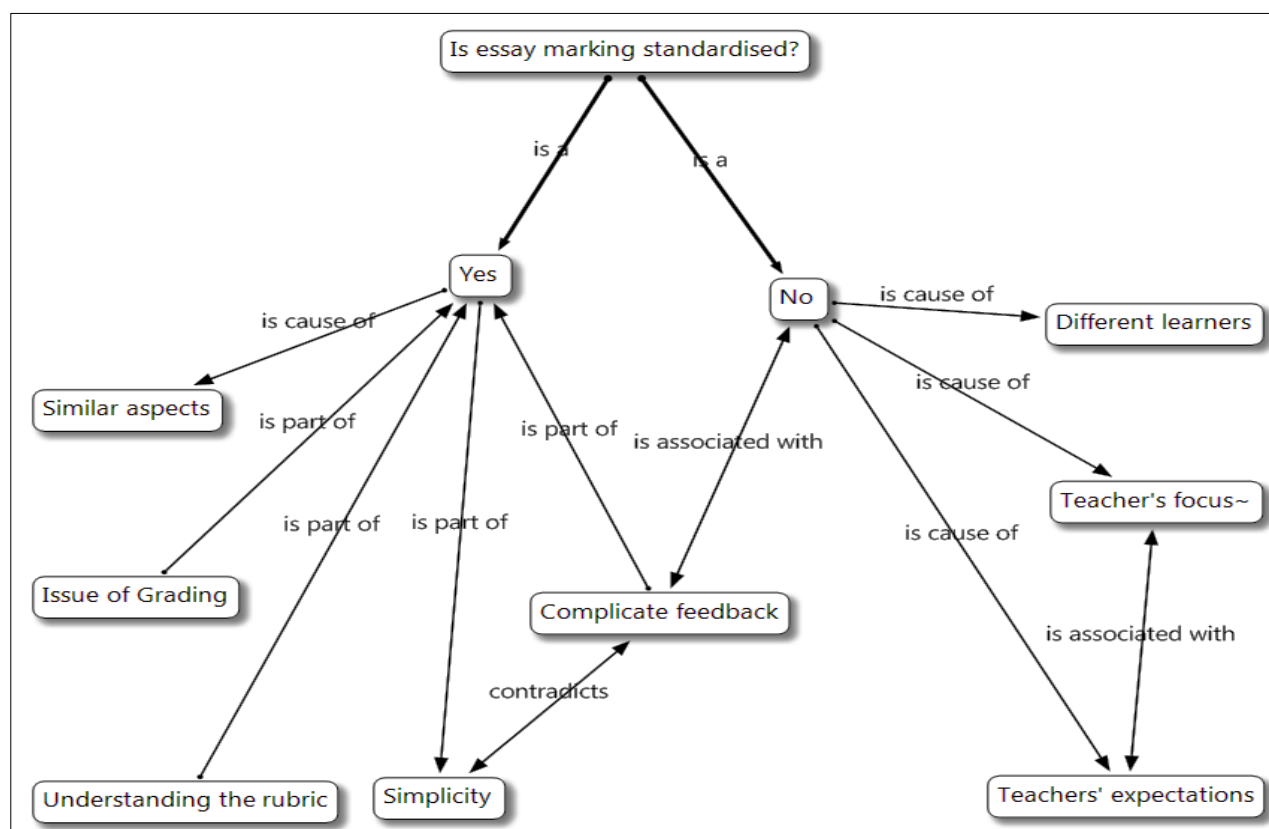
The codes and their frequencies are presented in table 4.4.11.

**Table 4.4.11: Teachers' perceptions on the standardisation of essay-marking**

CODES	PARTICIPANTS									TOTAL OBSERVATIONS
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
<b>Codes used by participants who believe that the rubric and correction code help to standardise their marking</b>										
<b>Similar aspects</b>	0	1	0	0	0	2	2	2	0	<b>7</b>
<b>Complicate feedback</b>	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	<b>6</b>
<b>Teacher's focus</b>	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	<b>5</b>
<b>Understanding the rubric</b>	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
<b>Simplicity</b>	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	<b>2</b>

Codes used by participants who believe that the rubric and correction code do not help to standardise their marking										
Teachers' expectations	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	7
Different grades	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Different learners	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>35</b>

The findings from this qualitative analysis could be represented in a network (see figure 4.4.8 below). From the network it is clear that there are two broad perceptions voiced by the participants about the notion of the standardisation of essay-marking: the most prominent response was that the rubric and correction code assist markers in marking similarly. However, some reservations about the effect of the rubric and marking code on standardisation are also noted.



**Figure 4.4.8: Network of teachers' perceptions on the standardisation of essay-marking**

From the network in the figure above, it can be observed that the code of simplicity is in contrast with the code of complicating feedback. Although the latter code was mentioned by participants who believe that rubric and correction codes help standardise their marking, the code actually

opposes the notion. This can be seen in the network with the indication of its association to the cluster code of 'no'. The codes are discussed below.

#### **4.4.5.1 Codes used by participants who believe that the rubric and the correction code help to standardise their marking**

If one unpacks the positive views of participants about the potential of the rubric and correction code to 'standardise' essay-marking, some prominent themes emerged. The codes used by participants who believed that the rubric and correction code assist in the standardisation of marking are: a focus on similar aspects of the essay, clarification of the teachers' expectations, the teachers' focus on the nature of creative essays, the simplicity provided by the rubric and the complications caused by the correction code and teachers' understanding of the rubric.

These themes and examples of participants' perceptions are discussed below. Four participants stated that the rubric and correction code help them mark similar aspects of learners' essays. The participants voice this belief in the following ways:

P 2: But the aspects that you will mark will be similar. They will not differ that much.

P 6: They standardise marking. It was difficult in the past, in the absence of the rubric. Every marker marked whatever he/she felt was important, but now, we all look at the same aspects.

In the past, you could mark a learner's script and I would mark it too, but we would award marks differently, each of us would look at different aspects.

P 7: They standardise marking because when I consult with my colleague, we manage to find the same mistakes ... they help you mark similar mistakes.

Participant 8 discusses the aspects of essays that the rubric helps teacher mark similarly in the following quote:

P 8: Eh, when we look at the structure, say we have the structure that has the topic, the introduction, the body content and the conclusion, right? The introduction must be attention-grabbing, in the body, the learner discusses thoroughly now. The conclusion must be clear that he/she is concluding, according to how I have already explained that he/she can give advices, express his/her feelings; that is the structure. And then language and style, just as I have explained that he/she must gloss the language, use things like idioms, vocabulary and figures of speech. His/Her spelling, combining and

separating words, paragraphs must follow each other logically, it must be clear that this is the introduction and this is the body and this is the conclusion, based on how the paragraphs are separated.

This means that teachers' perception of the standardisation of marking is mainly based on the fact that they now get to assess learners based on the same criteria, and they focus on the same aspects and errors. The similar aspects referred to, are the ones covered by the rubric categories such as the category of language and style and the correction codes such as spelling and orthography as illustrated by Participant 8 above.

In contrast to the appreciated effectiveness of the standardisation of feedback through the rubric, the correction code is reported as complicating the feedback it provides to learners. This notion can be observed from the following quotations from two participants:

P 3: Now, you will have written those things [the codes], but the learner will still not understand their meaning.

But it is not like in the olden days, back in the day when a learner made a mistake, we would provide a correct form for him/her, for instance if he/she had misspelled, we would provide the correct spelling where he/she got it wrong.

P 4: However, if we were not doing that, we [would] write the correct word, because sometimes when we get to class, we show them that where I put "P" it means you erred. But a learner sometimes ends up not knowing what word is the correct one.

If there were no codes, we could use our own writing to show the learner what the learner was supposed to have written. Just like in the past. On top of the incorrect word, you were supposed to write the correct one. But now, all we write are codes.

Even if you say you explain in class that if I have written "mt" I mean this, the learner will not know what the correct version should be.

... If a learner got the words wrong, we write "P" or when punctuation is missing we write "mt".

These views indicate dissatisfaction with the correction code. There are two issues raised in this context: on the one hand, the teachers note that they use the correction code, on the other hand they believe it is ineffective because learners do not understand the correction code. The lack of understanding of the correction code results in learners not understanding the errors that they made and therefore the potential to improve in future is missed. More research is needed

to understand the dissatisfaction with the correction code. However, there is no denial that correction codes also assist in standardising feedback.

In contrast to the complications caused by the correction code, Participant 6 explains how the rubric simplifies marking. She states:

P 6: They standardise marking. It was difficult in the past, in the absence of the rubric. Every marker marked whatever he/she felt was important, but now, we all look at the same aspects. Rubrics simplify marking. In the past, you could mark a learner's script and I would mark it too, but we would award marks differently, each of us would look at different aspects. But now, we look at similar aspects. I think rubrics simplify things.

Participant 6 bases her idea of simplicity on the fact that the rubric provides essay elements that should be marked for and presents categories of marks and in addition, somewhat guides the teacher on how to award marks for the standard of writing. This, therefore, means that the idea of simplicity as expressed by Participant 6, is restricted to the use of rubrics and not correction codes. This issue of simplicity is also attached to the issue of awarding marks. The code of the issue of marks was identified a total of three times from the two responses below:

P 5: Eh, with the rubric we will mark similarly, even though we will differ in terms of grading.

We will mark similarly but we will grant different marks.

P 6: In the past, you could mark a learner's script and I would mark it too, but we would award marks differently, each of us would look at different aspects. But now, we look at similar aspects.

Participant 5 holds the notion that even though the same aspects are marked for, teachers will weigh them differently. He, therefore, states that the marks will differ. On the other hand, participant 6 argues that the rubric assists teachers in marking for similar aspects. For instance, the rubric restricts marks for structure to five. As such, teachers cannot decide to award 10 marks for structure and they cannot decide to overlook structure in their marking. The rubric forces them to mark for the same aspects. However, as Participant 5 states, the teacher will still decide whether the learner receives four or five marks for structure even though he/she cannot grant six.

Participant 2 holds the notion that every teacher uses the rubric differently, based on how he/she understands it. However, from Participant 3's response it can be said that teachers more or less hold the same understanding of the rubric. This is deduced from the following quotes:

P 2: Yes. They standardise marking. But you know, most of the times, I do not know whether they standardise it or not. Everyone uses the rubric according to his/her understanding of it.

P 3: They try to standardise marking. Because we were even work shopped with an aim of helping us mark similarly.

According to Participant 3, the workshops that they attend are aimed at ensuring that they hold the same understandings of the rubric. As such, if they use rubrics according to their understanding of it, and they are trained to understand the rubric similarly, then teachers' marking may be said to be standardised.

#### **4.4.5.2 Views on the failure of the rubric and the correction code to standardise feedback**

The main views of participants who do not believe that the rubric and correction code assists in the standardisation of essay-marking, are teachers' expectations, differences in learners and differences in grades awarded for essays. Participant one and participant nine raised the theme of teachers' expectations of their learners in the context of essay writing. They stated:

P 1: From grade 9, learners come with a concept that that an essay is only written on one page. The topic, mind map and the essay are all on the same page. Sometimes you find that the learner has repeated the same thing over and over, which is something we do not want.

For example, a grade 10 learner. Here in grade 10, we struggle with learners when they write essays because they come from grade 9.

P 9: ...and I think it depends on the teacher's character and his/her expectations from the learners. When you first meet learners you can tell where they are, and you also have expectations of where you want them to be after you teach them, you know where you want them to reach.

And then after some time, perhaps after spending a period of three months as their teacher, you teach them what you expect them to produce in their assessment. You say, I want my essays in this order according to structure or something.

And then it depends on you and the expectations you hold

...which you are anticipating when you mark his/her paper, because you taught him/her a certain thing and you saw that he/she understands it, he/she has to give you a certain thing.

I go like, no man, since these children say they do not know Sesotho and maybe I also hear that their Sesotho is not clear, I then have that thing of saying, no, let me give them some undeserved marks for language.

Participant 1 and Participant 9 raise the issue of individual expectations that teachers hold of their learners and how they are supposed to write essays. Participant 1 formulates this as a process of getting grade 9 learners to understand what is expected when one writes an essay in grade 10. In other words, in this teacher's view, she has clear expectations of the nature of essay writing in grade 10 and she evaluates the writing of the grade 10 learners against those personal expectations. Participant 10 overtly formulates a position that teachers have expectations of essays and that they measure learners against those expectations. Participant 9 states that individual teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of their learners and evaluate their work against this personal yardstick as well. This means that teachers acknowledge the presence of some biases in their marking and this means that they are not entirely relying on the rubric and the correction code when they assess. These personal expectations that teachers have of essay writing minimise the potential of the rubric and correction code to standardise the levels of essay-marking.

Closely linked to teachers' expectations is the teachers' focus. Only Participant 2 and Participant 9 mentioned this theme, they stated:

P 2: What is important in an essay is the main issue.

P 9: Because even now, we can mark a learner's essay, and you find that I do not care that much about the structure, you see? You might find that I only care about the content.

You find that I only care about them, and I do not pay much attention to the structure, I will grant a certain mark, then you will find that the content is where the learner will get marks or lose them, right?

You say, I want my essays in this order according to structure or something. You focus on them.

There are people who do not look at the use of language.

It is only logical to expect that teachers will focus on the aspects that they expect their learners to improve on. As such, Participant 2 explained that according to her, the clear presentation of the main issue in an essay is the focus of her marking. Participant 9 on the other hand provides instances where markers may focus on totally different aspects of the same essay and subsequently mark differently. The admittance that individual teachers focus on specific issues when they mark and that differences in focus could result in variability in marks could be viewed as additional evidence of teacher biases in the marking process. The individual focus of a teacher while marking essays could result in biased marking, irrespective of the potential of the rubric and correction code to “standardise” essay-marking. The way in which the teacher applies the rubric and correction code determines what marks a learner will be granted.

Learners’ level of understanding can affect how the teacher assesses their essays. This is a code noted by Participants 1 and 9. They state the following:

P 1: Sometimes you find that they give you high standards, without taking into consideration the learners’ level of understanding.

P 9: There are people who do not look at the use of language. Just like the learners that I am teaching, I teach them home language, but they tell me that they do not know Sesotho. And because of their environment, I go like, no man, since these children say they do not know Sesotho and maybe I also hear that their Sesotho is not clear, I then have that thing of saying, no, let me give them some undeserved marks for language. Most teachers do that.

Participant 1 holds a notion that rubrics do not standardise marking based on the fact that the rubric does not cater for the differences between learners in different schools. A solution is provided by Participant 9 that the teacher will tailor his/her marking to make provision for covering his/her learners’ shortcomings. This means that the teacher will raise and lower the standards accordingly, not blindly following the rubric requirements.

In conclusion, it has been demonstrated in this section that although the majority of the participants (seven out of nine) believe that their marking is standardised to some extent by the use of rubrics and correction codes; this belief is complex because the participants also note that teacher biases (expectations and focuses) influence the use of the rubric and correction codes and, therefore, the potential of these instruments to standardise marking might be undermined. Table 4.4.12 presents the summary of findings. Seven participants agreed that the

rubric and the correction code standardise their marking while only two opposed the notion. Positive codes were identified a total of 14 observations. They included ‘similar aspects,’ ‘simplicity,’ ‘understanding of the rubric,’ and ‘the issue of grading.’ Negative codes were observed a total of 20 times, they covered ‘teachers’ expectations,’ ‘teachers’ focuses,’ ‘complicating feedback’ and ‘differences in learners.’ However, codes from participants who believe rubrics and correction codes standardise their marking were observed 20 times while codes from participants who believe rubrics and correction codes do not standardise their marking were observed a total of 14 times.

**Table 4.4.12: Summary of total code frequencies**

<b>Group of codes</b>	<b>No of codes</b>
It standardises marking	<b>7</b>
It does not standardise marking	<b>2</b>
Total of positive codes	<b>14</b>
Total of negative codes	<b>20</b>
Codes from participants who believe rubrics and correction codes standardise their marking	<b>20</b>
Codes from participants who believe rubrics and correction codes do not standardise their marking	<b>14</b>

The main finding from this analysis is that although the majority of the teachers perceive the rubric and the correction code as helpful in the standardisation process of their marking, there are elements that deter this potential. On the one hand, the participants believe that the rubric and correction code assist teachers to look at similar aspects in essays, on the other hand, they acknowledge that teachers’ preferences expressed as expectations and main focuses when they assess essays, hamper alignment in the marking process. On the one hand the rubric and the correction code help teachers to identify similar mistakes, but on the other hand, it is suspected not to be useful to learners as they are perceived to find it hard to understand the codes. In conclusion, therefore, rubrics are seen more useful than correction codes.

#### **4.4.6 Summary of main findings from interviews**

Essays usually follow the introduction – body – conclusion structure. This results section discussed what is expected from each of the essay subdivisions as perceived by our participants and reported during the interviews with the researcher.

Teachers focus more on the ability of an essay introduction to trigger interest from the reader. This theme was observed the most and was mentioned by most teachers. The writer is also expected to show that he/she is starting to narrate by informing us of what will be discussed. The writer is then expected to define the topic to both demonstrate that he/she has

understanding of what will be discussed and to ensure that the reader understands what the writer will be talking about.

The body content of the essay is expected to be creative. What marks creativity, therefore, is the content of the essay. The content is expected to be in line with what the topic requires. Although it is sometimes fictional, the content is expected to seem real and the events are supposed to be logical. The learner is expected to exhibit the ability to create stories, either from own personal experiences or from other people's experiences. Language is expected to be glossy in that idiomatic language and other figures of speech are expected in the essay. However, learners are expected to understand what the figures of speech mean and to ensure that they not only use figurative language but choose that which correspond with the heading/topic. Under the main theme of language, teachers also mention the need for good orthography and punctuation together with good word choices.

In the conclusion of the essay, learners are expected to make it obvious that they are concluding. Learners can do this by voicing their suggestions, opinions, points of views, solutions, teaching the reader and many other ways that show that the essay is being wrapped up and completed. In the introduction, teachers require the learner to give an overview of what will be discussed, in the conclusion, the learner is expected to briefly summarise what was discussed in the content of the essay. This act of introducing and summarising discussion points allows the learner to stick to the topic.

Style was chosen as the least important aspect in an essay. Language and structure were used as cluster themes in defining style. The finding there was that the participating teachers' inclusion of structure in the definition of style may be an indication of the lack of understanding what the style constitutes. The reason being that in the current rubric that participating teachers use (see Appendix B), structure is regarded as a separate issue that is different from the category of language and style. Language was the most observed theme in the description of style.

A peculiar finding here was that language and style cannot be separated, which means that you cannot say these marks are for style and those ones are for language. This, therefore, means that if language and style cannot be separated, then the aspect of language cannot be more important than that of style. However, language is observed as the greatest marker of style in an essay. In defining creativity, the teacher also looks at language, the same aspects similar to those that they claim do not matter much in an essay. This shows us that teachers are not clear on what style in an essay constitutes.

Teachers claim that they attend workshops that help them standardise their marking. Seven out of nine participants agree that the use of rubrics and the correction code help them mark similar to each other. The problem with the use of these tools (the rubric and the correction code) is that although it helps teachers identify similar mistakes and to award marks for similar essay aspects, it does not help learners. Teachers are in opposition to the use of the correction code because they feel that their learners are not benefiting from it. Some teachers go as far as suggesting that they would like to follow old routes and provide corrections for learners. Whether that will help learners improve in their writing or not, will still need further investigations.

## **4.5 Conclusion**

The main aim of this chapter was to present results from the empirical research employed to answer the question of how teachers mark creative Sesotho grade 10 home language essays by obtaining data on the assessment of creative writing by teachers. The first data set was collected using the questionnaire; the participants were given an opportunity to describe how they mark essays. They also reported their perceptions on the competence of learners in terms of peer assessment. Although they acknowledge that peer assessment is important, they do not believe that their learners are good at it. Teachers perceive that the post-assessing evaluations by the subject advisors or learning facilitators help standardise their marking in that they assess every task on its own. They, however, admit that learners' efforts do have an impact on the grades they allocate. As another tool for providing feedback, the participants reported using comments on essays in the questionnaires, but this perception was not borne out by an analysis of the scripts investigated in this study. In total, only one teacher provided comments on only two out of 10 scripts submitted. The comments focused on language matters.

According to the participants in this study, creativity is the most important aspect of a creative writing essay. To verify what they meant with creativity, teachers were requested to describe creativity in interviews. The finding was that creativity covers the ability to create, the use of figurative language, and most importantly, the content of a creative essay is expected to follow real life events that are possible even if learners are just being innovative and creating their own experiences. Factuality and logic are expected from the content of a creative essay. Introductions are expected to trigger interest in the prospective reader and the conclusions are expected to make it obvious to the reader that the essay is ending and the writer is required to voice his/her solutions, advice, opinions etc.

When it comes to grading, teachers were found to grant average marks for all three rubric mark categories. To teachers, marks were reported as an indication of how effective their teaching is and how good their learners are. Low marks, therefore, means either that the teaching strategy lacks or that the learners are not putting in enough effort.

The analysis of the findings is presented in the following chapter. A detailed discussion of the research questions and findings is presented in Chapter 6.2.

## **CHAPTER 5 – INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the discussion of the main findings from the empirical investigation.

### **5.2 The use of the correction code and the rubric to standardise the marking of Grade 10 Sesotho home language essays**

Standardisation in this study means that teachers maintain a level of consistency in their own marking and in comparison to each other. This is aided by the use of the correction code and the rubric to ensure that teachers mark the same aspects and that they provide similar feedback for the benefit of learners' understanding of their progress with essay writing. Participants perceive that marks can be used to motivate learners in that low marks indicate a need to work harder and put more effort in, and high marks indicate that the learner knows better. According to Randall and Engelhard (2010:1373), "grades should only represent student achievement". This means that teachers' assessment of learner writing should be reliable and indicate the achievement of the learner and not the preferences of the teacher. According to Kondo-Brown (2002:03), "[n]o matter what the method is, the reliability of rating is one of the major issues in performance-based assessments". As such, standardised essay assessment ensures that the outcome of the marking is reliable and that teachers are consistent in their own marking and in comparison to other teachers' marking. This section discusses the use of the correction code and the rubric to standardise the marking of grade 10 Sesotho home language essays written in South Africa.

#### **5.2.1 Participating teachers' perceptions of the standardisation of Sesotho essay-marking**

It seems that teachers are confident in their marking and they believe that they do not mark subjectively. Seven out of the nine teachers in this study perceived their assessment of Sesotho grade 10 home language creative essays as standardised by the rubric and the correction code. Regardless of the view by the participating teachers that the rubric and the correction code assists with the standardisation of marking, it was also noted that the rubric is not specifically designed for the needs of learners from different school. The suggested solution proposed by the participants was that teachers should adjust the standard of assessment according to the specific needs of each school. For instance, in a school where learners lack vocabulary,

teachers would adjust the rubric to grant lower marks for language use. This observation reported by participants indicates that “[r]aters’ expectations have an influence on the severity with which they score performances” (Hattingh, 2009:151). As such, teachers are assumed to be more lenient in assessing the aspects that they perceive to be their learners’ weaknesses. According to Lumley (2002:22-3):

... it is the rater who decides which features of the scale to pay attention to, how to arbitrate between the inevitable conflicts in scale wording; and how to justify her impression of the text in terms of the institutional requirements represented by the scale and rater training.

Unfortunately, the observation made by the participating teachers and the knowledge of this phenomenon stated by other researchers in this field, indicates that this matter will affect the standardisation potential of the rubric and the correction code use since the teacher will be inclined to be lenient or strict in awarding marks, as he/she sees fit for the context of her/his school. This realisation does not entirely defeat the “standardisation” potential of the rubric and correction code, as it does not eliminate the intra-rater consistency that is obtained when all teachers use the rubric and correction code consistently – albeit taking the weaknesses of their schools’ learners into account.

To the participants, standardisation entails looking at similar aspects of the grade 10 Sesotho essays by focusing on the aspects indicated in the rubric and consistently highlighting similar errors with the correction code. Although most participants acknowledge the usefulness of the standardised rubric and correction code, some of the teachers highlight issues with using them. For instance teacher focus and teacher expectations together with differences in learners’ and teachers’ understanding of the rubric are reported as impeding the potential of the rubric to standardise feedback. According to Hattingh (2009:150), individual teachers may differ from each other in four ways:

- i. Some raters may overall be more lenient than others.
- ii. Some raters may be biased against certain tasks or certain groups of learners.
- iii. Raters may vary in their degree of intra-rater consistency.
- iv. Individual raters may interpret and apply the rating scale in different ways (see also, McNamara, 1996:123-125).

This means that the effect of standardisation through the rubric may not be entirely successful. Something that the participants of this study are aware of. Participants highlighted the fact that

they may mark for the same aspects but they will differ in awarding marks. In other words, in their view, the standardisation of essay-marking is related to looking at similar aspects as indicated on the rubric and the errors that are identified on the correction code. They perceive grading as non-standardised in that they are aware that they might award different marks on the rubric for the same essays, due to their interpretation of the rubric elements in the contexts of their schools.

Although the difficulties with the standardisation of marking essays related to the grading of essays are observed as a problem by participants, they also observe that the rubric used to assess grade 10 Sesotho home language essays assists teachers in grading essays. The current rubric used to grade 10 Sesotho home language essays was proven to contain both holistic and analytic characteristics in the literature review. This means that the rubric does not provide clear guidance on grading. It stipulates minimum and maximum marks for different achievement levels but does not provide guidance on what each level entails. In other words, there is no guidance to teachers on how to relate the number of errors made, for example, with “split levels” of words and the mark provided for “Language, style and structure” on the rubric. Teachers should find their own approach to relate the number of errors indicated by the correction code to a mark for the relevant section on the rubric.

From the data gathered and analysed for this study, it is clear that teachers find this problematic. It is not feasible to do statistics with the small samples of essays and the small number of markers that participated in this study. One can analyse the frequencies of data and infer meaning based on this analysis. In this study, it became clear that there is no simple relationship between the participating markers’ allocation of marks on the rubric and their use of the correction code to indicate errors on the marked essays. This observation can be explained if one analyses the marks provided by markers for “Language, style and proofreading” on the rubric (this constitutes 15 out of the total of 50 marks for the essay) and the number of times a marker indicated “split words” on the correction code as an error on the essays marked.

The marking of marker 9 is used as an example in this discussion, because marker 9 provided above average, average and below average essays for the study<sup>7</sup>. In other words, one would be able to relate the marks given by marker 9 for “Language, style and proofreading” on the rubric, and then compare those marks with the number of times that “split word” errors were indicated on the essays from the correction code. “Split words” are regarded as an important

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<sup>7</sup> This trend is visible in similar ways in the marks and observations for “split words” on the correction code and the mark for “Language, style and proofreading” for all markers.

element related to “Language, style and proofreading”. “Split words” also received the most number of observations on the correction code for all markers. The full set of raw data is presented in Appendix 4E. For the purpose of this analysis, on the marks for “Language, style and proofreading” and the number of observations for “split words” is presented in table 5.1 below.

**Table 5.1: Marks for “Language, Style and Proofreading/editing” and observations of “Split words” awarded and made by marker 9**

Script number	Mark for “Language, style and proofreading” (out of 15)	Number of observations for “Split words”
76	13	18
77	12	0
78	11	16
79	10	22
80	6	8
81	5	15
82	12	2
83	10	11
84	9	8
85	6	15

From this table it is clear that there is no relationship between the number of observations for “split word” errors for this marker and marks on the rubric for “Language, style and proofreading”. For script numbers 78, 81 and 85, the marker observed 16, 15 and 15 observations for errors made with split words. Despite the similarity of the number of observations made for errors related to “split words”, the learners received 11 out of 15, 5 out of 15 and 6 out of 15 respectively for the rubric category “Language, style and proofreading”. This trend is observable for all markers that participated in this study.

This example indicates the difficulties that teachers experience in “translating” errors indicated on the correction code to marks for different sections of the rubric and the ultimate grade for the essay. The restrictions on the minimum and maximum marks for each category of marks on the rubric ensure that teachers adhere to the set criteria. This means that teachers cannot choose not to grant marks for “structure” or “language, style and proofreading” as they are forced to look at it in order to grant a final mark. As such, the rubric helps teachers to look at the same aspects on essays and to grade them based on similar percentages in the rubric in that structure does not constitute 20% of one essays’ total marks and 10% for another essay. In this way, the rubric and correction code contributes to some form of standardisation in the marking of grade 10 Sesotho essays by the participating teachers.

Marks are awarded holistically for essay criteria as indicated by different sections of the rubric. Table 5.2 presents the feedback learners receive in terms of the rubric.

**Table 5.2: The marking grid used to provide rubric feedback to learners in Sesotho home language with added translations into English**

<b>Makgetha a tekanyetso</b> <b>Categories of assessment</b>	<b>Matshwao</b> <b>Marks</b>	<b>Senotlolo</b> <b>Key</b>
<i>Dikahare le Moralo</i> Content and planning	30	DM. =
<i>Puo le setaele le Tekolobotjha</i> Language, style and self-correction	15	PST =
<i>Sebopeho</i> Structure	05	Seb. =
<i>Matshwao ohle</i> /Total marks		50

There are no elements related to each section of the rubric and teachers do not tick items or elements on rubrics. The DBE provides the master rubric and the correction code to all schools. Ideally, teachers are expected to mark items on the rubrics and the correction codes and then to provide totals on these tables to learners. However, this is not the current practice. Teachers write down the three sections of the rubric at the top or end of the marked essay and provide a mark for each section. They use the correction codes to indicate errors on the essays. As such, learners are not given much feedback through the rubric. The main function of the rubric is to provide grades. The lack of use of tables on which the participating teachers indicate their feedback on the rubric could also be related to the financial costs if longer tables with more details were to be provided.

Teachers could easily tailor-make the rubric categories for their own purposes of teaching, but strict restrictions by higher authorities on their level of freedom prohibit this. The aspect of post-assessment evaluations ensures that teachers adhere to the use of the correct rubric and the consistent use of the correction code and that they assess fairly. In South Africa, grade 12 assessments and “performances are moderated to control potential bias of individual raters,” (Hattingh, 2009:128). This is done by moderating Further Education and Training (FET) examination scripts “both internally and externally” (*ibid*). For grade 10, subject advisors (previously referred to as learning facilitators) moderate scripts at least once every quarter. As such, teachers are evaluated on their ability to conform to the standard expected by the DBE.

This forces teachers to be objective in their marking so that they remove any personal preferences in their marking and to conform to the standardised marking expectations.

It cannot be argued that the major threat to reliability of marking “is the lack of consistency of an individual marker” (Brown et al., 1997:235; Jonsson and Svingby, 2007:133). However, according to Jonsson and Svingby (2007:134) “intra-rater reliability might not in fact be a major concern when raters are supported by a rubric.” This, therefore, means that Sesotho home language grade 10 teachers are expected to be consistent and their assessment should be reliable when different marked scripts by the teacher in question are compared to each other.

The problem, however, is the fact that teachers use the rubric according to how they each understand them. Participants in this study see this as a hindrance to the aspect of standardisation in that although the same rubric and correction codes are used to assess essays, the way each teacher applies them will cause a divergence in awarding marks. However, according to Jonsson and Svingby (2007:136) “it seems safe to say that scoring with a rubric is probably more reliable than scoring without one.” Workshops and teacher training were identified as a strategy to ensure that teachers mark similarly when compared to each other. According to Hattingh (2009:151) this strategy is constructive because:

research shows that the reliability of writing assessment can be improved by controlling rater variance through a combination of factors, viz. using appropriate scales with clear scoring criteria, standardising scoring procedures and *training raters to interpret and apply scales consistently*. [emphasis added]

It should be noted that “[r]esearch in L2 [second language] performance suggests that rater training can reduce, but cannot easily eliminate a rater’s tendency for overall severity or leniency in judging performance” (Kondo-Brown, 2002:05). However, it cannot be neglected that “[r]ater training is successful in making raters more *self-consistent*” [emphasis in the original] (Lumley and McNamara, 1995:57). As such, teachers’ concerns about the differences in the interpretations of the rubric categories and aspects are managed through training and workshops and the simple fact of using a standardised correction code and rubric. Although the differences between markers could not be eliminated completely, major differences are managed in that all teachers need to focus on the same elements in essay-marking and the identification of corrections to be made in essays; all essays are moderated internally and externally from time to time; and intra-marker consistency is also enhanced.

### 5.2.2 Findings about standardisation from the script analysis

Eight out of nine participating teachers reported that they use comments to give feedback to their learners on the essays they write. The essay aspects that they reported as the focus of their comments include comments related to better essay structures, better writing from learners, less repetition of mistakes, improved grammar, and better understanding. Unfortunately, contrary to their perceptions, the main finding from the analysis of the scripts was that teachers generally do not give feedback through the use of comments. Only one teacher used comments on one essay analysed in this study. The comments were all related to the matter of orthography, especially “splitting words” and errors made with “capitalisation” in the learner’s essay. The only comments made by one participating teacher, therefore, simply underscored the message that the learners will get in any case via the extensive use of the correction code to indicate these types of errors. Based on the analysis of the 85 scripts provided by the nine participating teachers, one should conclude that comments on essays are not used as a regular form of feedback to grade 10 Sesotho home language essay writers in South African schools.

The findings from this study do indicate that the participating teachers use the correction code and the rubric as provided by the DBE. These findings indicate at some fundamental level, that the marking of the participating teachers is standardised to some extent, keeping the provisos discussed above in mind. Two major findings from the script analysis are that: (a) micro-elements related broadly to orthography (including errors related to split words, the combining of words, spelling and capitalisation) proved to be the error codes that are used by teachers when they indicate errors on essays; (b) there are no references to structure of essays (for example split paragraphs or the re-ordering of paragraphs) in the scripts. References to structure codes made up only 2% of the overall observed error codes in the script analysis.

The rubric marks awarded by the participating teachers for the scripts in the analysis cluster around 60%. The consistency with which marks for each section of the rubric were provided within the same range (irrespective of differences in observations on the correction code on, for example, split words) leaves an impression that teachers seem to give holistic marks and then use the rubric to spread the marks equally throughout the rubric categories. This, however, cannot be concluded in this study as more data would be needed to investigate this impression. What can be concluded, however, is the fact that the grading procedure seems to be standardised in that teachers consistently award marks for different essay topics similarly.

### 5.2.3 External factors that influence the marking of essays

An assumption may be that good behaviour generally influences success in school. Participating teachers, however, oppose this notion. Eight participants reported not taking general learner behaviour into consideration when they mark essays and they claim to mark focused on the correction code and the rubric. This may mean that the use of the correction code and the rubric help restrict teachers from being influenced by external factors in assessment. This notion was confirmed by participants' perceptions on the lack of influence of learner ability. Participating teachers believe that learner ability does not influence their grading of individual assessments. The main argument here was that post-assessment evaluations restrict teachers' freedom to grade based on external factors. The teacher is forced to assess an essay based on the current task because subject advisors evaluate assessed tasks. The rubric and the correction code are also perceived as helping the teacher explain the mark when learners with proven good writing abilities suddenly receive low marks.

In an educational setting it is needless to state that both learners and teachers expect improvement in abilities over time. However, the participating teachers indicated that the use of the rubric and correction code assist them to grant a mark for each essay that they assess that provides a fair assessment of the learner's performance in the current task. The participating teachers were adamant that they do not give free marks. They indicated that if the learner fails to improve, they follow up on the issue by trying strategies that would assist the learner to improve in the next essay task. Teachers also reported that they follow up when a learner suddenly improves drastically, because there might be plagiarism at work. The internal and external evaluations of essay-marking by a higher authority was also indicated as a reason for adherence to the rubric and the correction code requirements. Ultimately, participating teachers insisted that learners could not be granted extra marks in an attempt to influence a passing mark. Teachers know whom of their learners are strong writers, average writers and below average writers. As such, they can pick up if a learner underperforms. In this study, teachers reported granting a second opportunity to learners that suddenly under perform. Effort was indicated as being influential on the final marks teachers grant. However, even when learners put in a lot of effort, participating teachers report that they still adhere to the rubric in that when "best is not enough", the learner is granted low marks according to the rubric and provided an extra opportunity to re-submit the essay. This is a clear indicator of the confidence that teachers have in the consistency of their marking and the reliability of their marks.

Kane (1999:09) suggests that “[v]arious quality control procedures (e.g., periodic rescoring of some tasks) can be employed to enhance confidence that the scoring criteria are being applied correctly and consistently.” This is consistent with teachers’ views about the evaluation of their assessment by their subject advisors as evidence of their adherence to the set standard and procedure of assessing and providing feedback on learners’ essays. In summary, the post-assessment evaluations of teachers’ marking by a higher authority forces them to mark fairly and in a standardised manner. Participating teachers are more confident in their assessment of essays because subject advisors evaluate their work and if they check and agree with their marking, it means that they are competent assessors.

#### **5.2.4 Different marking contexts (or circumstances?)**

Learners are granted a choice to choose a topic for their process writing essays provided by the teacher. In this study, teachers reported that they do not take into account which topics are chosen when they mark. The participating teachers stated that they simply mark from the first essay. The same principle was reported for formative and summative assessment. The same rubric and the same correction code are used to assess both formative and summative assessments.

Based on the context of the participating teachers in this study, on average, Sesotho grade 10 home language teachers would teach a total of 202 learners which would result in a teacher marking a total of 1414 grade 10 essays in each academic year. Participating teachers perceive planning their marking as an important strategy for managing the workload. Although one teacher suggested that the DBE should appoint markers to reduce the workload of teachers, the majority of teachers reported that they do not accept assistance with their marking even though time for marking was indicated by some teachers as a problem.

In summative assessments, teachers have very little time to assess, as opposed to formative assessments. Although teachers acknowledge that time constraints may impact on the quality of their marking, the post assessment evaluations enforce teachers to consistently use the rubric and correction code and this increases their intra-marker reliability to a large extent in their view.

Teachers in this study generalise their perception of successful essays across genres and they generally do not differentiate between creative essay types. There are six essay types prescribed in the grade 10 Sesotho home language writing classes in South Africa namely: (i) persuasive or argumentative essays, (ii) reviewing essays, (iii) discursive essays, (iv) reflective

essays, (v) narrative essays, and (vi) descriptive essays (DBE, 2011a:37-39). Despite the different types of essays required as focus by the DBE in South Africa, there is only one correction code and one rubric used to assess all grade 10 Sesotho essays. There are no genre specific assessment rubrics or correction codes. The same tools are used throughout. This ensures that teachers are consistent in their assessment. The result of this form of standardisation however indicates that not much can be deduced from the feedback of the rubric and the correction code related to the specific essay or type of essay written by learners. It is beyond the scope of this study to determine if this is a problem in the teaching of different essay types in grade 10 Sesotho home language essay writing in South Africa.

### **5.2.5 Conclusion**

The participants are confident in their assessment based on the fact that they regularly undergo training to ensure that they hold the same perceptions of the rubric categories and the standard of performance of their learners. In addition, the post-assessment evaluations by the subject advisors also ensure that teachers adhere to the standards and that they give feedback on the rubric and the correction code that is consistent with the requirements of the DBE. Essay assessment in South Africa is said to be greatly standardised because the tools that teachers use to provide feedback are similar and are used consistently for the assessment of all writing tasks. Due to time constraints, no additional feedback (outside that provided via the correction code and the rubric) is provided to learners. It is, therefore, concluded that at a fundamental level, the method of enforcing and ensuring standardisation in marking of the Sesotho grade 10 home language essays in South Africa is optimal.

## **5.3 How the rubric and the correction code are used to provide feedback**

The two tools consistently used to provide feedback to learners on Sesotho grade 10 home language essays are the correction code and the rubric. This section seeks to explain how this process of feedback through the correction code and the rubric is managed in South African high schools as reported by the participants in this study. It was established in the literature review in Chapter 2 that rubrics are used to present an overall impression of the essay to the learner through grades, while the correction code is used to guide and provide explicit feedback during and after the writing process.

### 5.3.1 The process approach

The production of an essay in grade 10 Sesotho home language follows the four stages process. In the first stage, self-assessment is expected, in the second stage, peer- assessment is expected and the third stage entails an assessment by the teacher after which the learner incorporates the final changes to the essay and the final draft is assessed and graded by the teacher.

Henderson (1980:197) states that “essays may be conceived as fulfilling three distinguishable functions, simultaneously, (i) to aid the student's learning process; (ii) to provide a diagnostic medium through which the tutor can interact with the student; and (iii) to assess the student.” The essay provides a platform for the learner to incorporate all the skills learned in one practical communication assignment. As such, grade 10 Sesotho essay writing may be said to aid the learners’ learning process in that they are given a platform to practise their skills. The learner illustrates his/her capabilities in, for example, using the correct punctuation. The teacher will then focus on teaching punctuation if more learners struggle with it. The last function is to assess the learners’ performances. The rubric is used for this purpose; to indicate to the learner where the learner lacks and needs to focus more. According to Andrade (2014:02) rubrics:

are powerful tools for both teaching and assessment. Rubrics can improve student performance, as well as monitor it, by making teachers’ expectations clear and by showing students how to meet these expectations. The result is often marked improvements in the quality of student work and in learning.

It was elaborated in the literature review that the structure of the process approach as used in Sesotho home language grade 10 essays restricts the rubric feedback to the end of the process of writing. This, therefore, means that there is no proof whether learners consult the rubric feedback to improve their own future writing or not. This matter deserves further attention in future studies.

“As long as the rubric is only one of several sources, as long as it doesn’t drive the instruction, it could conceivably play a constructive role. But all bets are off if students are given the rubrics and asked to navigate by them” (Kohn, 2006:13). This is fortunately not the case in grade 10 Sesotho home language essay writing and assessment as conducted in South African schools. The rubric is used together with the correction code and instead of it being the central aspect of assessment; the rubric is only used at the last stage, clearly indicating that learners do not navigate according to the rubric. The rubric is used to give feedback to the final versions of

learners' essays. The only instance where teachers reported allowing learners to use the rubric feedback to improve their texts was when a learner underperforms and a second opportunity for submission was provided. One of the stages in process writing entails assessment by a peer. Granted that learners actually incorporate peer suggested changes into their essays, wrong suggestions of improvement may be made and incorrect improvements may be attempted. This matter is problematic in the context of process essay writing curricula such as in the case of Sesotho home language essay writing in South African schools. Two solutions were suggested by participants; the first was to mark the incorrect improvement as incorrect in the final version submitted to the teacher because it simply shows that the learner who incorporated the change also does not know any better. The second solution was to mark the learner's correct earlier version as correct and to simply indicate to the learner that the previous version was correct and that the peer-improvement proposed was incorrect. Unfortunately, the majority of participants reported that they do not attempt to track and trace peer-induced errors. Seven teachers reported not attending to learners who suggest wrong editions on their peers' essays at all.

This is a surprising finding. On one hand, participants reported their learners' peer assessment as not good and on the other hand, the same teachers agreed that peer assessment is important. The problem is that if they perceive peer assessment as important, it is only logical to expect them to work hard at ensuring that it is done in the best possible way and that the result thereof is desirable. The downside of neglecting peer-induced errors may result in learners no longer incorporating the peer suggested changes because they get penalised if they incorporate incorrect peer-suggested changes. Nelson and Carson (1998) found that students do not find their classmates' advice particularly useful. However, other studies (such as Paulus, 2008; Peterson and McClay, 2010) found that learners find peer assessment useful and they actually incorporate peer suggested changes. More research is needed to ascertain whether Sesotho grade 10 home language learners incorporate peer suggested changes and what the quality of peer suggested changes on essays is in this context.

### **5.3.2 Type of feedback provided by correction codes and rubrics**

According to Spencer (1998:264), "Practical English lecturers focus almost exclusively on surface-level problems and on the textual function of student writing to the detriment of the ideational or interpersonal aspects." As illustrated in Chapter 2, this is the same case even in Sesotho grade 10 home language creative writing. The correction code focuses on surface-level issues such as punctuation and orthography. Meaning changing codes are not represented well in the code and are not used by the participating teachers. Teachers are focused on pointing

out the surface-level errors like marking machines at the expense of responding as readers of the text.

According to Spencer (2012:35), students did not understand the codes used as marking symbols even though they were “explained in students’ study packages”. In Spencer’s (2012) context, the students in her study are distance learning students, who receive all of their instructions through correspondence. In the South African high school context where this study took place, the learners were in contact with the teachers. However, the same problem may be experienced in Sesotho grade 10 creative writing. The participating teachers indicated in the interviews and questionnaires that learners are not quite aware or sure of what each correction code means.

The main idea however from the correction code and the majority of codes observed from the script analysis is that learners are encouraged to focus on their language which is consistent with one participant’s statement that essays are all about language. It is concluded in this study that the use of the correction code as a sole feedback tool throughout the different stages of process writing is problematic as it communicates to learners that they ought to focus more on micro-elements when they revise their essays, such as orthography, lexical matters and punctuation. Teachers may be focusing on these items because of the fact that the items are over-represented in the correction code, in other words, the correction code provides more codes on these items than other items. This is similar to Spencer’s (2009:18) observation that “present codes [in the correction code that was used at the University of South Africa to provide feedback to student writing in an entry-level English for academic purposes module] refer almost exclusively to concerns relating to linguistic competence.” This finding is important and will receive attention in the next chapter when recommendations are made.

### **5.3.3 The difficulty in relating correction code feedback with rubric grades**

One would expect that since the correction code and the rubric are used to complement each other in providing feedback on essays, there would be some correspondence between the correction codes indicated on a script as part of marking and the marks awarded for different sections on the rubric. As discussed above, this is not the case in Sesotho home language grade 10 essay assessment. The script analysis indicated that there is no connection between the number of observations made for codes on the correction code, the marks for sections on the rubric and the final marks awarded to an essay.

The codes used on the current correction code are related to the criterion of language, style and editing/proofreading, for instance:

- i. Language – (indicated with P, looks at the language the learner used, in that judgements are made of whether the word choices are appropriate for the register aimed at or the style of writing followed).
- ii. Punctuation – (indicated with mt, indicates punctuation errors).
- iii. Word choice – (indicated with P, shows incorrect word choices).

The codes for paragraphing could be connected with the criteria of structure. Where the frequency of the use of the paragraph codes (// for split paragraphs and ↶↷ for re-order paragraphs) are used to explain the marks given for structure. As explained above, this is however not the case. Teachers seem not to make any connection between the frequencies of errors indicated on scripts and the marks awarded for each section on the rubric and for the essay overall. This observation leaves the impression teachers decide on what marks to award an essay after reading and marking and then they use the rubric to distribute the marks so that the overall mark they had in mind is achieved. According to Spencer (2012:36) students in her study “clearly felt they had a right to know how they could they have improved their writing and where they lost marks”. The kind of feedback given to Sesotho grade 10 home language essays clearly does not cater for this need. Learners are made aware of the mistakes that they are making during their writing but are not guided as to what more they can do to improve their texts because there is no clear link between the errors indicated on scripts and the marks received for sections of the rubric; and the final grades granted to an essay.

It would be worthwhile to investigate whether teachers assess the pre-final essay drafts with the rubric in mind or if they simply focus on identifying and highlighting errors in language.

#### **5.3.4 Perceptions of how the rubric is used in marking (or grading?)**

A general finding was that the participants generally mark from the first script regardless of the topics chosen by learners when multiple essay topics are provided. Eight from nine participants stated that they simply start reading and grading each essay presumably from the essay at the top of the essay pile. One participant stated that he/she reads a few essays to understand the level at which learners wrote for that task and then he/she starts grading essays in no particular order. Another reported alternative procedure mentioned by one teacher was assessing essays of similar topics together, which means that the teacher will have to group essays according to topic choice and then start grading.

In terms of how teachers use the rubric to grade, two views were reported. Five teachers proposed one point of view while four teachers presented another point of view. Five teachers mark with their rubrics in hand, their marking includes references to the rubric while four teachers mark the essay, determine a mark and then consult the rubric.

According to the participants' reports, there is no difference in marking a formative essay assessment and a summative essay assessment. The reasons put forth were the use of the same rubric and correction code to assess the two types of assessments, and the fact that the formative and summative assessments are equally important. Participants reported time constraints as the source of difference in assessing the two types of assessments. The rubric can, therefore, be said to be used in the same manner as in formative assessment, where some teachers prefer to mark with reference to the rubric and others prefer to mark first and then allocate marks with the rubric after assessing each essay.

### **5.3.5 Supplementing the rubric**

The majority of the participants perceive that the current rubric for assessing creative writing essays in Sesotho grade 10 home language in South African schools is sufficient. As stated earlier, participants believe that the rubric does not need any modifications. However, rating levels were indicated as possibly incorrect at times according to one teacher. Unfortunately it was not in the scope of this essay to validate the levels of rating on the rubrics and as such not much can be said with regards to levels of achievement. However, it would be interesting to investigate the validity of the levels of achievements based on the correction code. A possible explanation for the wrong levels of achievement would be when a learner performs above average in one aspect of a rubric criterion and average or below average in another aspect of the same criterion; the teacher cannot distinguish where the learner did right and where he/she performed slightly below average. Hattingh (2009:166) states the following about such predicaments:

Some raters find the scale difficult to implement consistently, because the scale makes it difficult to reward learners who perform better in some features than in others related to a particular criterion. Raters may, therefore, equate performances that are not at the same level because each level is described in terms of a group of features. All features have to be considered, but raters cannot score the features individually.

The second flaw identified by one teacher was lack of space for allowing marks for best performance or awarding effort in the rubric. This is the same flaw in the rubric used to mark Sesotho grade 12 home language creative writing essays. Hattingh (2009) added a category of extra marks pertaining to the tidiness of the essay following editing on the revised rubric in her study. In the final draft, this category of extra marks is removed, and as such, adding more categories for extra marks may not be optimal. Hattingh's (2009) suggested rubric for the assessment of English First Additional language is relevant to the marking of Sesotho essays in that the curriculum of Sesotho home language is translated from that of English First Additional Language in South Africa.

The rubric was found to provide close to no justification of the derivation of marks. It does not distinguish between what is best performance and what is not. Although the feedback from the teacher on the final mark for the rubric categories indicates the level of achievement for the learner, it does not provide clear feedback on how the marks were attained. This is the same for the teacher. The rubric does not instruct the teacher on what is good performance.

Hattingh (2009:166) states the following about mark derivation from rubrics used in English FAL grade 12 assessment:

In practice, the current scale does not guide raters to discriminate effectively between performances. Raters tend not to use the full range of the scale, but rather to bunch marks around 50 - 55%. This may be owing to the fact that the scale level descriptors are not based on examples of learner performances, that raters have to account simultaneously for various features at each level, or because levels are not clearly distinguished.(Hattingh, 2009:166).

This statement by Hattingh proved to be the same when the findings from the analysis of the scripts in this study are taken into consideration. Generally teachers were found to grant average marks around 60% for essays. This finding also confirms concerns raised by Van Rooy and Coetzee-Van Rooy (2015: 7) about the inflation of marks for African home languages as matric subjects. In their study, they maintained that the marks for English as a first additional language was fairly close to the average matric marks of participants; while the marks for African languages as matric subjects were statistically significantly higher than average matric marks. The data from this study indicate that the average marks awarded for grade 10 Sesotho essays that formed part of this study are already 10% above the marks for English first additional language essays observed in Hattingh's (2009) study. This

matter is important, as a learner's matric results ultimately determine access to higher education and are used as a predictor for academic success when academic point scores are calculated. An inflated mark for the Sesotho home language subject will not in the long run serve the learners well. As such, the need for a clearly defined explanatory rubric guide based on the current rubric may benefit teachers in understanding how to award marks.

### **5.3.6 Supplementing the correction code**

In the correction code, there are currently no positive codes indicating where learners have done outstanding work. In the questionnaire part of the study, this was raised as one of the things missing from the correction code. In the questionnaire study (question 6.1.1, c.f. Appendix E), a few scenarios were given to teachers in order to find out how they deal with the need to provide supportive comments to learners when they assess essays. The first finding was that when teachers identify whole sentences that do not make sense, teachers work towards finding a better construction for these sentences by either correcting it for the learner or by working with the learner to correct it. In other words, participating teachers said that they were trying to find out what the learner was trying to say and helping him/her to construct their sentence in a more clear way.

Sometimes there can be more than one way of treating an error. Teachers reported that they choose one code to assist the learner. This means that they choose the editing option for the learner instead of providing alternatives, thereby acting as dictators. This may be a result of the training from the DBE in South Africa, where teachers are instructed not to indicate too many errors in an essay. For instance, one teacher reported that they were instructed not to indicate two errors in succession at one place on the essay. For instance, the teacher cannot use the punctuation code to indicate both incorrect punctuation and capitalisation. The teacher will indicate punctuation on the first draft that the learner submits and then fix the capitalisation on the final draft if the learner did not detect the error on his/her own. This is done in order to avoid confusing learners.

Louw (2008:93) states that feedback is more than just the identification of incorrectness. Unfortunately, this is the case in the assessment of grade 10 creative writing Sesotho essays in South African schools. The correction code makes no provision for anything other than the identification of incorrectness.

### **5.3.7 Conclusion**

It was explained in this section that the process approach in Sesotho essay composition for grade 10 home language teaching in South African schools allows only the use of the correction code to give guiding feedback during the writing stages of essays. The rubric is used as the last form of feedback on the final version submitted to the teacher for grading.

The main practice as reported by participants in terms of marking essay scripts was beginning with the essay at the top of the essay pile regardless of different essay topics chosen by learners. Only one participant indicated sorting essays according to topics, but the majority of participants revealed that they do not spend time sorting essays according to any criteria. During the marking, teachers reported not taking into account the aspect of peer-induced errors, in other words participants reported that they left peer-induced errors untreated; or rather, that they do not track and trace which errors were introduced by peers. They simply mark all the errors in the essay as if they were learner-induced.

The correction code was proven to be directing the focus of teachers to the micro-issues such as orthography (split and combined words, spelling and orthography) and punctuation. This means that teachers focus on surface-level errors instead of meaning-changing issues in their assessment of essays. The main problem teachers noted with the use of correction codes is that learners are not quite sure of what each code refers to or what it means.

There is a clear lack of correspondence between the codes used in the essay and the marks granted at different sections of the essay and the final mark awarded at the end of the essay. However, most codes in the rubric (seven out of 12) relate to the “language, style and proofreading/editing” category of the rubric. There, however, is no clear relationship between the correction codes and the rubric category.

## **5.4 Elements of a good essay**

Clearly, there is a difference between successfully written essays and unsuccessfully written essays. In most cases, the marks awarded to each essay will make this distinction clear. One must keep in mind that even in a context where the participating teachers in this study were asked to select essays that are above average, average and below average, essay marks basically clustered in the average section around 60%.

This section looks into what participating teachers regard as most important in an essay and to some extent, what teachers regard as less important in an essay. Participants' perceptions on

the general usefulness of essays are explored first, followed by teachers' perceptions of the most important and the least important elements of essays. The aspect of creativity in "creative writing", introductions and conclusions are discussed as well. The aim with this section is to answer the fourth main question of this study, which was to determine what the participating teachers regarded as the elements of a good essay. The conclusion will summarise these elements.

#### **5.4.1 Participating teachers' opinions about the general usefulness of essays written in Sesotho**

It was found in this study that participating teachers believe that learners should write Sesotho home language essays to: (i) be able to express themselves, (ii) to use the correct grammar, (iii) to develop language in respect to the writing aspect of it, and (iv) to elevate the status of Sesotho in the education context. The outcome of writing would then be to: (i) enhance creativity, (ii) develop independent thinking and, (iii) exercise research skills while adding to the knowledge of the learners. It was therefore concluded from the questionnaire results that good essays are expected to be linguistically correct, follow the correct structure of an essay, exhibit creativity and be well planned.

Participating teachers suggested that Sesotho creative writing essays should be written on current affairs (such as municipal service delivery and crime in local towns) and topics that learners can relate to (such as matters affecting the youth, from which learners can learn life lessons), real life experiences in the lives of the learners (such as sports and challenges in education) and lastly, it was recorded that learners should write about events taking place in our communities, our country and the whole world. A total of 17 topics were identified from the 85 scripts that were analysed in this study. The finding here was that the topics identified from the scripts were in alignment with what the teachers suggested as topic themes for essay writing in grade 10 Sesotho home language. Although the topics are not based on fiction, learners can create their own stories and present them as possible in the real world. In this way, learners are provided with opportunities to improve their creativity, develop independent thinking and exercise self-expression in their own home language.

#### **5.4.2 Participating teachers' perceptions of the most important aspects in essays**

It was concluded in the previous chapter that participating teachers expect creative writing essays to: (i) exhibit creativity, (ii) to be well planned, (iii) to be linguistically correct, and (iv) to follow the correct structure of an essay. These expectations of participating teachers on the

characteristics of a good essay draw on each of the categories of the rubric. The first two elements identified fall under the category of content and planning, the third under the category of language and style and the last one under the category of structure. This, therefore, means that teachers' expectations are on the right track because they are clearly based on what they use to assess essays.

Participating teachers were found to regard creativity as the most important element of a successful creative essay in grade 10 Sesotho home language. Correct grammar use was elected as the second most important aspect of a good essay, followed by logic and punctuation. Style on the other hand was indicated as the least important aspect of a good essay preceded by coherence as the second least important aspect and narrative as the third least important aspect of a successful essay in Sesotho grade 10 home language.

From table 4.4.5, it is clear that style is supposed to go hand in hand with the tone and the register of the essay. However, teachers report that language and style cannot be separated, as such, teachers incorporate language matters such as punctuation in the definition of style. What is surprising in this definition of style is the fact that there is no mention of structure in the category of language, style and proofreading/editing. This may in turn mean that teachers are not clear on what constitutes style in the essay. Although they have captured the use of language correctly, their interpretation of structure as style may not be optimal. Creativity and style are discussed in the following section.

### **5.4.3 Teachers' perceptions on the most important and the least important elements of a successfully written essay**

Creativity and style were respectively chosen as the most and the least important aspect in essay assessment. Following is a discussion of the two elements.

#### **5.4.3.1 The most important element of a successful essay in Sesotho grade 10 home language**

In the questionnaires, creativity was elected as the most important element in good essays. Participating teachers indicated content as the main contributor in judging creativity. In the rubric, the category of "content and planning" constitutes 60 % of the overall essay grade. This then validates creativity as the most important aspect of a good essay because the category of contents constitutes the most marks in the essay.

The other three main clusters of themes in defining what the participating teachers consider as creativity in an essay were identified as the ability to create, language and structure. In the content, teachers expect learners to express themselves, learners should relay facts from the narrated events, use imagery, demonstrate logic in the narration, provide proof of planning and exhibit a clear understanding of the heading or topic of the essay. In this instance, content cover the things that the learner present as an essay. Under the ability to create, participating teachers expect learners to demonstrate the ability to make up their own stories and thereby show innovation. Under the cluster theme of language, figures of speech/language, idiomatic expressions, correct spelling, orthography and punctuation were listed as expectations.

It was stated in the previous chapter that together, the content cluster and the cluster of the ability to create make up the bulk of what may be defined as creativity in an essay. This is because the ability to create has a direct influence on the content of the essay. The quality of the essay contents is directly dependent on the learner's ability to create and his/her level of innovation and originality. As such, participating teachers are said to focus on what the learner is saying when they assess the aspect of creativity. This means that the teacher will mostly decide what mark the learner deserves; depending on how much he/she was impressed by the content of the essay.

#### **5.4.3.2 The least important element of a successful essay in Sesotho grade 10 home language**

In the questionnaires (c.f. Appendix E, Question 3.3), style was identified by three participants as the least important element in a good essay (c.f. Table 4.2.2). In contrast, it was identified by only one participant as the most important aspect. After a frequency analysis of the ratings of essay elements by the participating teachers from the questionnaire results, the aspect of style was noted as the least important aspect in an essay (c.f. Table 4.2.3).

Participating teachers' perceptions saw language as the single most defining component of style in an essay. However, after clustering the codes with respect to themes; "language" and "structure", structure emerged as the most prevalent component of style. As explained before, the marks for style, language and register are combined in the rubric criterion. In contrast however, the marks for structure are categorised under a different category. The analysis of the rubric also indicated that there is no relation between the category of style and the aspect of structure. The fact that marks are awarded holistically for a criterion on the rubric, validates teachers' reports that language and style cannot be assessed separately. However, the

participants' identification of structure as style may be an indication that they do not have a clear understanding of the rubric criteria or that they lack the ability to distinguish between the rubric categories. Unfortunately, teachers' understanding of the rubric categories was not investigated in this study. However, it should not be neglected that they indicate possibilities of confusion about the rubric categories.

From the 11 codes (generated from the Atlas analysis) identified from participant responses to the open ended question in the interviews on what constitutes style in a creative writing essay, (i) language, (ii) idiomatic expressions, (iii) punctuation, (iv) figures of speech and to some extent, (v) learner preference can directly be linked with the category of language and style. Paragraphing which was observed second most frequently in these responses and the physical structure of the essay could be linked to the category of structure. Logic and coherence on the other hand could be directly linked to the category of content and planning. Sentences can be assumed to fall under the category of structure because it may be linked with paragraphs. The style of writing as a code seems to be out of place in that teachers mentioned it in attempt to mean the way in which the essay was written, including the preference or use of certain figures of speech and physical structures.

It is not surprising that teachers are not clear on what style refers to. Producers of the rubric seem not to have explained what each category evaluates. Confusion is quite possible because teachers only have the rubric without a guide on how to use it. Such a guide assists teachers not only in knowing what to assess, but also how to assess. An example of such a guide is that of Hattingh (2009:273). Unfortunately, teachers are not guided on how to use the rubric to assess for each category mainly based on the assumption that the rubric is self-explanatory, which is not true.

It is concluded, therefore, that confusion on what each category of the rubric entails is not entirely teachers' faults. The problem lies in the ambiguity of rubric categories. An example here would be Hattingh's (2009) study where a validated marking grid was proposed for assessment of grade 12 final English FAL examinations. The final grid presents two mentions of style, the first in the category of "structure and style" and second under the category of "vocabulary". Hattingh's (2009:276) final proposed validated rating scale distinguishes between two levels of achievement namely: "extended range [of vocabulary], highly appropriate style, diction and register" and "limited range [of vocabulary], inappropriate style, diction and register" under the category of vocabulary. In contrast however, under the category of "structure and style" there is no mention of style. The category distinguishes between achievements of "effective division into

introduction, body and conclusion together with effective paragraphing” against the low achievement level characterised with “no division into introduction, body and conclusion together with no paragraphing”. In her revised scale guide, Hattingh (2009:273) provides examples of style as “formal, informal, narrative, descriptive and argumentative”. This provides some extent of clarity into the understanding of style. However, it does not relate to what she labels as the category of “structure and style”.

In conclusion, the aspect of style in Hattingh’s (2009) final rating scale may be said to confirm participants’ perceptions of what constitutes style in an essay. Participating teachers list both structure and language as components of style, which corresponds with Hattingh’s (2009:273) categorisation of style under the “vocabulary” and the “structure and style” categories. However, Hattingh’s category of structure and style is not clearly defined to incorporate style. Based on the findings from this study, it is clear that teachers may need more clarity as to what style constitutes.

#### **5.4.4 Participating teachers’ perceptions on creative introductions and conclusions**

This section addresses the concept of creativity by discussing findings about what the participating teachers regard as creative introductions and creative conclusions to essays. In the current rubric for essay assessment for grade 10 Sesotho home language creative writing, both the introduction and the conclusion are addressed under the category of “structure”.

##### **5.4.3.1 Creative introductions**

Based on the answers by participants on the open-ended questions in the interviews (on what constitutes a creative introduction and a creative conclusion to an essay), five main themes were identified from participants’ responses on what they regard as creative introductions to creative writing essays. The most frequently identified expectation from introductions was the ability to trigger interest at the reader.

Most of the codes identified from participants’ responses pertained to the functions of introductions. This covered four of the main themes identified as triggering interest, grabbing attention, providing a summary of the essay and defining the topic to show understanding of it. The functions of the introductions can be said to depend on the genre of the essay, which then decides the structure of the introduction which also incorporates the length of the essay and finally determine appropriate figures of speech and idiomatic expressions used by the writer.

The least important aspect in deciding whether an introduction is creative was observed as language. The functions of the essay introduction were noted to be most important. In the rubric, the only reference made to introductions is whether they are satisfactory and relevant to the heading or not. This means that it is important to relate the introduction to the heading of an essay. The deciding factor that will indicate whether the introduction is satisfactory will be its ability to fulfil the expected functions perceived by the participating teachers.

In summary, creative introductions fulfil the functions of introducing the topic, explaining it according to need, giving a summary of the whole discussion, and triggering the attention of the reader. This is done through the use of correct figures of speech and fitting idiomatic expressions. The selections of the functions of the introductions to use or incorporate are dependent of the genre of the essay and are restricted by the length of the essay.

#### **5.4.3.3 Creative conclusions**

Consistent with the need for learners to write essays, participants identified creative essay conclusions as fulfilling the function of self-expression (voicing the opinions of the learners). In the participants' views, learners are expected to present the whole story in the body of the content and then voice their inner thoughts at the end of the essay. For instance, a learner may write about the effects of drugs on the youth in his/her society and in the conclusion, he/she will express what he/she feels about drug use or how he/she thinks victims can be assisted. The second most important function was identified as indicating the end of the essay in that the reader is supposed to decipher that the essay is ending and that the discussion has come to an end. Participating teachers also indicated the need for relating the conclusion to the introduction.

Participants were also found to generalise between essay types without being specific to essay types such as discursive, argumentative, narrative and etc. The cause may be that there is only one general rubric for the different types of essays. More research is needed to ascertain how teachers actually teach writing in classes in order to find out if they differentiate between essay types or not. The problem here is that learners are provided with a variety of essay topic choices to choose from, as such, learners may be choosing to write the same type of essay every time and this hinders the successful teaching of different essay types.

#### **5.4.5 Conclusion**

It is apparent that teachers need guidance as to what they should mark for under the rubric categories as Hattingh (2009) proved in her study. The rating scale guide functioned as training for the teacher in that it stipulates what should be assessed in which way. In most cases a rubric guide distinguishes good performance from bad performances under specific categories of the rating scale. The aspect of style was indicated as misunderstood by teachers based on their identification of structure as the main component of structure. Hattingh's (2009) examples of style in an essay were discussed to better understand teachers' confusion in the definition of the rubric aspect style relevant to this study. The conclusion was that a rubric guidance sheet would be useful in defining to teachers, what each category entails and what each aspect of the rubric refers to.

In summary, it was indicated in this study that grade 10 Sesotho home language learners in South African schools should write essays on current and real life events. This was proven to be the current practice based on the outcomes of analysis of scripts and topics of essays selected by learners. Participating teachers perceive creativity as the most important aspect of a successful essay. The aspect of creativity is assessed in the content of the essay, which forms the biggest part of marks in an essay. This therefore means that participating teachers are more focused on the content of an essay over other aspects. This perception is contradicted when evidence from script analysis is compared with these views.

The introductions of essays are supposed to fulfil the function of introducing the essay, giving a summary of discussion points, triggering the interest of the reader through the use of figures of speech and idiomatic expressions relevant to the topics addressed.

## **CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This study set out to investigate how teachers provide feedback to creative writing essays in grade 10 Sesotho home language as a subject in South African high schools. A case study with nine participants, from six schools, from three townships in the Fezile-Dabi district of the Free State province, was conducted.

This chapter presents a concluding synopsis of the answers to research questions gleaned from this study, as well as a summary of the main findings, the implications of the findings, and the recommendations based on the findings and the limitations of this study. Two main recommendations on the improvement of the feedback on creative writing essays based on the findings of this investigation are presented and more general recommendations are made.

### **6.2 Concluding synopsis of answers to the research questions posed in the study**

The aim of this section is to provide a brief concluding summary of the answers to the research questions posed in this study

#### **6.2.1 Answers and conclusions related to research question 1**

Research question 1 was:

What is known about Sesotho home language creative essay writing in South Africa?

From the literature review in Chapter 2, it was demonstrated that the marking of essays in grade 10 creative writing in the home language of Sesotho follows the trends recognised internationally. In other words, there is nothing expected to be different from how Sesotho home language creative essays are assessed in comparison to how teachers assess creative essay writing.

The process approach to writing and assessment was demonstrated as being followed by teachers in Sesotho home language. The DBE enforces the process approach to writing based on the reasons presented in Chapter 2 (DBE, 2008a; DBE, 2008b; DBE, 2011a; DBE, 2011b). Such reasons include the need to involve learners in their own teaching and learning and ensuring that learners receive usable feedback to aid their own improvement and

understanding. It was, therefore, also proven that the curriculum of Sesotho home language follows that of English FAL curriculum. As such, the assessment of creative essay writing in Sesotho may be concluded as optimal and up to international standards of assessing essays in both the first and second language levels.

### **6.2.2 Answers and conclusions related to research question 2**

Research question 2 was:

What are teachers' perceptions on the use of the rubric and the correction code to standardise their marking?

The participating teachers perceive their essay-marking as standardised with regard to aspects of marking as included in the rubric and the correction code, but they exclude grading from this perception. They experience their grading as a non-standardised element in the process. In contrast to the participating teachers' opinions, the findings from an analysis of the marking were that the grading is standardised to a great extent, because the teachers seem to award marks in a close range that can be viewed as "average". This finding is consistent with Hattingh's (2009:166) findings that teachers prefer to grant average marks. The analysis of the marked scripts included in this study revealed that teachers of Sesotho grade 10 home language as a subject award marks in the range of about 60% for essays; while the average marks observed by Hattingh (2009:166) for English as a FAL were generally between 50 to 55%. This is an important finding as it confirms views by academics that the marks for matric African home languages as subjects are inflated (see Van Rooy and Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2015 for a discussion) when compared to for example the marks for matric English FAL as a subject.

Apart from the rubric and the correction code, the participating teachers believe that the post-assessment evaluations conducted by the DBE contribute a lot to the standardisation process in their marking of grade 10 Sesotho home language essays. A secondary factor that helps with the standardisation of their marking practices, is the attendance of workshops offered by the DBE. For instance, teachers reported wanting to provide the correct constructions of sentences for learners when they mark essays. However, the participating teachers hold the view that they are instructed to not do so in the training workshops by the DBE. Training workshops, therefore, influence marking practices, but the views of the participating teachers are that the post-assessment evaluations by an internal and sometimes external educational officer wields the most influence on their marking practices.

### 6.2.3 Answers and conclusions related to research question 3

Research question 3 reads as follows:

How do Sesotho home language teachers in grade 10 use the rubric and the correction code to provide feedback on creative writing in the subject Sesotho home language?

The main impression from this study is that teachers use the rubric and the correction code prescribed by the DBE in South Africa for the marking of grade 10 Sesotho home language essays. The correction code is the only instrument used to provide feedback during the early writing stages of grade 10 Sesotho essay writing in South African high schools. The rubric is only used as feedback instrument (with the correction code) when the final essay is marked by the teacher. The practice to use the rubric only to provide feedback on the final essay implies that learners do not focus their writing on the outcomes on the rubric during the early stages of the writing process. The use of the correction code as only feedback instrument during the early stages of the writing process draw the attention of learners to the importance of micro-language matters (mainly related to matters of orthography). The under-representation of criteria related to the structure of an essay in the correction code, and the absence of reference to the content of the essay, probably leaves the impression with learners that the most important element to get right when one writes an essay, is spelling.

The lack of a detailed explanation of the elements on the rubric seems to be problematic among the participating teachers in this study. The lack of specific criteria under each section of the rubric, and proposed achievement levels for each aspect on the rubric, probably underlies the impression by the participating teachers that although the rubric standardises their marking in that it focuses their attention on the same aspects of an essay, marks might still differ. The participating teachers, for example, report that they cannot separate marks for language and style as they are supposed to go hand in hand. As such, the rubric provides too little information on what learner can do to improve their writing. The impression left by the analysis of the scripts and the teachers' use of the correction code is that teachers probably give a holistic mark for the essay.

Based on the frequency analysis of the scripts where observations were made about how the teachers marking with the correction code, it was clear that there was no direct relationship between the frequency of the use of the correction code and the rubric grades. One would have expected that the marks for the rubric category of "language, style and proofreading/editing" and the number of errors produced in an essay (indicated by the teacher on the scripts) would be

aligned in some way. In other words, when a learner made many errors with, for example, splitting of words, one expects her to get lower marks for the rubric element “language, style and proofreading/editing”. This was found to not necessarily be the case as explained earlier. Therefore, the feedback given through the correction code and the feedback given through the rubric seem to be viewed as separate matters.

#### **6.2.4 Answers and conclusions related to research question 4**

Research question 4 read as follows:

Based on the analysis of actual marked scripts and the teachers’ perceptions of their own marking, what are the elements of a good essay?

The main perception of participating teachers was that the most important aspect of a good essay is creativity. In the opinion of the participating teachers, creativity is related to the content of the essay. Grammar was indicated as the second most important aspect of a good essay by participants. In contrast, style was elected as the least important aspect of a good essay. There seems to be confusion among the participating teachers about the matter of style and how to operationalise the element of style in good essays. This matter is addressed below as part of the recommendations that flow from this study.

The use of figures of speech and idiomatic expressions were identified by participants as the best way to make the essay interesting and as such to demonstrate the creativity of learners as writers. The aspect of language was consistently highlighted as another important element related to creative essays. Participating teachers noted that language use is related to creative introductions, creative content, creative conclusions and the aspect of style.

The participating teachers expect learners to write introductions that trigger their interest and that would stimulate them to read the essay with interest. Introductions are also expected to introduce the topic, to explain the topic if necessary, to give a summary of the whole discussion, and to trigger and help to maintain the attention of the reader. The rubric and the correction that teachers use to assess essays are similar throughout the essay types, as such, learners will choose which functions to prioritise in the introduction of their essays based on the specific need of their essay type.

The participating teachers expect learners to write conclusions that indicate to the reader that the essay is ending. An important element of good conclusions highlighted by the teachers in this study is that they expect to hear the views and opinions (the “voices”) of their learners in the

conclusion. Sometimes the writer can choose to end the essay with a question to either prompt the reader to think or to let the reader come up with his/her own end to the essay. Other ways of ending the essay mentioned by the participating teachers involved giving advice, or teaching the reader something. The conclusion is also expected to link back to the introduction. Good language use, related to the levels of creativity in an essay, and structure emerged as the most prominent aspects of good essays from this data.

### **6.3 Main findings of the study**

This study postulated to investigate how teachers provide feedback to creative writing essays in grade 10 Sesotho home language classes. The main findings in this study were as follows:

- The process essay writing approach used in writing and assessment of creative writing in grade 10 Sesotho home language essays is optimal and if implemented correctly, may benefit all stakeholders (the learners, the peers and the responsible teacher).
- There is no correspondence between the rubric marks provided on the rubric for different sections and the frequency of related errors indicated by the use of the correction code,
- The correction code is used to provide mainly surface-level feedback on micro-language matters such as “spelling”. Orthography errors are the most prominent category of errors indicated on essays, regardless of the achievement level of the essay.
- The rubric is used to guide teachers on the aspects of essays that they should award marks for, and ensures that every aspect of the essay is awarded marks consistently throughout different essays.
- The rubric feedback does not provide insight as to what learners have not achieved or have achieved. This is because teachers provide rubric feedback through marking grids that indicate holistic marks for each criterion on the rubric.
- Teachers are not clear on what to assess under each rubric category.
- Teachers are aware of the effort by the DBE in South Africa to standardise their marking (through trainings and post-assessment evaluations). Participating teachers believe that the tools used to assess essays (which are the correction code and the rubric) ensure that they mark for similar essay aspects and indicate similar errors consistently for each teacher and between different teachers. However, participants also perceive that the marks they award to different essays are not standardised as teachers could award different marks to the same essay.
- Teachers generally award marks around 60% for essays, and this mark is achieved via the allocation of around 60% for each section of the rubric. This leaves the impression that

teachers award marks holistically and then spread the marks across the three rubric sections.

## **6.4 Implications of the findings of the study**

The first implication of this study is the apparent need for a synchronisation of the correction code and the rubric. There are two issues to consider. First of all, the writing process should be reconsidered. It would be ideal if the rubric and the correction code could be applied to all draft versions of the essay in progress. Learners would then get feedback on the micro-elements of an essay via the correction code, and feedback about the macro-elements of the essay from the start. This would hopefully focus the attention of learners on the important matters of essay writing, like correct language use (via feedback on the correction code) and creativity and structure, via the rubric. There is a need for the two marking instruments to work together in providing feedback to learners about their progress and achievement in essay writing. The impact of a changed process where both marking instruments are used to provide feedback to learners would have to be tested in future studies.

The second way in which the marking instruments should be synchronised better, is to provide opportunities for teachers to discuss and formulate some guidelines about the relationship between different elements in the correction code and the rubric. If the rubric elements could be operationalised more clearly, and if elements in the correction code could be related overtly to sections on the rubric, the marking practices, especially the award of final marks, could be made more efficient. This change in the process could potentially address the perception of the teachers that the rubric and the correction code standardise their marking, but not their award of marks.

The second major implication of the findings of the study is that the correction code needs to be refined. A better balance between surface-level issues or micro-elements like orthography; and macro-elements that relate to the structure of a good essay, for example effective introductions and conclusions, should be attempted. If the correction code focuses on both issues, and the rubric is used for feedback during all stages of the writing process, the nature of the feedback to learners would change from the current dominant focus on micro-elements like “split words” and macro-elements in a good essay. Future studies could then investigate statistically how the elements of the correction code relate to marks on the rubric via linear mixed-model analyses. This process would allow for the development and assessment of the use of a new or improved correction code. This means that more research in this regard is encouraged and recommended.

As stated above, findings from this study also indicate that the rubric used to grade learners' essays in Sesotho grade 10 home language creative writing needs to be refined. There is a need among the participating teachers to better understand each of the sections on the rubric. It was proposed above that the rubric elements should be operationalised in order for teachers and learners to know what should be assessed under each category of the rubric. Findings from this study may be useful in a process where definitions are constructed based on what the participating teachers regard as elements related to certain criteria of the rubric. It is also proposed that a rubric guide be prepared for teachers. In the rubric guide, teachers are asked questions pertaining to each category of marks. Based on teachers' answers and levels of satisfaction, marks are then allocated. The goal is to clarify what each category entails, so that the inter-rater reliability and intra-rater reliability of the marking process could be improved. A validation of teachers' marking would benefit assessment scholars in that the deviation of marks between different teachers would be evaluated and conclusions on the standardisation of marks between different teachers would be made. This validation of teachers' marking would allow for the determination of marks from the rubric criteria. Ultimately, this could also contribute to ensure that teachers have more confidence in the standardisation of the marks they award for essays. This was a concern expressed by the participating teachers.

## **6.5 Recommendations**

Based on the main findings of this study, two main and some general recommendations are made.

### **6.5.1 The expansion of the marking grid**

It is recommended in this study that the marking grid used to present final grades for essays (c.f. Table 5.1) should be expanded to indicate which elements are related to which sections on the rubric and how marks are awarded for each section. The expansion and operationalisation of elements and marks are aimed at providing clear guidelines to teachers when they mark and clear feedback to learners when they receive their marked essays. Although teachers may resist the suggested changes in the marking process that would include the use of an expanded marking grid, and correction code for each stage of the process where they provide feedback to learners, I do believe that teachers see how their learners will benefit from the changed process. Davies and Vaccarino (2010:205) state that it is not just any feedback that should be provided, it is "essential to ensure that the feedback provided is of a high quality that the students will find useful." The problem with the current rubric is that it does not clarify how the different categories of marks add up to give the total achievement for each criterion of the

rubric. For instance, if a learner receives 15 out of 30 for “content and planning”, the learner is not clear on whether the 15 marks were influenced by incompetence in either planning or the content of the essay. The proposed expanded marking grid aims to clarify the achievement levels for each aspect on the rubric so that the learner may be clear why he/she received 15 marks out of 30 and would know which areas of essay writing they need to focus on for improvement. Table 6.1 presents the proposed expanded marking grid. This proposal is based on the assumption that learners would benefit more from clearer rubric. The current marking grid is expanded to make provision for clarity on what marks are awarded for.

**Table 6.1: Recommended marking grid to be presented to learners on their final essays to better indicate their achievement for each criterion on the rubric**

Criterion of marks	Categories of Marks	Total for each category	Final marks for each criterion
<b>Content and Planning</b>	Contents	/30	/30 <sup>8</sup>
	Planning	/30	
<b>Language, style and proofreading/editing</b>	Language use	/15	/15
	Style	/15	
	Register	/15	
	Tone	/15	
	Proofreading/Editing	/15	
<b>Structure</b>	Paragraphing	/5	/5
	Introduction	/5	
	Conclusion	/5	
<b>Total marks</b>			<b>/50</b>

If marks are awarded in this way, teachers would give marks to specific elements that make up a good essay; and learners will receive specific feedback on elements of essay writing that they should improve on over time. Paulus (1999:266) states that “the way that teachers structure the writing classroom and the type of feedback they give will no doubt determine how their students approach the writing process, view feedback, and make revisions to their writing”. As such, it is important to note that unless used in earlier drafting stages (with the correction code as proposed above), this marking grid may not prove to be useful in improving learners’ writing (Monyaki, 2001:63-5). Also, although the expansion of the marking grid and the inclusion thereof in the drafting stages might not be welcomed by teachers as it would add more work to

<sup>8</sup> It is proposed that the average for the marks achieved at each criterion of the rubric should become the final mark for the category.

their already hectic schedules, it cannot be denied that it would be time well spent as it would provide learners with well-deserved additional feedback.

### 6.5.2 An explanatory rubric guide

It has been stressed in this study that teachers are not clear on what each category of the rubric assesses. This, therefore, means that categories on the rubric need to be operationalised and that teachers need a clear guide on how to assess essays and what to assess under each category on the rubric. In Hattingh's (2009:207-8) study, "some trial examiners were inconsistent in their interpretation of certain features in the sense that their judgment of one was influenced by another". As a remedy, "[t]he distinctions between these items were clarified by emphasising the main focal aspect of each feature as specified in the rating guide," (Hattingh and Van der Walt, 2013:88).

Similarly, this section proposes an explanatory rubric guide for teachers based on the findings from this study on how teachers assess grade 10 essays with the rubric provided by the DBE in South Africa. The guide is presented first (c.f. Table 6.2) and the logic and explanation for each definition is provided after that. The proposed guide is based on definitions provided by participants in this study and the definitions provided in the CAPS (2011b) document and adjusted for the assessment of Sesotho grade 10 home language essays.

The strategy used in the explanatory rubric is to focus teachers' attention on specific issues via the use of questions. If markers (teachers) answer these questions, they would be able to determine the level of achievement of the learner for that element more consistently. The rubric guide does not assist teachers in awarding marks, it is meant as a guiding tool to assist teachers in focusing on the same aspects.

**Table 6.2: Proposed explanatory guide based on the current rubric used for assessment of Sesotho creative writing assessment in grade 10 South African schools**

*Note to markers: Please read the questions in this guide, answer them for yourself and consider the corresponding level of achievement on the rubric.*

Criterion in the rubric	Explanation of the categories of the rubric
<b>Planning</b>	Does the learner present the proof of planning at the beginning of the essay? Is it obvious from the essay that the learner planned the essay? Is there a link between the planning and the actual essay?

<b>Content</b>	<p>Is the essay factual?</p> <p>Do the contents (facts or points discussed) adhere to the heading requirements?</p> <p>Is there logic in the essay?</p> <p>Does the essay indicate the learner's ability to create and to be innovative?</p> <p>Is the level of creativity exhibited by the learner notable?</p> <p>Does the learner use figures of speech and/or idiomatic expressions? If yes, do they contribute to the overall content of the essay?</p> <p>Is the imagery used in the essay clear?</p>
<b>Language</b>	<p>Is the language used correctly in terms of spelling, word separations, orthography, and sentence constructions?</p>
<b>Style</b>	<p>Is the choice of either formal or informal style appropriate for the topic?</p> <p>Is the learner consistent in his/her use of style?</p>
<b>Register</b>	<p>Are the word choices and the grammar appropriate for the context?</p> <p>Are the word choices and grammar at the level that can be expected for the chosen topic?</p>
<b>Tone</b>	<p>Can you feel the mood of the essay?</p> <p>Does it achieve the goal of the essay, for instance, making you cry, happy, or changing your moods?</p>
<b>Editing/ Proofreading</b>	<p>Are there too many errors following editing or proofreading?</p> <p>Is the learner able to correct the errors indicated on the pre-submission draft?</p>
<b>Structure</b>	<p>Does the learner's essay contain an introduction, body and conclusion</p>
<b>Paragraphing</b>	<p>Is the essay divided into paragraphs of about five to seven lines?</p> <p>Are the paragraphs and sentences well-constructed?</p> <p>Do they hinder the flow of the essay?</p> <p>Is it hard to understand what is communicated by the essay?</p> <p>Can you distinguish between essay parts (introduction, body and conclusion)?</p>
<b>Introduction and conclusion</b>	<p>Does the introduction make you want to read further?</p> <p>Does it introduce the discussion?</p> <p>Can you tell what will be discussed in the essay from reading the introduction?</p> <p>Is the topic explained or does the topic indicate that the writer understands the topic?</p> <p>Is language appropriately used to spark your interest to read further?</p> <p>Does the conclusion link to the introduction and the topic of the essay?</p>
<b>Length of the essay</b>	<p>Is the length of the essay appropriate, too long or too short?</p>

The category of "content and planning" was indicated in the literature review as looking at five aspects in an essay: (i) sustainability of the content of the essay, (ii) coherence and flow, (iii) interesting ideas, (iv) level of creativity and (v) clarity of planning. The analysis of the rubric in

the literature review and the participating teachers' responses in the interviews to what constitutes a good essay were used to define the category of "content and planning". For content, the aspect of creativity was explained in simpler and presumably clearer terms. Currently, planning is indicated by the use of a mind map, however, it is clear from Hattingh (2009:200) that planning cannot be proven by a simple mind map and that a mind map can be constructed at the end of an essay just to comply with the requirements. As such, teachers are advised in this study to consider the flow of ideas as more of an indication of planning than the mind maps.

Addressing the problem of explicitly incorporating planning in the scale proved problematic, since the panel differed on how they conceptualised evidence of planning. Some participants argued that planning was evident in a performance if the final product was coherent and organised. Others considered evidence of planning to be explicit notes such as mind maps. Both arguments may result in bias towards learners with different styles. Some learners may plan an essay in detail, but still only manage to present an average performance (Hattingh 2009:199).

The findings in this study confirm the findings by Hatting (2009) in that teachers consider the flow of ideas as proof of planning together with the actual presentation of planning in the form of a mind map. As such, a recommendation to teachers, as indicated in table 6.1, is that teachers check both the presence of the mind map and the actual flow in the essay.

The category of "language, style and proofreading/editing" was indicated as focusing on: (i) good language, (ii) punctuation, (iii) word choice, (iv) appropriateness of style, tone and register, and, (v) number of errors in the final document. Learners are expected to attempt improvement on errors indicated by teachers on the pre-final essay drafts. As explicated in this study, the focus of the correction code feedback on essays is on micro-level issues mainly pertaining to orthography. This means that learners' competence in incorporating these improvements in the final draft is assessed through the rubric. The combination of language and editing on the same holistic criterion may be taken as an indication that the errors in language, indicated on earlier drafts of an essay, are expected to be fixed and that the criterion may be assessing whether this has been done competently. For instance, language on the rubric is indicated to look at awareness and complexity of language, punctuation, creativity in language use including the correct use of figures of speech and idiomatic expressions and good word choice. The difference between looking at the use of figurative language here to looking at it under "content"

is that under “language” the teacher assesses the correctness as it goes hand in hand with editing. Under content, the teacher simply assesses the presence of and the appropriateness of figurative language.

The CAPS document provides a glossary of terms for teachers, for this study, the English FAL CAPS document glossary was used. Although register and tone are defined in the glossary, the aspect of style is neglected. Register is explained as “the words, style and grammar used by speakers and writers in different contexts or situations, e.g. official documents are written in a bureaucratic register, legal documents are written in a legal register” (DBE, 2011a:92). Tone is explained as “the emotional message of a text. In a written text it is achieved through words (e.g. neutral words to create an objective tone). In a film it could be created through music or the setting” (*ibid*, 2011:93). These explanations were used in defining the criteria of “language, style and proofreading/editing” in the rubric guide in table 6.2.

The aspect of style was difficult to define, however, the CAPS provided clues as to what is marked as style in essays. First, in explaining the process approach used in writing Sesotho grade 10 creative essays, learners are expected to “establish an individual voice and *style*” [emphasis added] (*ibid*, 2011:35). Second, “voice” is further explained as “writing from own point of view” while for style, only an example is provided, “formal and informal” (*ibid*, 2011:36). The two examples of style are listed in Hattingh’s (2009) definition of the criterion of “appropriateness of vocabulary” (*ibid*, 2009:273). To this list she adds “...narrative, descriptive and argumentative” (*ibid*, 2009:273). Moslemi (1975:159) lists a criterion of “uniqueness of style” and explains it as “[a] reflection of the student writer’s unique individuality, his particular preferences, tastes or beliefs. His particular use of humor or wit. A unique blend of emotions, moods and personal philosophy.”

Teachers in this study however indicated that they look at linguistic devices such as figures of speech and idiomatic expressions in the content of the essay, independent of style (language was the least of their concerns when it comes to defining style in creative essay). As such, although they regard style and language inseparable, linguistic devices such as figures of speech and idioms are not regarded as part of style. Style therefore looks at the formality with which the text is constructed. This is because it is the learner’s choice to use colourful language, but that does not affect the formality with which the text is constructed. Figurative language can be used with any type of essay and any register or tone.

The category of “structure” assesses: (i) paragraphing and flow, (ii) sustainability of topic and conclusion, and (iii) appropriate length. Paragraphing was identified as a very important element by teachers in the interviews where teachers’ perceptions on what constitutes good paragraphing were explored. The sustainability of the topic is associated with the ability to keep the introduction and conclusion aligned with the topic. The panel in Hattingh’s (2009) study “agreed that the focus of this criterion [of structure] was on organisational features on surface-level, namely paragraphs and a clearly identifiable introduction, body and conclusion” (*ibid*, 2009:201). The same focus is, therefore, maintained in the description of the structure in the Sesotho home language grade 10 creative essay rubric.

Needless to state, more investigations into what teachers perceive as constituting each category on the rubric is needed. Furthermore, the teachers’ perceptions need to be compared with their actual use of the rubric and the requirements from the subject advisors. In addition, it is important to note that the proposed rubric guidance recommended here has not been validated as achieving the goal of standardising teachers’ marking. It is only an aid to assist teachers in keeping their minds focused on what each category on the rubric entails and how to consistently award marks for similar achievements demonstrated in essays.

### **6.5.3 General recommendations**

Teachers should not be trained to focus on error identification as though they are error identification machines. In their reading of essays, teachers should be encouraged to respond as readers of the text before they respond as error identifiers. This would ensure that teachers provide both the feedback on where errors are located on the text, and indicate the general acceptability of the essay in question based on the levels of creativity exhibited and the understanding of the topic at hand.

The rubric marking grid is recommended for grading of pre-final essay drafts in order to provide macro-level feedback to learners throughout the writing process (complemented by the correction code). This would ensure that learners not only focus on language matters indicated by the use of the correction code, but that they also focus on aspects, such as introductions and conclusions and the appropriate content of the essay. According to Monyaki (2001:75) and Moletsane (2002:30), learners perceive suggestions for re-writing as punishment. As such, more research is needed to ascertain how learners in Sesotho home language receive macro-level feedback in order to ensure successful implementation of the extended marking rubric in

pre-final drafts. Learners ought to perceive macro-level feedback as a chance to enhance their own writing instead of punishment.

Teacher trainers might consider to use the recommendations and findings in this study as material for a workshop on training teachers and teachers might consider using the contents of this study for their own personal gain.

## **6.6 Limitations of this study**

It was clear from the marked scripts that there is no correspondence between the frequencies of errors indicated by the use of the correction code and the final marks awarded to an essay. The shortcoming of this study was that teachers assessed different essays and for different essay topics. As such, a linear mixed-model analysis could not be conducted in this study to determine how the markers' uses of the correction code relate to the sections in the rubric and the final marks that are awarded. As such, future research would benefit from allowing participants to assess the same essays in order to conduct the linear mixed-model analysis. This would allow for the development of a new or the improvement of the current correction code to include a balance of correction code elements on the rubric and shift the focus from micro-issues to a more balanced focus on both micro- and macro-issues.

No firm recommendations are made on the correction code, except the obvious need for incorporating macro-level emphases into the correction code. As such, future studies would benefit from more in-depth investigations into how the current correction code could be improved.

As this is a case study, the findings in this study may not be generalised for all Sesotho grade 10 home language creative writing settings in South Africa, because the participants in the study were sampled from the one education district that is overseen by one subject supervisor who not only conducts the training, but also conducts pre-assessment evaluations. As such, future studies could benefit from inviting participants from different education districts in South Africa in order to broaden the potential for generalisation of the findings.

The Sesotho home language curriculum, like other curriculums of other vernacular home languages in South Africa, was indicated in the literature review as a translation of the English first additional generic curriculum with slight deviations where language specific examples are

added. As such, future research would benefit from a parallel study in both the grade 10 English first additional language and a vernacular home language in South Africa in order to improve generalisability of their results to cover English first additional language and the vernacular home languages in grade 10.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

It is concluded from this study that teachers' assessment of essays meets the expectations and standards set by the DBE in South Africa. The quality of the marking and its relationship with the real achievement of learners needs more research. The use of the correction code together with the rubric as feedback instruments to learners during the different stages of writing would provide feedback that would assist learners to know where to improve their writing at a macro- and micro-level. The use of an operationalised rubric that is aligned with the correction code would greatly assist teachers to align their marks with micro- and macro-level errors or areas for improvement and to improve the standardisation of their marking even more. This refinement would make the important task of guiding learners to express themselves well in their home language an even more meaningful activity.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 4A: Individual marks on rubrics as awarded by individual markers

#### Marker 1

Essays	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Averages
Content and planning (30)	19	19	17	18	17	19	17	15	15	12	<b>16.8</b>
Language, style and proofreading/editing (15)	12	12	13.5	12	13.5	10.5	12	13.5	12	10.5	<b>12.2</b>
Structure (5)	4	4	4.5	4	4	3.5	3.5	4	3	3.5	<b>3.8</b>
<b>Total (out of 50)</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34.5</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>32.5</b>	<b>32.5</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>32.8</b>

#### Marker 2

Essays	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
Content and planning (30)	21	20	18	18	15	15	13	13	<b>17.4</b>
Language, style and proofreading/editing (15)	10	12	10	10	10	10	10	9	<b>10.3</b>
Structure (5)	3	3	4	3	3	2	4	4	<b>3.3</b>
<b>Total (out of 50)</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>31.1</b>

#### Marker 3

Essays	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Averages
Content and planning (30)	19	18	17	17	17	16	15	15	16	16	<b>16.6</b>
Language, style and proofreading/editing (15)	8	7	8	8	8	7	7	7	6	6	<b>7.2</b>
Structure (5)	3	2.5	3	3	2	2	2.5	2	2	2	<b>2.4</b>
<b>Total (out of 50)</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27.5</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>26.2</b>

#### Marker 4

Essays	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Averages	
Content and planning (30)	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	15	15	<b>17.3</b>
Language, style and proofreading/editing (15)	8	8	7	6	8	8	6	8	5		<b>7.1</b>
Structure (5)	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	3	3		<b>3.6</b>
<b>Total (out of 50)</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>23</b>		<b>28</b>

**Marker 5**

<b>Essays</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Averages</b>
Content and planning (30)	26	23.5	20.5	22	20.5	18	18	20	15	13	19.65
Language, style and proofreading/editing (15)	14	11.5	10.5	10	10	10	9	8	8.5	9	10.05
Structure (5)	3	3	3	2	3.5	3	2	2	2.5	3	2.7
<b>Total (out of 50)</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>32.4</b>

**Marker 6**

<b>Essays</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>Averages</b>
Content and planning (30)	24	20	18	18	15	18	15	15	15	15	15	17.1
Language, style and proofreading/editing (15)	13	12	10	9	10	8	8	8	8	8	8	9.3
Structure (5)	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	2	2.5
<b>Total (out of 50)</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>28.9</b>

**Marker 7**

<b>Essays</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Averages</b>
Content and planning (30)	18	17	15	16	13	14	13	12	13	14.6
Language, style and proofreading/editing (15)	7	8	6	6	7	5	5	5	4	5.9
Structure (5)	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.1
<b>Total (out of 50)</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>22.6</b>

**Marker 8**

<b>Essays</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Averages</b>
Content and planning (30)	25	25	25	23	22	22	22	23.43
Language, style and proofreading/editing (15)	10	10	11	11	10	10	10	10.29
Structure (5)	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4.29
<b>Total (out of 50)</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>38</b>

**Marker 9**

<b>Essays</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Averages</b>
Content and planning (30)	24	25	19	20	15	17	8	8	7	7	15
Language, style and proofreading/editing (15)	13	12	11	10	6	5	12	10	9	6	9.4
Structure (5)	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	4	3
<b>Total (out of 50)</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>27.4</b>

### Appendix 4B: Summary of marks for essays for correction code per marker

Items on correction code	Participant									Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Split words	64	146	109	387	209	128	125	54	115	<b>1337</b>
Combine words	8	24	35	34	39	27	35	3	16	<b>221</b>
Orthography	2	2	17	43	28	25	52	4	1	<b>174</b>
Spelling	29	45	8	37	59	73	55	5	41	<b>352</b>
Punctuation	8	1	19	39	24	2	27	4	9	<b>133</b>
Capitalisation	19	6	18	38	13	6	11	2	22	<b>135</b>
Word choice	4	11	19	51	37	8	51	1	0	<b>182</b>
Missing items	3	20	5	9	55	4	7	0	2	<b>105</b>
Unnecessary items	4	4	3	5	6	6	9	2	4	<b>43</b>
Unclear constructions	5	4	0	1	18	7	5	0	3	<b>43</b>
Split paragraphs	0	0	0	0	0	1	16	2	0	<b>19</b>
Re-order paragraphs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
<b>Total observations</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>644</b>	<b>488</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>2745</b>

### Appendix 4C: Combined correction code information

Participant	Orthography	Lexical	Punctuation	Sentence	Paragraphs
<b>1</b>	103	11	27	5	0
<b>2</b>	217	35	7	4	0
<b>3</b>	169	27	37	0	0
<b>4</b>	501	65	77	1	0
<b>5</b>	335	98	37	18	0
<b>6</b>	253	18	8	7	1
<b>7</b>	267	67	38	5	16
<b>8</b>	66	3	6	0	2
<b>9</b>	173	6	31	3	1

## Appendix 4D:Frequencies of marks

**Table 4.1:** Frequencies of marks allocated for the 85 essays in the analysis

Mark out of 50	Nr of times mark was allocated	Percentage of time mark was allocated
17	1	1.2
19	3	3.5
20	1	1.2
21	2	2.4
22	1	1.2
22.5	1	1.2
23	2	2.4
24	7	8.2
24.5	1	1.2
25	5	5.9
26	6	7.1
27	6	7.1
27.5	1	1.2
28	7	8.2
28.5	1	1.2
29	4	4.7
29.5	1	1.2
30	7	8.2
30.5	1	1.2
31	5	5.9
32	1	1.2
33	2	2.4
34	4	4.7
35	2	2.4
36	3	3.5
38	2	2.4
40	7	8.2
43	1	1.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4.3:** Frequencies of marks out of 15 on the rubric for language, style and proofreading/editing

<b>Mark out of 15</b>	<b>Number of times mark was awarded</b>	<b>Mark out of 15 expressed as percentage</b>
4	1	1.2
5	5	5.9
6	8	9.4
7	9	10.6
8	22	25.9
8.5	1	1.2
9	8	9.4
10	18	21.2
10.5	1	1.2
11	3	3.5
11.5	1	1.2
12	5	5.9
13	2	2.4
14	1	1.2

**Appendix 4E:Raw data for the errors identified from scripts submitted  
by participants according to different markers**

Markers	Script number	Category of essay	TOTAL (100)	TOTAL (50)	Correction Codes											
					Split words	Combine words	Orthography	Spelling	Punctuation	Capitalisation	Word choice	Missing items	Unnecessary items	Unclear constructions	Split paragraphs	Re-order paragraphs
1	1	A-Average	70	35	9	1	0	7	2	0	0	3	1	0	0	0
1	2	A-Average	70	35	1	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
1	3	A-Average	70	35	7	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
1	4	Average	68	34	3	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
1	5	Average	68	34	4	1	0	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
1	6	Average	66	33	3	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0
1	7	Average	64	32	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	8	Average	64	32	5	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	9	Average	58	29	31	4	1	0	1	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	10	Average	52	26	0	0	0	1	3	9	2	0	0	0	0	0
2	11	A-Average	80	40	7	3	0	4	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	0
2	12	A-Average	68	34	5	7	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	13	A-Average	70	35	14	0	1	5	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
2	14	Average	64	32	11	4	0	5	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
2	15	Average	62	31	11	0	0	3	1	1	3	0	1	4	0	0
2	16	Average	56	28	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	17	Average	54	27	92	4	1	19	0	5	5	2	2	0	0	0
2	18	Average	54	27	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
2	19	Average	52	26	2	5	0	5	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	0
3	20	Average	60	30	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
3	21	Average	55	27.5	5	0	1	0	3	2	3	1	0	0	0	0
3	22	Average	56	28	7	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
3	23	Average	56	28	19	2	3	6	3	4	8	0	0	0	0	0
3	24	Average	54	27	12	11	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
3	25	Average	50	25	8	8	4	0	4	4	0	3	0	0	0	0
3	26	Average	49	24.5	4	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
3	27	Average	48	24	22	8	1	0	7	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	28	Average	48	24	10	3	1	0	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	0
3	29	Average	48	24	20	0	2	0	0	2	4	0	1	0	0	0
4	30	Average	60	30	50	9	3	7	3	2	5	1	0	0	0	0
4	31	Average	60	30	114	4	17	1	19	5	7	1	0	0	0	0
4	32	Average	58	29	61	4	7	5	5	20	1	1	0	0	0	0
4	33	Average	56	28	41	3	13	10	0	5	11	0	2	0	0	0
4	34	Average	58	29	16	4	3	0	2	2	3	2	1	0	0	0
4	35	Average	60	30	5	2	0	2	4	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
4	36	Average	54	27	53	4	0	6	6	2	14	2	2	1	0	0
4	37	Average	52	26	29	0	0	5	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0

4	38	Average	46	23	18	4	0	1	0	0	5	2	0	0	0	0
5	39	A-Average	86	43	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	1	1	0	0
5	40	A-Average	76	38	7	2	0	1	2	0	1	3	0	0	0	0
5	41	Average	68	34	22	1	1	5	0	0	1	4	0	1	0	0
5	42	Average	68	34	3	7	0	7	1	3	7	7	0	1	0	0
5	43	Average	68	34	2	6	6	0	1	5	3	2	0	2	0	0
5	44	Average	62	31	5	2	0	9	1	0	5	12	1	3	0	0
5	45	Average	58	29	31	2	5	7	8	1	4	8	1	4	0	0
5	46	Average	60	30	7	6	4	7	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
5	47	Average	52	26	28	3	6	9	5	2	5	7	1	1	0	0
5	48	Average	50	25	102	10	6	13	2	2	9	10	2	5	0	0
6	49	A-Average	80	40	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
6	50	A-Average	70	35	24	2	0	2	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	0
6	51	Average	62	31	10	5	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
6	52	Average	58	29	7	1	12	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	53	Average	56	28	2	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	54	Average	56	28	8	1	3	6	1	1	6	0	0	0	0	0
6	55	Average	52	26	2	2	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	56	Average	52	26	28	6	3	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
6	57	Average	50	25	2	4	3	10	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	0
6	58	Average	50	25	18	2	0	4	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	0
6	59	Average	50	25	22	3	4	26	1	0	0	0	0	7	0	0
7	60	Average	54	27	23	1	3	6	1	1	6	0	0	0	0	0
7	61	Average	54	27	24	6	6	7	1	1	2	2	1	0	0	0
7	62	Average	48	24	6	4	1	2	5	6	3	1	3	0	1	0
7	63	Average	48	24	8	4	0	4	6	0	9	3	2	0	1	0
7	64	Average	44	22	6	5	11	7	4	0	7	1	0	0	5	0
7	65	Average	42	21	14	2	14	8	4	0	8	0	0	0	1	0
7	66	B-Average	40	20	5	2	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	5	0	0
7	67	B-Average	38	19	20	1	11	11	4	1	11	0	2	0	0	0
7	68	B-Average	38	19	19	10	6	9	2	2	3	0	1	0	8	0
8	69	A-Average	80	40	39	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	70	A-Average	80	40	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
8	71	A-Average	80	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	72	A-Average	76	38	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	73	A-Average	72	36	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
8	74	A-Average	72	36	7	2	1	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	75	A-Average	72	36	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
9	76	A-Average	80	40	18	7	0	4	1	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	77	A-Average	80	40	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
9	78	Average	66	33	16	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
9	79	Average	66	33	22	0	0	4	1	5	0	0	1	1	0	0
9	80	Average	48	24	8	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	81	Average	48	24	15	1	0	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	82	Average	46	23	2	2	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	1	0	0
9	83	Average	42	21	11	1	0	11	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
9	84	B-Average	38	19	8	2	0	12	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	0
9	85	B-Average	34	17	15	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Key: A-Average = Above Average; B-Average = Below average

## Appendix A: Correction Code

Senotlolo sa ho tshwaya:

Correction code:

<b>Makgetha a tekanyetso</b> <b>Categories of assessment</b>	<b>Matshwao</b> <b>Marks</b>	<b>Senotlolo</b> <b>Key</b>
Dikahare le Moralo Content and planning	30	DM. =
Puo le setaele le Tekolobotjha Language, style and self-correction	15	PST =
Sebopeho Structure	05	Seb. =
Matshwao ohle/Total marks		50

**Tataiso bakeng sa ho tshwaya ditema:**

**Ho sehellwe lentse kapa polelo e fosahetseng mola ho be ho bontshwe mofuta wa phoso ka thoko ka tshebediso ya matshwao a latelang:**

- | bakeng sa ho arola mantse a ngotsweng a kopantswe empa a lokela ho arolwa;
- -, + bakeng sa ho kopanya mantse a arohantsweng empa a ngolwa a kopane;
- **mn** bakeng sa mongolo (orthography) o fosahetseng;
- **mp** bakeng sa mopeleto o fosahetseng;
- **mt** bakeng sa tshebediso ya matshwao a puo e fosahetseng kapa moo ho hlokehang letswaho la puo;
- **p** bakeng sa puo e sa sebediswang ka nepo kapa ka tshwanelo/tlwaelo;
- ^ bakeng sa lentse kapa karolwana e siilweng dipakeng tsa mantse a mang;
- // bakeng sa ho arola diratswana
- ↻ ↻ diratswana ha di fapantswe

**Guidelines on marking texts**

**Underline the word or sentence and indicate the kind of mistake/error on the side by using the following signs:**

- | to divide words written as compound whereas they are separate;
- -, + to combine words that are written as separate whereas they ought to be written as one;

- **mn** for incorrect orthography;
- **mp** for incorrect spelling;
- **mt** for incorrect or missing punctuation;
- **p** for incorrectly used language or unusual language choices;
- **^** for a missing word or part of a word missing between words;
- **//** to separate or divide paragraphs;
- **↶↷** to re-order paragraphs.

## Appendix B: Rubric used to assess creative writing in South African Sesotho Grade 10

### Rubric for assessing essays

### Ruburiki ya ho lekanyetsa moqoqo

Makgetha a ho lekanyetsa	Kgato 7 E babatsehang	Kgato 6 Phihlelo e kgabane	Kgato 5 Phihlelo e ntle	Kgato 4 Phihlelo e mahareng	Kgato 3 phihlelo e foofo	Kgato 2 Karolwana feela	Kgato 1 Ha ho phihlelo
	80%-100%	70%-79%	60%-69%	50%-59%	40%-49%	30%-39%	0-29%
MORALO, DIKAHARE/DIF UPERWENG	Dikahare tse babatsehang tsa boiqapelo; mehopolo e matla e phepetsang monahano	Dikahare ke tse ntle, mehopolo key a boiqapelo, e tebileng mme e tsosa tjantjello.	Dikahare dia kgahlisa, di momahane hantle; mehopolo e tsosa tjantjello, e a kgodisa.	Dikahare tse loketseg, tse momahaneng ho lekaneng; mehopolo e e tsosa thahasello ya , boiqapelo bo kgotsofatsang.	Dikahare di mahareng feela, momahano ha e ntle; mehopolo boholo e a amoheleha; boiqapelo bo a haella.	Dikahare ha di a hlaka ka nako tsohle; mehopolo e seng mekae, e a iphethaka.	Dikahare boholo di tswile lekoteng; ha ho momahano; mehopolo e kgathatsa matla, e a phethakwa.
Matshwao: [30]	Moralo le/kapa mekgwaritso e hlahisa moqoqo o babatsehang	Moralo le/kapa mo/mekgwaritso di hlahisitse moqoqo o motle haholo.	Moralo le/kapa mo/mekgwaritso di hlahisitse moqoqo o motle.	Moralo le/kapa mo/mekgwaritso di hlahisitse moqoqo o kgotsofatsang.	Moralo le/kapa mo/mekgwaritso di hlahisitse moqoqo o mahareng feela.	Moqoqo o ntse o sa amohelehe kगतong ya PL, le ha o radilwe; ha o a bopeha hantle.	Moralo kapa mekgwaritso e a haella; moqoqo o bopilwe ka tsela e sa kgahliseng.
30	24-30	21-24	18-21	15-18	12-15	9-12	0-9
PUO, SETAELE LE TEKOLO-BOTJHA	Kelohlolo e sedi ya matla a puo; puo (le ya bonono) le matshwao di sebediswa ka tsela e babatsehang; kgetho ya mantswe e a babatseha setaele	Kelohlolo e sedi ya matla a puo; puo le matshwao di sebediswa ka nepo; o sebedisa puo ya bonono; kgetho ya mantswe ke e batsi, ya boiqapelo; setaele	Ho na le bopaki ba kelohlolo e sedi ya puo; puo le matshwao a puo boholo di nepahetse; mantswe a kgethilweng ke a loketseng tema; setaele sehalo le	O bontsha kelohlolo e itseng ya matla a puo; puo ya hae ha e bonolo. Matshwao a puo a lekane; kgetho ya mantswe ke e lekaneng setaele, sehalo le	Kelohlolo e sedi ya puo e a haella; tshebediso ya puo e mahareng feela; matshwao a puo hangata ha a sebediswa ka nepo; kgetho ya mantswe a motheo feela;	Puo le tshebediso ya matshwao a puo di fosahetse; kgetho ya mantswe e a haella; setaele, sehalo le rejisetara ha di a nepahala.	Puo le tshebediso ya matshwao a puo di fosahetse haholo; kgetho ya mantswe ha e ya nepahala; setaele, sehalo le rejisetara di fosahetse kahohlehohle.

	sehalo le rejišetara di loketse sehlooho.	sehalo le rejišetara di loketse sehlooho.	rejišetara di loketse sehlooho.	rejišetara di tsamaelana le sehlooho.	setaele, sehalo le rejišetara di hloka momahano.		
Matshwao: 25	Moqoqo bohola ha o na diphoso ka ha o lekotswe botjha ho hlaola diphoso.	Moqoqo bohola ha o na diphoso ka ha o lekotswe botjha ho hlaola diphoso.	Moqoqo bohola ha o na diphoso ka ha o lekotswe botjha ho hlaola diphoso.	Moqoqo o ntse o na le diphoso tse mmalwa le ha o lekotswe botjha ho hlaola diphoso.	Moqoqo o na le diphoso tse ngatanyana le ha o lekotswe botjha ho hlaola diphoso.	Moqoqo o ntse o tletse diphoso tse ngata le ha o lekotswe botjha.	Diphoso di ngatanyana, le pherekano e kgolo le ha na le boiteko ba tekolobotjha.
25	15-25	10½-14 ½	9-10	7½-8½	6-7	4½-5½	1-2
SEBOPEHO, DIRATSWANA, SELELEKELA LE QETELO; BOLELELE	Diratswana di a babatseha, di hokahane, ka tsela e hlakileng ka dinako tsohle.	Diratswana di ntle haholo, di hokahane ka tsela a hlakileng bohola ba nako.	Diratswana di bopilwe ka kgokahano ka tsela e kgotsofatsang.	Diratswana di ntle, di hokahaneng ka tsela e utlwahalang.	Diratswana le dipolelo di na le diphoso, empa moeleleo o ntse o le teng.	Diratswana le dipolelo tsa motheo feela.	Mongolo o molokoloko (ha ho diratswana) kapa diratswana di a haella haholo.
Matshwao: 5	Selelekela le qetelo di a babatseha haholo, di dumellana le mosebetsi.	Selelekela le qetelo di ntle haholo, di dumellana le mosebetsi.	Selelekela le qetelo di a kgahlisa haholo, di dumellana le mosebetsi.	Selelekela le qetelo di a kgotsofatsa, ho latela ditlhoko tsa mosebetsi.	Selelekela le qetelo di batla di kgotsofatsa, ho latela mosebetsi.	Selelekela le qetelo tse bonolo feela.	Selelekela le qetelo di haella le ho fokola haholo.
	Bolele bo nepahetse, ho latela ditlhoko tsa sehlooho.	Bolele bo nepahetse	Bolele bo nepahetse	Bolele bo nepahetse.	Bolele bo batla bo nepahetse.	O batla o le molele kapa mokgutshwane haholo.	O molele/mokgutshwane haholo.
5	4-5	3.5	3	2.5	2	1.5	0-1

### Rubric for assessing essays

Marking criteria	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>Meritorious</b>	<b>Substantial</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Elementary</b>	<b>Not achieved</b>
	80%-100%	70%-79%	60%-69%	50%-59%	40%-49%	30%-39%	0-29%
Content and planning	Content exceptional, highly original; ideas: Thought provoking, mature; coherent development of topic; vivid, exceptional detail.	Content commendable, original; ideas: imaginative, interesting; logical development of details.	Content sound, reasonably coherent; ideas: interesting, convincing, several relevant details developed.	Content appropriate, adequately coherent; ideas: interesting, adequately original.	Content mediocre, gaps incoherence, ideas mostly relevant, limited originality.	Content not always clear, lacks coherence; ideas: few ideas, often repetitive.	Content largely irrelevant. No coherence; ideas: tedious, repetitive, off topic.
Marks: [30]	Planning and/or drafting resulted in a flawlessly presentable essay.	Planning and/or drafting resulted in a well-crafted and presentable essay.	Planning and/or drafting resulted in a very good and presentable essay.	Planning and /or drafting resulted in a satisfactorily presented essay.	Planning and/or drafting resulted in a moderately presentable and coherent essay.	Inadequate for HL level, although planned/ or drafted, it is not well presented.	Inadequate planning and/or drafting, weak; essay unsatisfactorily constructed.
30	24-30	21-24	18-21	15-18	12-15	9-12	0-9
Language, style and proofreading/editing	Critical awareness of impact of language; language, punctuation effectively used; uses	Critical awareness of language; language, punctuation correct;	Critical awareness of language evident;	Some awareness of impact of language; language simplistic;	Limited critical language awareness; punctuation often inaccurately used;	Language and punctuation flawed; word choice is limited; style, tone and	Language and punctuation are incorrect; word choice: incorrect; style, tone,

Marks: 25	highly appropriate language (including figurative language) and punctuation; choice of words exceptional; style, tone, register highly suited to topic.	uses figurative language; choice of words varied and creative; style, tone, register appropriately suited to topic.	language, punctuation mostly correct; choice of words appropriate; Style, tone, register suited to topic.	punctuation adequate; word choice adequate; style, ton, register suited to topic.	simplistic word choice; style, tone and register incoherent.	register are incorrect.	register completely incorrect.
	Text virtually error-free following proof-reading, editing.	Text largely error-free following proof-reading, editing.	Text mostly error-free following proof-reading, editing.	Text still contains few errors following proofreading, editing.	Text contains several errors following proofreading, editing.	The essay contains a lot of errors even though it has been edited.	There are a lot of errors and a lot of conclusion even though there is an attempt at editing.
25	15-25	10½-14 ½	9-10	7½-8½	6-7	4½-5½	1-2
Structure, paragraphs; introduction and conclusion; length	Paragraphs brilliantly constructed, consistent and clear at all times	Paragraphs brilliantly constructed, consistent and clear most of the time.	Sentences, paragraphs well-constructed.	Paragraphs adequate; might be faulty but still makes sense	Sentences, paragraphing might be faulty in places.	Sentences, paragraphs constructed at an elementary level.	Sentences, paragraphs Muddled (no paragraphs), or inconsistent.
	Introduction and conclusion perfect, suited to topic.	Introduction and conclusion very good, suited to topic.	Introduction and conclusion good, suited to topic.	Introduction and conclusion satisfactory, suited to topic.	The introduction and the conclusion are almost satisfactory,	The introduction and the conclusion are simplistic.	The introduction and the conclusion are insufficient and very weak.
Marks: 5							

					suited to topic.		
	Length in accordance with requirements of topic.	The length is correct	The length is correct	The length is correct	The length is almost correct	The essay is a bit too long or too short	The essay is too short or too long
5	4-5	3.5	3	2.5	2	1.5	0-1

## **Appendix C: Process writing stages as defined by CAPS (2011b)**

### **Planning/Pre-writing**

- Analyse the structure, language features and register of the text type that has been selected
- Decide on its purpose, audience and context
- Brainstorm ideas for the topic using, for example, mind maps
- Discuss the criteria that will be used to evaluate the piece of writing
- Research the topic, for example in a library, and select relevant information
- Identify main ideas and supporting detail

### **Drafting**

- Write a rough first draft that takes into account purpose, audience, topic and text type
- Choose appropriate words, for example, in a narrative use evocative words and phrases to make the writing vivid
- Organise ideas in a logical sequence so that the argument flows smoothly in an essay
- Organise ideas and/or images so that a story makes sense
- Establish an individual voice and style
- Read drafts critically and get feedback from teacher and classmates

### **Revising, editing, proofreading and presenting**

- Evaluate their own and others' writing for improvement using set criteria
- Refine word choice, sentence and paragraph structure
- Work on the sequencing and linking of paragraphs
- Eliminate ambiguity, verbosity and any offensive language
- Use grammar, spelling and punctuation correctly
- Prepare the final draft including layout, for example, headings and fonts
- Present the text

## Appendix D: General grading scale over 100%

Rating scales for Sesotho home language Grade 10 through 12

RATING CODE	RATING MARKS	%
7	Outstanding achievement	80 – 100
6	Meritorious achievement	70 – 79
5	Substantial achievement	60 – 69
4	Adequate achievement	50 – 59
3	Moderate achievement	40 – 49
2	Elementary achievement	30 – 39
1	Not achieved	0 – 29

## Appendix E: Questionnaire administered to teachers

### QUESTIONNAIRE

#### SECTION A - BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 Are you a home language speaker of Sesotho?

Yes	No
-----	----

1.2 Gender

Male	Female
------	--------

1.3 Age

Age	Please tick (✓) the appropriate block	Age	Please tick (✓) the appropriate block
<20 years	1	41-50 years	4
21-30 years	2	51-60 years	5
31-40 years	3	60+ years	6

1.4 How many years have you been a teacher?

0-3 years	4-6 years	7-10 years	10-15 years	15+ years
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1.5 How many years have you been teaching Sesotho?

0-3 years	4-6 years	7-10 years	10-15 years	15+ years
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1.6 How many schools have you taught at?

1 school	2 schools	3 schools	4 schools	5+ schools
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1.7 What is your highest qualification?

Certificate	Diploma	Degree	Honours	Masters	PhD
-------------	---------	--------	---------	---------	-----

1.8 From what kind of institution did you graduate for your highest qualification?

FET College	College	Univ. of technology	Technikon	University
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1.9 Other than Sesotho, what other subjects do you teach?

--

## **SECTION B – OPINIONS ABOUT THE GENERAL USEFULNESS OF ESSAYS WRITTEN IN SESOTHO**

2.1 In your opinion, what are the characteristics of a good essay written in Sesotho?

--

2.2 In your opinion, why should learners write essays in Sesotho?

--

2.3 In your opinion, what is the most appropriate grade that learners should start to write essays in Sesotho?

--

2.4 In your opinion, what topics should essays be written about in Sesotho?

--

2.5 In your opinion, is essay writing in English different from essay writing in Sesotho?

--

### SECTION C – ASSESSING ESSAYS

3.1 According to you, what element is of more importance in an essay? Please tick the most appropriate block.

a. Grammar	A
b. Punctuation	B
c. Logic	C
d. Coherence	D

e. Creativity	E
f. Style	F
g. Narrative	G

3.2 Why do you think your chosen element of importance is more important than others?

--

3.3 Please rank the list of elements in the table below in order of importance to you when you mark essays. Please put a “1” next to the MOST IMPORTANT element, a “2” next to the second most important element etc.

a. Grammar	
b. Punctuation	
c. Logic	
d. Coherence	

e. Creativity	
f. Style	
g. Narrative	

3.4 How did you choose the least important aspect in written essays? I.e. why is it least important?

--

3.5 When you mark essays, how do you go about marking them?

a. I read a few essays just to understand the level at which most learners wrote and then start grading them	
b. I start grading right from the first one	
c. I read each essay and then assess it for all aspects then move to the next one	
d. I order the essays in terms the strength of each learner and then start assessing from the best performing learner to the least performing learner	
e. I order the essays in terms the strength of each learner and then start assessing from the least performing learner to the best performing learner	
f. I read a few essays and assess them for a certain aspect and then mark other essays and repeat the process till I have covered all aspects	
g. OTHER: I use another strategy when I mark essays	

Please write down the strategy you use when you mark essays if you selected “OTHER” above:

--

3.6 How do you use your marking grid/rubric during essay assessment?

a. I mark each essay with my rubric in hand	
b. I mark focused on the storyline and then consult my rubric	
c. I know the grid off by heart so I just read and grade	
d. I count the number of mistakes and then make my judgement	
e. OTHER: I use my marking grid / rubric in another way when I mark essays	

Please write down the strategy you use when you mark essays if you selected “OTHER” above:

--

3.7 The main method of providing feedback to students was through written comments on the essay. Some teachers have abandoned this method as encouraged by the department of education. However, there are students who still need more guidance than that provided by the correction code, as a result, some teachers still use comments to cater for such learners. Please comment on your personal experience below:

3.7.1 Do you comment during marking essays using anything other than the correction code?

Yes	No
-----	----

3.7.2 If you ticked yes, what do you comment on?

a. Inconsistencies in the storyline	
b. Grammar mistakes	
c. What they have done correctly	
d. What they could improve	
e. The language and word choice	
f. Anything else? <i>Elaborate please:</i>	

3.7.3 In your opinion, how effective or useful are your comments? Why do you think so?

--

3.8 Teachers complain about time constraints related to marking in general. How do you manage your marking time given the workload you have?

--

3.9 On average per year, how many students do you get?

--

3.10 On average per year, how many essays to students write?

--

3.11 Do you ever allow other teachers or any other person to assist you in marking?

Yes	No
-----	----

3.12 What strategies do you think you could start to manage the workload of essay-marking better?

--

3.13 Examination settings are usually different to regular settings. As such, a teacher's behaviour and conduct may differ as to what kind of assessment he/she is undertaking. Please answer the following questions:

3.13.1 When there are multiple essay topics as in exam settings, how do you start to mark?

a. I read a few essays just to understand the level at which most learners wrote and then start grading them one at a time in no particular order	
b. I start grading right from the first one regardless of the topics chosen	
c. I read once and then assess the essay for all aspects	
d. I assess essays of similar topics before moving onto essays of a different topic	
e. I assess according to the alphabetical order	
f. I assess according to students' strength as demonstrated by their previous writing task	
g. OTHER: I use any way to start to mark	

Please write down the strategy you use when you start to mark essays if you selected "OTHER" above:

--

3.13.2 What is the difference between marking an essay during the term and the examination essay?

--

#### **SECTION D - PEER ASSESSMENT**

4.1 How would you rate learners' peer assessment?

<b>1</b> They cannot do it at all	<b>2</b> They are bad	<b>3</b> They are trying	<b>4</b> They are good	<b>5</b> They are exceptionally good
--------------------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------	---------------------------	--------------------------------------

4.2 How do you treat the first draft of an essay in prepared essays?

a. I read it in comparison to the final draft	
b. I only look at it to see if errors were introduced after it was revised	
c. I actually mark it	
d. I don't have time to consult it	
e. OTHER: I treat the first draft in another way	

Please write down the way in which you treat the first draft when you start to mark essays if you selected “OTHER” above:

--

4.3 How do you handle errors introduced during peer assessment?

a. I mark them as incorrect, the learner should have known better than to incorporate a wrong correction, it simply means he/she also didn't know the correct form	
b. I mark it correct, it is not the learner's fault	
c. I indicate on the final draft that the correct form was supposed to be the one the learner changed	
d. I don't look at the first draft, so I haven't really faced such a situation, there are too many learners, I just don't have the time	
e. OTHER: I treat the errors introduced by peer assessment differently	

Please write down the way in which you treat the errors introduced by peer assessment if you selected “OTHER” above:

--

4.4 What do you think is the best way of correcting the learner who introduces errors into another learner's essay as peer assessor?

a. He/she will repeat the same mistake in his/her essay, I will correct it there	
b. I would rather call him/her and discuss the problem	
c. There are too many learners, I do not get the time for follow ups	
d. OTHER: I correct the learner in any way	

Please write down the way in which you correct the learner if you selected “OTHER” above:

--

4.5 Do you think that peer assessment contributes to the improvement of learner essays?

1 Not at all	2 It is not helpful	3 To some degree	4 It is helpful	5 It is imperative
-----------------	------------------------	---------------------	--------------------	-----------------------

**SECTION E – ISSUES IN MARKING****FACTORS AFFECTING/INFLUENCING MARKING:**

5.1. In your experience, does a learner's behaviour in class affect the way teachers mark his/her essay?

5.2 How does a learner's ability in essay writing affect the way that teachers mark his/her essay?

5.3 How does a learner's previous achievement in essay writing affect the way teachers mark his/her essay?

5.4.1 How does a learner's effort at essay writing affect the way you mark his/her essay?

5.4.2 How do you think teachers measure effort? In your opinion, what are the indicators of "effort" for teachers?

- 5.5 Do you think that teachers weigh each student's achievement against the general class performance? Please elaborate your answer.

--

### **HANDLING LEARNERS' POTENTIAL**

- 5.6 What do you do when a student has not written as best as they could/should have written based on their past performances?

--

- 5.7 What do you do when a student has written better than any of their previous performances but has not made the pass mark?

Fail the student	Pass the student	Other: I handle this differently
------------------	------------------	----------------------------------

Please explain why you fail or pass the student below:

--

Please write down the way in which you handle this situation if you selected "OTHER" above:

--

### **TEACHER BIASES**

*Recent literature on teachers' grading practices has found consistent, even if sometimes small, biases along the lines of gender, race, and ethnicity.<sup>9</sup>*

- 5.9 Do you think that these biases affect students' final marks in Sesotho essays?

Yes	No
-----	----

<sup>9</sup> Ouazad, A., & Page, L. 2012. Students' Perceptions of Teacher Biases: Experimental Economics in Schools. London: Centre for the Economics of Education.

Please explain your answer above.

5.10 What do you think are the most prominent biases among Sesotho teachers in general have when assessing creative writing?

5.11 How do you think the biases of teachers in your region affect how they assess learners' essays?

5.12 Where do you think the biases of teachers in your region come from? Or what do you think motivated or encouraged these biases?

5.13 What do you think would be the best way to overcome teachers' biases in your region?

**SECTION F – TEACHERS’ SUPPLEMENTS****SUPPLEMENTING THE CORRECTION CODE:**

6.1.1 How do you deal with instances where the whole sentence does not make sense?

6.1.2 How do you deal with instances where the learner has an option, for example; he/she may choose to either change the whole word, or rephrase, how do you indicate such if you indicate it at all?

6.1.3 What other issues do you face while marking that are not covered by the correction code and that were not discussed above?

6.1.4 The correction code does not allow any praises, how do you incorporate praises into your marking?  
*How do you praise your learners in text?*

**SUPPLEMENTING THE RUBRIC:**

6.2.1 How do you deal with the aspects of essays that are shown as combined on the rubric but are not aligned in the learner's text? *For example: the language, punctuation, word-choice are seriously flawed, but the style, tone and length are satisfactory, what mark would you award to the student?*

6.2.2 According to you, what is of the utmost importance? *The length of the text or the content in the text?*

6.2.3 What do you think the rubric lacks? What would you add to the rubric if you were to modify it for all teachers?

6.3 What do marks mean to you i.e. how much value do you attach to marks?

6.4 What do you think marks mean to your learners?

**This is the end of the questionnaire.  
Thank you for taking your time to fill this in. God bless you.**

## Appendix F: Permission from the Department of Basic Education to conduct the study

Enquiries: BM Kitching  
Tel. no: 051404 9221  
E-mail: b.kitching@fseducation.gov.za



Mr J. Sibeko  
1679 Refengkgotso  
Deneysville  
1932

Dear Mr Sibeko

### APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

1. This letter serves as an acknowledgement of receipt of your request to conduct research in the Free State Department of Education.

**Research Topic:** An analysis of feedback styles in the assessment of creative writing by Grade 10 teachers in SeSotho Home Language - A case Study

**Approval is herewith granted to conduct research in the following schools:**

**Deneysville:** L.E Notsi S/S, Nomsa S/S & Pele-Ya- Pele S/S

**Sasolburg:** Nkgopoleng S/S, Kahobotjha-Sakubusha S/S, Ceda S/S & Iketsetseng CS/S


**Orangeville:** Metsimatle S/S

**Target Population:** 9 X Grade 10 - SeSotho Home Language Teachers

**Period of research:** For three months from the date of signing of this letter. Please note that the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year.

2. Should you fall behind your schedule by three months to complete your research project in the approved period, you will need to apply for an extension.
3. The approval is subject to the following conditions:
  - 3.1 The collection of data should not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process.
  - 3.2 A bound copy of the research document should be submitted to the Free State Department of Education, Room 319, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Old CNA Building, Charlotte Maxeke Street, Bloemfontein.
  - 3.3 You will be expected, on completion of your research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department.
  - 3.4 The attached ethics documents must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department.
4. Please note that costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.

Yours sincerely

  
DR JEM SEKOLANYANE  
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

DATE: 04/09/2015

## Appendix G: Permission from the North-West University to conduct the study



PO Box 1174, Vanderbijlpark  
South Africa, 1900

Tel: (016) 910-3111  
Fax: (016) 910-3116  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Understanding and Processing Language in  
Complex Settings (UPSET)  
Tel: (016) 016 910 3482

E-Mail [Bertus.vanRooy@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Bertus.vanRooy@nwu.ac.za)

26 November 2015

Dear Mr. Sibeko

### **ETHICS APPLICATION: NWU-00424-15-S8**

I hereby wish to inform you that your application for ethics clearance for your MA study was approved by the Ethics Committee for Language Matters of the North-West University at its meeting of 27 May 2015, pending the submission of permission from the relevant authorities. After these permissions were obtained, the committee confirmed the approval of your application at its meeting on 16 September 2015.

Yours sincerely



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Prof. Albertus J van Rooy

Chairperson: Ethics Committee Language Matters

## Appendix H: Ethical requirements for conducting research in the Free State Department of Education



**Enquiries: Dr MC Liphapang**  
**Reference: Ethics Doc**  
**Tel: 051 404 9290**  
**Fax: 086 6929 092**  
**E-mail: [maphokal@edu.fs.gov.za](mailto:maphokal@edu.fs.gov.za)**

### ETHICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Free State Department of Education has an obligation to among other things ensure safety and respect of human dignity for the learners in the schools and all its employees.

There are many ethical issues to be taken into serious consideration when conducting research. The Free State Department of Education believes that the researchers conducting research in this department should, amongst others, adhere to the following ethical conduct:

- Researchers need to be aware of having the responsibility to secure the actual permission and interests of all those involved in the study;
- If the participants/respondents are learners permission should also be sought from their parents/guardians;
- They should not misuse any of the information collected but use it only for the purpose it is meant for;
- There should be a certain moral responsibility maintained towards the participants;
- There is a duty to protect the rights of the people in the study as well as their privacy;
- The confidentiality of those involved in the research study must be observed at all times, keeping their anonymity secure;
- The researcher should observe the following values: trust, respect, honesty fairness and integrity

Private Bag X20565, Bloemfontein, 9300  
 Old CNA Building, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Charlotte Maxeke Str, Bloemfontein  
 Tel: (051) 404 9290/58/59 E-mail: [maphokal@edu.fs.gov.za](mailto:maphokal@edu.fs.gov.za)

## Appendix I: Letters to the principals



P.O. Box 1174,  
Vanderbijlpark  
1900  
20 January 2015

Attention: Principal

Addresses of participating schools removed to protect the anonymity of participants

### To the Principal and school management

Dear Principal

A request is hereby made to the principal and the school management team at Cedar Secondary School to allow the person mentioned underneath to conduct a research at the school. This research is aimed at grade 10 Sesotho home language teachers.

The topic is “*Feedback mechanisms in in the assessment of creative writing in Sesotho home language by Grade 10 teachers: A Case Study*”. It is aimed at describing the mechanisms employed by teachers when assessing essays. Permission to conduct this study at Metsimaholo district schools has been sought from the Department of Education.

The research would entail one-on-one sessions with participating teachers after school hours. It is estimated that approximately 3 meetings of about an hour each, would be needed. The participants would have to fill out a questionnaire and meet the researcher for an interview. It is hoped that this study will run from mid-February to end of March 2015.

This project has ethics clearance from the NWU (00031-07-A1 from 19-11-2012 to 18-11-2018). You can contact the project leader for more information: [Susan.coetzeevanrooy@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Susan.coetzeevanrooy@nwu.ac.za) / 016-910-3422. Please note that neither the school nor the participating educator will be identifiable in the data discussion.

Your response and participation would be more than appreciated.

**Kind regards**

**Johannes Sibeko (Master’s student at North-West University)**

## Appendix J: Questionnaire consent form

### POTSO PAMPIRI

**Lebitso le Seboko:**  
**Nomoro tsa mohala:**

#### Tumellano ka tsebo

Re lebohela thuso ya hao patlisisong ena. Ka kopo, ela hloko hore:

Ha ho mabitso kapa ho hong ho bontshang boitsebiso ho tla sebediswa ha ho tlalehuwa dintlha. Le ha dintlha tsa hao tsa ngolophelo di tlo sebediswa ho hlopha dintlha, tlhahiso leseding ena ha e na ho amahangwa le boitsebiso ba hao mme ha ho tlo kgonahala hore o tsebisahale ho tswa ho dintlha tseo.

O dumelletswa ho ikhula projekeng ena nako e nngwe le e nngwe, ntle le ho fana ka mabaka, mme ha o no hlahelwa ke letho ka ho etsa jwalo. O dumelletswa le ho ka kopa hore dintlha tsa hao di seke tsa hlola di sebediswa projekeng ena. Empa he, ka kopo, o seke wa ikhula ntle le natso e bohlokwa hobane ho ka ama projeke ena hampe, ho tse ding, ho tla ba le kgahlametso ho dipalopalo tsa projeke ena.

Projeke ena e tjhaetswe mekgwa ke NWU (00031-07-A1 ho tloha 19-11-2012 ho ya ho 18-11-2018). O ka ikamahanya le moetapele wa projeke bakeng sa tlhahiso leseding e fetang mona: [Susan.coetzeevanrooy@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Susan.coetzeevanrooy@nwu.ac.za) / 016-910-3422.

Nna (ya bitswang mothusi ho tloha ntlheng ena hoya pele), ke utlwisisa hore:

Ka ho nka karolo mona, nna, mothusi, ke dumella batsamaisi ba patlisiso hore ba sebedise dintlha tsohle tseo ba di unang ho tswa ho nna bakeng sa *Dissertation* ya Johannes Sibeko selemong sa 2015 le bakeng sa mabaka a mang a dipatlisiso ho ya kamoo ba bonang ho hloka hla ba ntse ba etsa bonnete ba hore nna (mothusi) ha ke hlophehe.

Ke a utlwisisa hore dintlha tsa ka di keke tsa phatlalatswa mme bothusi ba ka bot la nkuwa e le palopalo mme ha ho ka hloka hla hore dintlha tsa ka di sebediswe di ikemetse, ke tla bitswa Mothusi.

E saenetswe: \_\_\_\_\_ ka di \_\_\_ tsa \_\_\_ 2015.

Tshaeno:

## QUESTIONNAIRE

Name and Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Informed Consent

Thank you for taking part in this study. Please note that:

No names or any form of identification will be used when reporting on the data. Although your biographical details will be used to organise the data, this information will not be linked to your identity and it will not be possible to identify you from the data.

You are free to withdraw from the project at any time, without stating reasons, and you will not be harmed in any way by doing so. You may also request that your data no longer be used in the project. However, you are kindly requested not to withdraw without careful consideration since this may have a detrimental effect on the statistical reliability of the project, among others.

This project has ethics clearance from the NWU (00031-07-A1 from 19-11-2012 to 18-11-2018). You can contact the project leader for more information: [Susan.coetzeevanrooy@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Susan.coetzeevanrooy@nwu.ac.za) / 016-910-3422.

I (here-onwards referred to as the participant), understand that:

By participating in this study, I, the participant allow the study conductors to use the details acquired from my participation for the purpose of the dissertation of Johannes Sibeko in the year 2015 and for other scientific reasons and studies as they see fit while keeping me (the participant) anonymous.

I understand that my details will not be published and that my participation will be taken as a statistic and that should there be a need for my data to be used in isolation I will be referred to as a Participant.

Signed by participant at: on the \_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ 2015.

Signature:

## Appendix K: Interview consent form

### INTERVIEW - INFORMED CONSENT

**Title of project:** An analysis of the assessment of creative writing by grade 10 teachers in Sesotho home language: A case study

**Project leader:** Mr J Sibeko ([Sibekojohannes@yahoo.com](mailto:Sibekojohannes@yahoo.com) / 0780928127)

**Supervisor:** Prof AS Coetzee-Van Rooy ([Susan.coetzeevanrooy@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Susan.coetzeevanrooy@nwu.ac.za) / 016-910-3422)

#### Informed Consent

Thank you for taking part in this study. Please note that:

No names or any form of identification will be used when reporting on the data. Although your biographical details will be used to organise the data, this information will not be linked to your identity and it will not be possible to identify you from the data.

You are free to withdraw from the project at any time, without stating reasons, and you will not be harmed in any way by doing so. You may also request that your data no longer be used in the project. However, you are kindly requested not to withdraw without careful consideration since this may have a detrimental effect on the statistical reliability of the project, among others.

This project has ethics clearance from the NWU (004-24-15-S8). For more information, you can contact the project supervisor; Prof AS Coetzee-Van Rooy.

I \_\_ (here-onwards referred to as the participant), understand that:

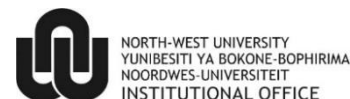
By participating in this study, I, the participant allow the study conductors to use the details acquired from my participation for the purpose of the dissertation of Johannes Sibeko in the year 2015 and for other scientific reasons and studies as they see fit while keeping me (the participant) anonymous.

I understand that my details will not be published and that my participation will be taken as a statistic and that should there be a need for my data to be used in isolation I will be referred to as a Participant. In addition, I allow Mr Sibeko to record the interview for transcription purposes. I understand that the recording will not be used to identify me in anyway except as an anonymous study participant.

Signed by participant at: \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ 2015.

Signature:

## Appendix L: Letters to the principals



### Research project:

An analysis of the assessment of creative writing by Grade 10 teachers in Sesotho Home Language: A case study

### Information about the project:

This MA study focuses on the attitudes and practices of teachers of Sesotho as a home language towards the marking of creative writing essays. The focus of the study is on Sesotho creative writing in Grade 10 when learners start to write these longer types of essays.

### Participating teachers will be asked to:

- Identify 9 Sesotho grade 10 creative writing essays from their classes. A copy of these anonymous essays marked by the teachers are given to the researcher to analyse.
- Complete a questionnaire about their knowledge, attitudes and practices concerning the marking of Sesotho grade 10 creative writing essays. The completion of the questionnaire would take between 45 and 60 minutes. Participants complete these questionnaires in their free time.
- Participate in an individual interview with the researcher to discuss practices around the marking of grade 10 Sesotho creative writing essays. The interviews will take between 10-15 minutes and will be conducted in the free time of the teachers.

All data will be reported anonymously, i.e. the names of pupils whose essays were selected by teachers were never even given to the researcher; the names of teachers and of schools will not be mentioned in the study. Teachers will be referred to as “Teacher 1” and schools will be referred to as “School A”.

The aim of gathering this data is for research purposes. I.e. the study wants to understand better how teachers regard the marking of Sesotho grade 10 creative writing essays. The information will only be reported in the dissertation and in academic articles or books. No additional reports will be written from this data.

We would like to acknowledge the assistance of participating schools in the “Acknowledgement Section” of the dissertation by mentioning all the names of the participating schools in alphabetical order.

### Consent

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (initials and surname of principal)  
of the \_\_\_\_\_ (name of school)

hereby gives permission to the researcher (Mr Johannes Sibeko under supervision of Prof AS Coetzee-Van Rooy – 082-878-2338 / 10208747@nwu.ac.za) to conduct the study as described above at the school.

I give permission that references to the school is anonymised in the text of the dissertation. I.e. I note that references to the school would be made, for example, to “School A” and that the name of the School would not be used in the text of the dissertation.

I also give permission that the NAME of the school could be added to the acknowledgement section of the dissertation as described above.

Preference of principal for acknowledgement of the name of the school in the acknowledgement section	Please tick the relevant preference
Yes	
No	

Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_