

**SENTENCE STRUCTURE AS A MEASURE OF WRITING PROFICIENCY: An analysis of
ESL learners' compositions at a desegregated school in the Mahikeng Area Office.**

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that the mini-dissertation hereby submitted to the University of North West for the degree of Master of Arts in English has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university. I declare that it is my work in design and in execution and that all materials contained herein have been duly acknowledged.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my late father, Mothupi Andreas Sebe, my mother, Puseletso Anisia Sebe, who have always believed in me, and raised me to realise my potential.

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ABSTRACT

In recent years there have been concerns regarding the educational attainments and literacy levels of learners in South African schools. Using Hallidayan grammar (Halliday, 1994; 1987), the current study investigated the writing proficiency of Grade 12 English Second Language (ESL) learners in a desegregated school. Unlike their peers in township and rural schools, these learners have acquired conversational fluency as a result of learning in English quite early in their schooling. According to Clachar (2003), the writer who uses a strategy of clause-chaining, linking paratactic and hypotactic clauses to form longer sentences, realises a more oral register and, conversely, the writer who uses a strategy that uses clauses so that they are embedded, employs a more academic register. On index of hypotaxis, the results of the study indicated a high presence of compound and complex sentences formed by using subordination. Embedded clauses that are associated with advanced writing skills were non-existent. It was concluded that the participants had acquired conversational fluency but had not yet acquired the writing proficiency levels that are required for academic writing.

TABLE OF CONTENTS**PAGE**

1.	CHAPTER 1: Introduction and Background.....	1
1.1	Introduction.....	1
1.2	Statement of the problem.....	4
1.3	The research question.....	6
1.4	Objectives of the study	6
1.5	Methodology	7
1.5.1	Method	7
1.5.2	Sampling	7
1.5.3	The participants	7
1.5.4	Data collection procedure	8
1.5.5	The instrument	9
1.6	The significance of the study	9
1.7	Chapter division	10
2.	CHAPTER 2: Literature review.....	11
2.1	Introduction	11
2.2	Development of syntactisation	11
2.2.1	Syntactisation: early studies	11
2.2.2	Development of hypotaxis	13
2.2.3	Studies on children's writing	15
2.2.4	Moving from spoken to written norms	16

2.2.5	Subordination: formation of relative clauses.....	17
2.3	Types of clauses	20
2.4	Approaches to teaching writing	23
2.4.1	Focus on language structures	23
2.4.2	Focus on text functions	24
2.4.3	Focus on creative expression	24
2.4.4	Focus on the writing process	24
2.4.5	Focus on content	25
2.5	Writing in NCS (National Curriculum Statement).....	25
2.6	Development of writing competence: South African studies	26
2.7	Cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) writing skills	28
2.8	The Communicative Approach and the teaching of grammar	29
2.9	The effect of grammar teaching on second language acquisition	30
2.10	Second language acquisition.....	31
2.10.1	Second language acquisition: social accounts.....	32
2.10.2	Second language acquisition: learner attitudes.....	33
2.10.3	Second language acquisition: social class	34
2.10.4	Second language acquisition: learning contexts	35
2.10.5	Second language acquisition: age.....	38
2.11	Second language acquisition: cognitive accounts.....	38
2.11.1	Krashen's second language acquisition model	40
2.11.2	Bialystok's second language acquisition model.....	41
2.11.3	The multidimensional model.....	41

2.12	Acquisition of relative clauses	44
2.13	Some common errors resulting from learning an L2	45
2.14	Summary	48
3.	CHAPTER 3: Methodology.....	49
3.1	Introduction.....	49
3.2	Research design	49
3.2.1	Method.....	49
3.2.2	Sampling	49
3.3	The participants	50
3.4	Data collection procedure	51
3.5	The instrument used	52
3.6	Summary	53
4.	CHAPTER 4: Analysis and main findings.....	54
4.1	Introduction	54
4.2	The main findings of the study	54
4.2.1	Types of sentence structures that are dominant in the compositions of Grade 12 ESL learners.....	54
4.2.2	Types of clause structures that are frequently used by Grade 12 English Second language learners.....	59
4.2.3	To what extent what do the compositions of Grade 12 English Second Language learners display features of written English?.....	63

4.2.4	Is there a positive correlation between a high frequency of subordination and scores obtained in the compositions of Grade 12 ESL learners?	65
4.2.5	Is there a negative correlation between a low frequency of subordination and the scores obtained by Grade 12 ESL learners?	67
4.3	Summary.....	67
5.	CHAPTER 5: Synthesis of the main findings, Recommendations and Conclusion.....	68
5.1	Introduction	68
5.2	Synthesis of the main findings	68
5.3	Limitations of the study	69
5.4	Recommendations	70
5.5	Conclusion	71
	Bibliography.....	72
	Appendices.....	81
	Appendix A: The question given to the participants	81
	Appendix B: The marking rubric for marking Grade 12 compositions.....	82
	Appendix C: The compositions of the participants	
	Appendix D: The compositions for formal examination	

1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction



Recently there have been concerns regarding educational attainments and literacy levels of learners in South African schools. Learners in South African schools have been found to be performing below their counterparts in countries in Southern Africa in literacy and numeracy competitions (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Despite this, very little has been done, either to describe the problem empirically, or to give an account of why the learners do not attain acceptable levels of literacy and numeracy. While many commentators have blamed the legacy of apartheid education, some have blamed the new curricula that were introduced after 1998 (Jansen, 2005; 2001) and others have blamed the language policy for schools (Heugh, 2000, Alexander, 1999). Alexander (1999) argues that Grade 12 pass rates will not improve significantly until learners are instructed in their home language (also called mother tongue). However, despite the commendable body of research, locally and internationally, that endorses mother-tongue instruction as the most appropriate language of learning and teaching and the basis for the addition of a second language, (UNESCO, 1968 cited in Manyike, 2007; Genesee, Paradis & Crago, 2004; Baker, 2001; Williams, 1996; Bamgbose, 1991; Macdonald, 1990) the role of indigenous languages in schooling in South Africa is highly contested (De Klerk, 2002; Marivate, 2000). Most parents prefer English as a medium of instruction for their children. Preference for English as language of learning and teaching (LoLT) is, amongst other factors, encouraged by the fact that second language learners who go to formerly whites-only schools (currently informally referred to as Model C schools or former Model C schools) seem to be performing better than their counterparts who go to township and rural schools. One benefit for the learners that attend former Model C schools, compared to their counterparts in township and rural schools is that they rapidly acquire good conversational fluency.

Cummins's (1984; 1981) studies in BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) have indicated that conversational fluency is acquired to a functional level within about two years of initial exposure to the second language whereas at least five years is usually required to catch up to the native

speakers' competency in academic aspects of the second language. Similarly, Schlebusch and Thobedi's (2004) study on learning English as a second language (ESL) in Grade Eight in black township schools in South Africa indicates that learners sometimes seem to be able to speak English in general conversation but when the deeper cognitive levels of English are needed to complete certain tasks, they often experience problems. Observation has indicated that there is a huge difference in terms of language proficiency between black learners in former Model C schools and their peers for whom English is a home (first) language. This is especially evident in writing tasks.

According to Cummins (1984), there may be threshold levels of linguistic competence which bilingual children must attain both in order to avoid stagnation of development and allow the potentially beneficial aspects of bilingualism to influence their cognitive and academic functioning. He argues that a cognitively and academically beneficial form of bilingualism can be achieved only on the basis of adequately developed first language (L1) skills. Black learners in the former Model C schools start learning in English as early as they are three or five years old and usually never get to learn their home language until they are in Grade Seven (Hendricks, 2001:3).

From 1998 new curricula were introduced in South African schools. These outcomes-based curricula aim to eradicate the effects of rote-learning curricula of the apartheid period. The new curricula envisage language learners who are critical and proficient in the different language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) states that writing is a powerful instrument of communication that allows learners to construct and communicate thoughts and ideas coherently. Furthermore, frequent writing practice across a variety of contexts, tasks and subjects fields enables learners to communicate functionally and creatively. This makes writing an integral part of learning. It is, therefore, imperative that learners acquire adequate writing skills to succeed academically. The current study focuses on the participants' writing proficiency. Writing is central to educational success (Hoff, 2005; Owens, 2004; Bashir, Conte & Heerde, 1998). Writing enhances acquisition as learners experiment with words, sentences and larger chunks of writing to communicate their ideas effectively and to reinforce the grammar and vocabulary they are learning in class (Bello, 1997). In FET (Further Education and Training Band) which includes Grades 10 to 12, learners write examinations in three papers. In Paper 1 (Comprehension, Summary and Language in use), learners write a summary of a text in the form of a continuous paragraph. In Paper 2 (Poetry, Novel and Drama), they write at least

one discursive essay and in Paper 3 (Creative and Transactional writing) they write a composition and a variety of longer and shorter transactional texts. Learners are also required to compile a portfolio consisting of fourteen written tasks. Seven (7) of these tasks are compositions and transactional texts and literary essays. The curriculum comprises four LOs (learning outcomes). LO 3, which is called Writing and Presenting, envisages the learner that is able to write and present for a wide range of purposes and audiences using conventions and formats appropriate to diverse contexts.

The South African school curriculum and language policy reflect strong influence of Cummins' (1984) theory of additive bilingualism – a system whereby learners are introduced to a second language gradually, and get to learn it without losing their mother tongue. It is argued that the learner's home language needs to be strengthened and developed so as to provide a sound foundation for learning additional languages (Department of Education, 1996:11). Multilingualism is regarded as a global norm (Department of Education, 1996:3). This is given impetus in the language-in-education policy (Department of Education, 1996) which prescribes that a learner take a minimum of two languages, one as LoLT and another at Home Language (HL) level. Although all the official languages are equal and may be taken at HL level, in the former Model C schools learners are instructed in English or Afrikaans, which majority take at HL level despite the fact that they do not speak these languages at home (Singh, 2000; Van Rooyen & Jordaan, 2009). However, this context poses a challenge for the development of language for academic purposes (Van Rooyen & Jordaan, 2009:271) as these learners show that they have not acquired sufficient writing skills by the time they exit high school.

Examining English clause-structuring by Creole-English-speaking children in Canada in academic writing, Clachar (2003) observed that they used more paratactic-hypotactic clause structures typical of spoken or conversational discourse and, hardly wrote embedded, complex clause structures that are characteristic of expository academic writing. Clachar (2003) argues that, because they are not native speakers of English, these children are mistakenly placed in classes designed for children who are nonnative speakers. As a result, their linguistic experiences are not recognised and their literacy needs are not attended to (Clachar, 2003). In South Africa, black learners who attend former Model C schools face a similar situation. Because they are fairly fluent in English, they are usually forced, by circumstances in the schools or the choice of their parents, to enrol in English Home Language classes even though English is not their home language. Clachar (2003) submits

that Creole-speaking children may believe that they already know Standard English and thus may not be motivated to confine themselves to Standard English. According to Craig (1998, cited in Sinnemäki, 2008), nonnative English children such as Creole-English-speaking children, because they already know Standard English, may not recognise new English structures and new register features of academic English taught to them, and therefore, fail to use these register features. Observations have indicated that black learners attending former Model C schools focus very little attention to English and instead worry more about other school subjects than English. This happens regardless of their poor performance in English, especially in tasks that require proficiency in writing skills and grammar.

The current study was conducted to examine the writing proficiency of Grade 12 second language learners (called ESL learners) in former Model C schools. These learners have been found to be attaining language proficiency levels that are better than those of their counterparts in rural and township schools. Additionally, their general educational attainment levels are higher than those of the learners in the township and rural schools. Language proficiency has been defined as the ability to use language accurately and appropriately in its oral and written form in a variety of settings (Cloud, Genesee & Hamayan, 2000:60). This incorporates the four language aspects, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing. According to Manyike (2009), these aspects develop independently of one another, especially when the language acquired is not the learners' first language. However, these aspects reinforce one another. The current study examined the types of sentence structures that Grade 12 ESL learners in an English medium school in the Ngaka Modiri Molema district of the North West Province are able to write. In this study, the learner data are shown to display many of the stylistic features of spoken English than written English. It was concluded that this reflects the participants' conversational fluency and that they had not acquired adequate writing skills for academic purposes.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Writing is crucial to literacy. It underpins learning across all areas of the curriculum (Hendricks, 2009:1) and to a large extent it impacts on learners' educational success. This skill, however, does not come naturally, but must be taught and practised intensively (Van der Walt, Evans & Kilfoil, 1989:257). According to Cummins's (1984) model of linguistic competence, writing proficiency is classified under Quadrant B – context-reduced and

cognitively demanding communication. It is, therefore, a cognitive/academic skill that is acquired fully much later compared to conversational fluency.

Writing requires planning at a number of different levels, among which is the choice of syntactic packaging for combining propositions (Mazur-Palandré, 2007:173), the most common being coordination and subordination. Observations indicate that the ability to produce simple and coordinated sentences is acquired quite early in the process of learning a second language. According to Allison, Beard & Willock (2002) and Kress (1994), increasing use of subordination is a feature of advanced writing proficiency.

Written and spoken structural norms differ in a number of ways (Miller & Weinert, 1998). According to Mazur-Palandré (2007:173), there exist contextual variations in the use of linguistic forms according to the type of text and modality of production. A narrative text and an expository text, for example, differ markedly. Narrative texts involve relating personal events chronologically and combining them, using casual relations. Mazur-Palandré (2007) argues that this type of text is acquired early by children but undergoes continuous development over time. On the other hand, expository texts have a non-linear macrostructure and impose a distant discourse stance and a high level of cognitive development in speakers and writers. As a result, spoken texts require less planning time and conversational constraints than written texts. They also do not require complex coordination or non-finite subordination as written texts do.

Clachar (2003) argues that the ability to choose appropriate register for academic discourse is grounded in the students' ability to recognise and understand the pragmatic and semantic roles of conjunctions in clauses. In conversation, conjunctions are used to simply link paratactic and hypotactic clauses, thereby forming long sentences. However, in academic discourse, conjunctions play both pragmatic role (combining clauses) and semantic role (showing relationships between and among different constituents).

The focus of the current study was the types of sentence structures that English second language learners in the former Model C schools are able to write by the time they exit high school. Simple and coordinated sentences are associated with child writing and less skilful writers of poor proficiency, while subordinated complex sentences with embedded clauses are associated with advanced writing proficiency.

1.3 The research question

The present study seeks to establish the writing proficiency of Grade 12 English second language learners. It asks:

- What types of sentence structures are predominant in the compositions of Grade 12 English Second Language learners in former Model C schools?

Academic writing that learners do at secondary school, and tertiary institutions in particular, indicates that expository and discursive writing involves using complex sentence structures. Spoken and written discourses are vastly different. The latter is characterised by complex sentence structures while the former may have broken and/or incomplete sentences. Learners in secondary school are expected to produce written texts that are typically associated with academic discourse. In order to answer this main question, the study seeks to establish the following:

1. What is the frequency of subordinated sentences in the compositions of English Second Language learners?
2. What types of clauses are frequently used by Grade 12 English Second Language learners?
3. To what extent do the compositions of Grade 12 English Second Language learners display features of written English?
4. Is there a positive correlation, if any, between a high presence of subordinated clauses and the scores obtained by English Second Language learners?
5. Is there a negative correlation, if any, between a low subordination and poor compositions?

1.4 Objectives of the study

Clachar (2003) argues that, by examining the challenges associated with the students' use of clause-level structures typical of academic discourse, one can gain insight into the way these challenges are reflected in the textual organisation of academic discourse. The current study investigates how English Second Language learners in the former Model C schools grapple with subordination, a feature that is, generally, associated with advanced writing proficiency and academic discourse.

According to Mazur-Palandré (2007), there exist contextual variations in the use of linguistic forms according to type and modality of production. For example, narrative texts require different linguistic forms and register compared to expository texts. In secondary schools, learners are expected to produce written texts that are typically characterised by complex sentence structures that are a mark of advanced writing proficiency. According to Clachar (2003), such texts are characterised by a high rate of embedded clause structures. Paratactic and hypotactic clauses are regarded as a feature of spoken discourse. The current study sought to establish the level of writing proficiency that English Second Language learners in former Model C schools have by the time they are in Grade 12.

Writing proficiency is crucial for academic success, especially after secondary school. Learners in Grade 12 are at the exit point to tertiary education institutions and it is crucially important that in this grade they should be able to write at the level required in such learning institutions.

1.5 Methodology

1.5.1 Method

The study uses the mixed method. This method has become the preferred method of research design in recent years, especially in the social and human sciences. According to Creswell (2003), this method combines the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research designs and gives the researcher freedom to offset the weaknesses of either method used alone. Mixed method, therefore, provides a better understanding of the problem. In the current study quantitative method, written compositions, was used to collect the data and qualitative method was used to analyse and interpret the results.

1.5.2 Sampling

Because of the time constraint and the scope of the current study, random stratified sampling was used. This procedure was chosen as it would give subjects the same probability of being selected for the sample (Creswell, 2003).

1.5.3 The participants

The participants in this study were Grade 12 English Second Language (ESL) learners in a desegregated secondary school in the Ngaka Modiri Molema district in North West Province. The participants were selected on the basis of their general performance in English (as a

school subject). The school has been recording commendable results in the (NSC) National Senior Certificate (Grade 12) examinations over a number of years. Although the school enrolls learners from different racial groups, the majority of its learners are black (African) learners. They are admitted at the school on the basis of their good performance in English. Their parents should also accept the school's language policy, which is English as a language of teaching and learning and they choose either seTswana or Afrikaans as a First Additional Language (FAL). All the learners take English at Home Language (HL) level. This means, English is not only the learners' language of learning and teaching, but it is regarded as their first/home language – a language they speak at home, even though this is not necessarily so. Although seTswana, the first language of majority of the learners, is taught at the school, a considerable number of the learners take Afrikaans as their first additional language.

Grade 12 is the exit class in the South African school system. Learners at this level are expected to show readiness to join the workforce or continue their education at institutions of higher learning, having acquired the necessary skills, which include the ability to communicate well in spoken and written communication. It is, therefore, imperative that in Grade 12 learners acquire or show that they have acquired appropriate writing skills required to function well in the workplace and/or institutions of higher learning.

As mentioned earlier, all the learners at the school take English at HL level and may select either seTswana or Afrikaans as a second language. Since an additional language was not the main focus of the study, it was not established how many of the participants were taking either of these languages at FAL level.



1.5.4 Data collection procedure

A total of hundred-and-forty (140) learners were given a topic to write a composition on. The compositions were marked and the scores were ranked from outstanding to low performance. Using random sampling, a total of twenty (20) compositions was taken by selecting every seventh composition from the total sample.

As the Department of Education (1998; 1996) recommends that process writing approach be used to teach writing, the participants were given the task (composition) as part of their formal assessment for school-based assessment (SBA), which is commonly known as Continuous Assessment (CASS). The participants were given a period of a week to write the composition. This would afford them enough time to go through all the steps of process

writing (brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising and reworking, editing, proof-reading and presenting). This would also make the situation appear normal to the participants.

1.5.5 The instrument

The study focused on sentence structures, examining the frequency of subordinated sentences in the participants' compositions. The index of hypotaxis was used to analyse the participants' sentences.

In South African schools, extended writing (that is, composition) is taught as early as primary school (Department of Education, 2000). Learners are often advised to use a variety of short and long sentences to make their written communication effective. This is reinforced with explicit teaching of sentence structure, including coordinated and subordinated sentences.

1.6 The significance of the study

As mentioned earlier, there is a general concern regarding the literacy levels and educational attainments of learners in South African schools. However, there is limited research addressing the extent to which these learners achieve the language competence required to meet the demands of the curriculum. Observation indicates that there are even fewer studies that focus on the linguistic competence of learners in former Model C schools since these schools are doing relatively well, especially in the NSC Grade 12 examinations. This study will contribute to the research available on the linguistic competence of English second language learners in English-only schools, in terms of sentence structure.

Writing proficiency is crucial for educational success. The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) envisages producing learners who are proficient writers (Department of Education, 1996:13). It is argued that these learners will be competent, versatile writers who will be able to use their skills to develop appropriate written, visual and multimedia texts for a variety of purposes. The present study has indicated that compositions of Grade 12 English second language learners in former Model C schools still show a considerably high presence of simple and coordinated sentences and a very low presence of subordinated sentences. This indicates their well-developed conversational fluency and that they have not yet acquired adequate writing proficiency skills required for academic writing.

If we consider Clachar's (2003) study on Creole-English-speaking children, black learners who enrol in former Model C schools constitute a unique group in that, unlike ESL learners in rural and township schools, they are fairly fluent in English, but have not attained native speakers' proficiency like their peers for whom English is first or home language.

1.7 Chapter division

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

This chapter provides the background to the study, the research question and the significance of the study

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter discusses the literature related to the study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents the research design, method used to collect data, the instrument used and the participants in the study.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

This chapter discusses the main findings of the study.

Chapter 5: Synthesis of findings, Recommendations and Conclusions

2. CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the literature related to the current study is reviewed. This includes the latest research on development of syntactisation; hypotaxis; features of children's writing and the challenges of black learners in English-medium instruction schools; types of clauses, focusing on relative clauses, and the common approaches to writing used by many teachers in recent times. The communicative approach remains highly recommended. In the NCS, teachers are encouraged to use the approach since the main goal of language classes is to assist learners to acquire language for communication in the real world.

As mentioned earlier, ESL learners in English-only schools in South Africa constitute a unique group and English language learning contexts in the country are quite complex. This section also discusses second language acquisition accounts, focusing on the acquisition of writing proficiency, especially syntactisation and relative clauses.

As noted in the previous chapter, there is a scarcity of research focusing on the aspect of language learning in South Africa that is the focus of the current study. Although there are numerous studies focusing on writing proficiency of second language learners, these were conducted outside South Africa. Cultural and contextual factors that were present for such studies could make a huge difference, if not present for studies conducted in South Africa. Most of the studies conducted in South Africa too, have tended to focus on younger children in primary schools or adult learners already at institutions of higher learning, such as universities and colleges. For example, Monyai (2004), Howie (2002), De Klerk (2000) and Hendricks (1999) Datta (2000) Hendricks (1999), focused on children younger than eleven (11) years old and Norton (2005), Kress (2004) and Datta (2000) focused on students at university. In order to address the objectives of the study, it became necessary to follow the leads suggested in the research studies that could be found.

2.2 Development of syntactisation

2.2.1 Syntactisation: early studies

Functionalists have theorised that language learning evolves out of learning how to carry on a conversation. According to this view, the ability to construct sentences, for both native speakers and second language learners, develops as they engage in conversations. According to Givón (1979), cited in Ellis (1994), language acquisition is characterised by a gradual move from discourse-based, pragmatic mode of communication to a syntactic mode. This means that syntactisation is the gradual move from loose, paratactic structures, typically found in informal, unplanned discourse, to ‘grammaticalised’ structures, similar to those that characterise formal planned discourse. She termed the first type of language ‘pragmatic mode’ and the more grammatical one ‘syntactic mode’ For example:

(1) Ice cream, I like it.

The sentence below typically occurs in informal, unplanned discourse, while the sentence below is typical in syntactic mode:

(2) I like ice cream.

Table 1 below shows the characteristics of these two types of modes.

Pragmatic mode (informal/unplanned discourse)	Syntactic mode (formal/planned discourse)
Topicalised constructions e.g. My father he’s sick	Grammatical constructions e.g. It’s my father who is sick
Loose coordination	Tight subordination
Plentiful repetition and slow delivery	Little repetition and fast delivery
Reduction and simplification of grammatical morphology	Full grammatical morphology
Short verbal clauses with few noun phrases per verb	Long verbal clauses with several noun phrases per verb

Table 1: Characteristics of the pragmatic and syntactic modes (from Ellis, 1994:372)

Later Givón’s findings were supported by Pfaff’s (1992, cited in Ellis, 1994) study of L2 German pre-school and early school-age Turkish children in Berlin. The study showed that main verb use of ‘sein’ and ‘haben’ preceded the auxiliary use of the same verbs.

Significantly these studies give credence to suggestions that coordination precedes subordination. That is, language learners seem to learn to use coordinating language devices before they can learn to use subordinating devices and that coordination ranks lower compared to subordination.

Sato's (1988), cited in Ellis (1994) study, however, could not come up with evidence to support the existence of syntactisation. Her study of two Vietnamese learners of English found little evidence of paratactic speech. However, the study indicated a shift from coordination to subordination and that the learners used juxtaposition (a form of coordination) as the main way of expressing logical relationships. The learners also could not use infinitival complements, relative clauses and gerundive complements until in the period of the study (Ellis, 1994:373). An important finding of this study was that it showed that interaction may be insufficient to ensure full syntactisation, and that encounters with written language may be crucial (Ellis, 1994:373).

2.2.2 Development of hypotaxis

Hypotaxis can be defined as a hierarchical arrangement of phrases and clauses (Nordquist, 2010). The main constituent is called main clause and the other clauses are in subordinate relationship with the main clause. Hypotaxis generally involves using relative pronouns and subordinating conjunctions. The opposite of such an arrangement is called parataxis whereby clauses are of equal standing in the sentence. Parataxis is achieved by stringing clauses with coordinating conjunctions. In parataxis the clauses appear like sentences within a sentence. Hypotactic and paratactic clauses may be compressed through nominalizing device called embedding. This forms more complex units. According to Halliday (1994; 1987) and Clachar (2003), hypotactic and paratactic clauses are associated with spoken language, while embedding is associated with written academic discourse. Hypotactic and paratactic clauses have been found to be features of children's writing and the writing of non-proficient writers. Embedding on the other hand, characterises advanced writing proficiency. According to Sinnemäki (2008), the distinction between hypotactic and embedded clauses is mainly semantic in nature.

Earlier studies of children's writing, (Perera; 1984; Kroll, 1981; Harpin, 1976) have suggested that children progress in their uniquely individual ways, at their own speeds, in mastering first the physical skill of writing and then in exploring its potentialities (Allison, Beard & Willock, 2002:5). Harpin (1976) argues that in order to explain and discuss what

happens when children write and to be able to follow development, there was a need for a method of systematically describing the writing. Subsequently, he developed indices which would show how children progress towards mastery of their native language. Included in the indices were six items, namely, average sentence length; average clause length; an index of subordination; a weighted index of subordination; the ratio of common subordinate clauses to all subordinate clauses, and a personal pronoun index (Allison, Beard & Willock, 2002:6). According to Harpin (1976:63), such indices offer guide to placing a writer's work on scales of language maturity.

One significant effect of Harpin's study is the suggestion that there seem to be distinctive patterns of syntactic development in children's writing. For example, it was observed that the use of "and" as a universal coordinator in the speech of young children is transferred to their writing in its early stages and that by the time children come to write, it is a powerful habit and it gives way, slowly and reluctantly to the very large number of different joining methods provided for in English.

In the study on the linguistic features in children's writing, Perera (1984) observed that learning to write entails mastering not only the physical forms of letters, spelling and punctuation, but also the structural and organisational patterns that characterise written language. Perera's study was based on an earlier study by Kroll (1981) which outlined four phase of writing namely, preparation, consolidation, differentiation and integration. At the stage of preparation, children are learning the basic mechanics of handwriting and spelling; at the consolidation stage they are able to express in writing what they can already say; at the differentiation stage they can compose and their writing begins to diverge from speech, showing unique syntactic structures and patterns of organisation. By the last stage children have acquired control of both oral and written language and are able to make appropriate linguistic choices. Perera (1984) argues that, although it may not be easy to assign chronological ages to these phases, it is possible that consolidation stage begins when children are about 6 to 7 years old, that the differentiation stage begins at about 9 to 10 years and that the integration stage may begin when they are 11 or 12 years old. At this stage, children's writing shows grammatical structures rarely found in speech, indicating evidence of differentiation between speech and writing (Allison, Beard & Willock, 2002:8).

Very significantly, Perera's study suggested that children gradually lose their dependence on coordination as means of joining clauses and develop a range of other ways of connecting their ideas (Allison, Beard & Willock, 2002:8), showing increasing use of subordinate clauses. According to Perera (1984), between the ages of 7 and 17, children's writing shows increasing use of nominal and adverbial clauses of place, manner, and concession and relative clauses become frequent between the ages of 7 and 10.

Explaining Harpin's (1976) and Perera's (1984) studies, Allison, Beard & Willock (2002) conducted a study on syntactical features of the writing of children aged 7 to 9 in a 5 – 9 first school in the North of England, investigating how these features may be influenced by the task undertaken. Using the index of subordination they investigated the frequency of adverbial clauses, nominal clauses and relative clauses in autobiographical narratives, retelling of a version of a story, continuation of a story provided by a picture, writing an account of an incident and an account of how to play a game well-known to the child. The study seemed to confirm Harpin's observation that children follow a 'common path', though at different speeds and with some variations, thus validating the view that context and task influence writing (Sampson, 2003). The important finding of the study was that teachers can have a very profound effect on the rate and quality of individual development through levels of expectation, the careful provision of tasks and the quality of intervention (Allison, Beard & Willock, 2002:32).

Writing skills are about using an appropriate construction to express a particular idea in a particular context, not about percentages (Sampson, 2003:7). This suggests that, the ability to express thoughts using appropriate constructions, and not the frequency of particular constructions should be the goal of the writing class.

2.2.3 Other studies on children's writing

Written and spoken texts have evidently distinct features (Miller & Weinert, 1998). According to Mazur-Palandré (2007) syntactic links constitute a good diagnostic tool for the analysis of syntactic development in written and spoken text production. In her study of written and spoken texts of French children learning English, Mazur-Palandré (2007) examined how syntactic connectivity is affected by text type genre (narrative and expository), modality of production (written and spoken discourse) and age. The study showed that type of text and modality are responsible for significant differences in the speaker/writer's choice of syntactic links. It indicated that simple coordination and marked

juxtaposition decrease with age, whereas the effect of age turned out to be significant, suggesting that by growing up and in the course of schooling coordination with ellipsis of subject, finite and non-finite subordination increased in children's production. Expository texts were found to be characterised by more finite and non-finite subordination than narrative texts which were characterised by marked juxtaposition. This study, generally, reinforced the findings of both Perera (1984) and Harpin (1976).

According to Fayol (1997) and Bonin (2003, cited in Mazur-Palandré, 2007), written text implies relaxed temporal constraint and a longer planification time whereas spoken text involves less planification time and conversational constraints. This suggests that written texts compared with spoken texts, should show more complex syntactic links such as non-finite subordination. The absence of such structures in written texts may be indicating poorly developed writing skills. Observations have indicated that most schools and English educators have adopted the process writing approach. This afford learners time to engage in the various stages recommended in the approach so as to produce written texts of excellent quality, in terms of sentence structures and general language use.

2.2.4 Moving from spoken to written norms

As mentioned earlier, written and spoken structural norms differ in a number of ways and that, at some stage adult learners and mature writers indicate that they had outgrown certain tendencies that characterise spoken texts. Observations have indicated that most learners who go to the former Model C schools arrive at school already speaking English fairly fluently as they would have started learning in English in day-care centre or kindergarten. It is expected that by the time they complete schooling, a decade or so later, they would have acquired adequate writing skills as well, and would be skilled users of the written language (Sampson, 2003:1).

Sampson's (2003) study of child writing, published writing and speech indicated that child writing was as wordy as published writing. He concluded that the wordiness in child writing indicated that there may have been periods in the past when writers deliberately and pompously made sentence structures more ramified and verbose than was necessary. The writings of D.H. Lawrence, Thomas Hardy and Charles Dickens, for example, are written in long, wordy complex sentences. In a sense the wordiness in child writing indicates the end-point of the process which children acquiring literacy skills are embarked on. Sampson's study indicated that infinite clauses occur at the same rate in

child writing and speech. Nominal clauses, verbless clauses, antecedentless relative clauses, and bare non-finite clauses were less frequent in published writing than speech and they occurred at a rate similar in child writing. Adverbial clauses occurred at the same rate in both speech and child writing. The study confirmed the findings of earlier studies on children’s writing in that it showed that child participants in the study had acquired an ability to construct phrases, but had not acquired the ability to construct clauses. Significantly, the study showed that adaptation to adult norms occurred sooner with relative clauses than other kinds of subordinate clauses. The study, however, could not conclusively show why relative clauses, which are structurally complicated than other subordinate clauses, were acquired quite early.

2.2.5 Subordination: formation of relative clauses

According to transformational grammar, a relative clause is a structure realisation of an embedded sentence following a definite or an indefinite head noun phrase. In the following examples the relative clause is written in italics and the noun phrase is underlined:

- (1) The boy *who was running fast* stumbled.
- (2) A boy *who was running fast* stumbled.

The relative clause formation rule involves the omission of the second identical noun phrase and it is replaced with an appropriate relative pronoun. In the example below, the noun phrase “The boy” is deleted in the second sentence to ‘embed’ it into the first sentence. As a result, the two sentences:

- (1) The boy was running fast.
- (2) The boy stumbled.

become,

- (3) The boy who was running fast stumbled.

Subordination is employed to try and avoid repetition that steals energy from written discourse. Fundamentally, it shows the relationships between the thoughts because, unlike coordination that only involves combining words and groups of words, it involves combining whole sentences. Subordination leads to formation of complex sentences. In

many secondary school grammar/textbooks, a clause is defined as “a simple sentence ... or a phrase with a finite verb” (Gosher, 2000:17), “... a group of words containing a finite verb” (Lutrin & Pincus, 2002:9) and two major types of clauses, namely, main clause and subordinate clause are identified. For example, in the sentence below, the main clause is written in italics and the finite verb is underlined:

- (1) *The van came to a halt* after it had run out of petrol (Lutrin & Pincus, 2002: 9).

The subordinate clause is subordinate to or dependent on the main clause. In the example below, the subordinate clause is written in bold and the finite verb is underlined:

- (1) **While the engine was running**, the man jumped out of the car (Lutrin & Pincus, 2002:9).

A clause is introduced by a coordinating conjunction or a subordinating conjunction. A coordinating conjunction forms coordination and the clause (s) have equal status. The central coordinating conjunctions are “and”, “but” and “or” and marginal coordinators, in that they must come between the clauses are “for”, “nor”, “so”, “therefore”, “then”, and “yet” (Greenbaum, 1991:122). Coordinating conjunctions are used to form compound sentences. In the examples below the coordinating conjunctions are written in italics:

- (a) Fugard was born in Middleburg *and* he attended school in Port Elizabeth.
- (b) The committee felt obligated, *but* the chairperson did not.
- (c) Emily does not want to see the doctor, *nor* does Liz.
- (d) The committee anticipated the budget cut *yet* it still needed to cut several projects.

Subordinate conjunctions are used to form complex sentences. The three major types of subordinate clauses are:

- (a) Noun clause (also called nominal clause). For example:

- (1) *What Goldilocks did* is unacceptable. The noun clause functions as the subject.
- (2) The bears claimed that Goldilocks had stolen their porridge. The noun clause functions as the object.

- (b) Adjectival clause or relative clause: For example:

- (1) I am tired of hearing about Goldilocks *who stole the oats*.
- (c) Adverbial clause. Adverbial clauses function as adverbs.

(The examples are from Gosher, 2000:17 – 18)

Table 2 below shows the different types of subordinating conjunctions.

Types of clauses	Subordinating conjunctions
1. Adverbial clause of time	when, after, as soon as, whenever, while, before
2. Adverbial clause of place	where, wherever
3. Adverbial clause of reason	because, since,
4. Adverbial clause of condition	if, unless, provided, since, as long as
5. Adverbial clause of concession or contrast	although, as if, though, while

Table 2: The different types of adverbial clauses and subordinating conjunctions

Adverbial clauses are defined by the function of the subordinating conjunction. The following examples show the clear functions of adverbial clauses:

- (1) We learned about Goldilocks *when we were in nursery school* (Adverbial clause of time)
- (2) We sat *where we could hear the teacher* (Adverbial clause of place)
- (3) We listened *as we were told to do* (Adverbial clause of manner)
- (4) We enjoyed her story *because she spoke beautifully* (adverbial clause of reason)
- (5) The teacher told us the fairy tale *so that we would learn not to steal* (Adverbial clause of purpose/reason)
- (6) We were so frightened by the tale *that we swore a vow of honesty* (Adverbial clause of result)
- (7) *Although we tried hard*, it was difficult to be good (Adverbial clause of concession)
- (8) *If you are a cynic*, you will mock the Goldilocks’s story (Adverbial clause of condition)

(The examples are from Gosher, 2000:18).

A subordinate clause may be introduced by a subordinating conjunction (e.g. while, that, when, before); a relative pronoun (e.g. who, whom, whose) or a participle or a gerund. A subordinate clause is formed by embedding (Vaida, 1996:197). There are two types of embedding, namely, centre and right branching. For example:

- (1) The boy *who was running fast* stumbled (centre embedding)
- (2) Police are looking for the thief *who escaped* (right branching)

2.3 Types of clauses

Studies in the area of text analysis have recently indicated that examining clause structure through hypotaxis, parataxis and embedding, important distinctions between registers of conversational discourse and registers of academic writing can be identified (Clachar, 2003). Downing (1978), cited in Clachar, (2003), submits that, because relative clauses manifest themselves in many different ways, it is impossible to characterise them. However, examining the properties and functions of relative clauses, researchers have observed several types. De Vries (2002) observed that relative clauses may be described syntactically and semantically. Generally, relative clauses are (1) subordinated, and (2) are connected to surrounding material by a pivot constituent, usually a noun or a noun phrase (De Vries, 2002: 37). By examining syntactic properties of relative clauses, we can identify three types of relative clauses. The examples used here were adapted from (De Vries, 2002).

- (a) Please pass this over to the man **who is wearing a red jacket** (restrictive relative clause). In a restrictive relative clause the pronoun has a subject role.
- (b) Jill spoke to the lecturers, **who failed the test on didactics** (appositive relative clause). Jill spoke to all the lecturers, who by the way have failed a test on didactics.

The pronoun in the next sentence plays a different role.

- (c) Jill spoke to the lecturers **that failed the test on didactics** (restrictive relative clause). The relative clause suggests that Jill spoke only to the lecturers who failed the test on didactics.
- (d) Jill spilled the **milk that there was in the can** (degree relative clause). Jill spilled all the milk that was in the can. The relative clause refers to the amount of milk rather than the fact that there was milk in the can.

Examining the syntactic properties of relative clauses we can identify three types, namely, pronominal, postnominal and circumnominal. For example:

- (a) I have lost **the present you gave me** (pronominal relative clause).
- (b) Jill lost the present **that I gave to her** (postnominal relative clause).
- (c) You know the stranger **whom he gave the money** (circumnominal relative clause).

De Vries (2002) contend that some relative clauses do not automatically fit into the picture above. For example:

- (a) Jill liked **what I gave to her** (free relative clause). In this type of clause, the relative clause does not have an overt antecedent or it is implied.
- (b) The book **you gave me has been torn up** (participial relative clause). In this type of clause, the relative clause has participial inflection and does not show participle.
- (c) The **boys who are standing** are tall (correlative relative clause). The relative clause occurs in a left-adjoined position and is separated from its correlate in the main clause. The correlate is usually a pronoun or determiner.

Halliday (1994) describes clauses as main clause, paratactic clause, hypotactic clause and embedded clause. Table 3 shows these different types of clause as identified by Halliday (1994).

CLAUSE	TYPE
1. They do not take good care of their health and so they get sick often	Main Paratactic
2. The theory clearly explains the cause of the political unrest that constantly plague these countries	Main Embedded
3. The author illustrates the motivation that children get from writing their own reading materials that they create based on their own life experiences	Main embedded embedded
4. The second justification is that if the school board disagrees with these new laws that the county has provided if the committee is comfortable spending a lot of time in meeting rooms, in deliberations, even on weekend, then I inform the county of their disagreement and stop wasting parents' precious time which they can spend with children at home	Main hypotactic embedded hypotactic hypotactic paratactic embedded

Table 3: Types of clauses (adapted from Clachar, 2003)

Halliday (1994) defines these different types of clauses as follows:

- (1) Main clause: It the dominant clause and introduces a sequence of paratactic clauses in a hypotactic relationship.
- (2) Hypotactic clause: It is a clause dependent on another clause but does not assume an integral role in that clause. Examples include adverbial clauses and non-restrictive relative clauses.
- (3) Paratactic clause: It is a clause linked to the main clause by a coordinating conjunction.
- (4) Embedded clause: Unlike the hypotactic clause, embedded clause is dependent on another clause and it is an integral part of the clause. Examples include restrictive relative clauses, comparative clauses, and complementizer clauses.

Many secondary school English textbooks describe clauses as:

- (1) Main clause: This is a clause that is independent, especially in a complex sentence. For this reason, it is also called an independent clause.
- (2) Subordinate clause: This is a clause that is dependent or 'subordinate' on the main clause. It depends on the main clause for complete meaning and as a result cannot make sense on its own. It is part of a complex sentence. It is also called a dependent clause.

2.4 Approaches to teaching writing

Since English Foreign Language (EFL) and English Second Language (ESL) emerged as a distinct area of scholarship in the 1980s (Hyland, 2003) numerous approaches to teaching writing have developed. Hyland (2003) describes five of such approaches. These approaches are underpinned by beliefs and theories about language teaching and learning and can be attributed to certain movements in the fields of linguistics and second language teaching. This section discusses these approaches.

2.4.1 Focus on language structures

In this approach, writing is seen as an extension of grammar whereby it is used to reinforce structures that have been taught. As a result, writing is seen as a coherent arrangement of words, clauses and sentences, structured according to a system of rules (Hyland, 2003:4). Learners are, therefore, taught linguistic knowledge, vocabulary and syntactic patterns and cohesive devices that are thought to be building blocks of texts (Hyland, 2003:4). Assessment in this type of approach focuses on examining the learners' of grammatical and lexical knowledge. Often, writing tasks are guided and controlled, with a view of making the learners exhibit the ability to manipulate the structures taught. Hyland (2003) submits that this approach is used today in writing classes at lower levels of language proficiency.

The major shortcoming of this structuralist approach to language teaching is that it regards language learning as habit-formation. There is no guarantee that focus on grammar can lead to better writing (Hyland, 2003:12). This approach does not give learners freedom to take risks with language and can hinder learners from developing their writing beyond a few sentences.

2.4.2 Focus on text functions

This approach emphasises the communicative functions of certain language forms. Hyland (2003) submits that this approach is influential where L2 learners are being prepared for academic writing. Teachers using this approach aim to develop learners' ability to develop effective paragraphs, through the creation of topic sentences, supporting sentences and transitions to develop different types of paragraphs (Hyland, 2003). To some degree, guided writing tasks are used, but the learners are encouraged to do free-writing. Guided writing tasks include rearranging muddled paragraphs into a coherent essay; selecting appropriate sentences to fill in gaps in an essay or writing paragraphs from given information. In this structuralist approach, the importance of introduction, body and conclusion is emphasised. The learners are taught different types of texts such as narrative, descriptive and expository.

According to Hyland (2003), the major shortcoming of this approach is that writing is detached from the practical purposes and personal experiences of the learners. Like in the focus on language structures approach, writing is seen as a product.

2.4.3 Focus on creative expression

Teachers using this approach emphasise on the importance of self-expression rather than form. Learners are encouraged to find their voices to produce writing that is fresh and spontaneous (Hyland, 2003:18). In this approach writing tasks are organised around learners' personal experiences and opinions as writing is seen as a creative act of self-discovery (Hyland, 2003). Unlike in the earlier approaches, writing is seen as a skill that can be learned, not taught. Teachers do not impose and the writing tasks given to learners require them to give personal responses to topics. Learners are encouraged to do pre-writing in journals or diaries.

The major shortcoming of this approach is that an assumption is made that we all have innate creative potential to write and the teacher's duty is to stimulate this potential. Hyland (2003) argues that in this approach, there are no clear principles from which to teach and evaluate 'good writing'.

2.4.4 Focus on the writing process

In this approach writing is seen as a cognitive activity and learners are encouraged to plan, define, prepare and evaluate situations (Hyland, 2003) and as a result writing instruction

focuses on training learners to brainstorm, plan, draft, revise and rework, and edit their drafts. However, these stages are not seen as linear, but recursive and interactive. The approach places emphasis on the importance of awareness of audience. As a result, strategies such as conferencing and peer-feedback are employed.

In process writing, error-correction is not emphasised. In fact, teachers are encouraged to assist learners to make meaning rather than be concerned about grammatical accuracy. Because of its democratic nature and leniency on errors, this approach has become popular in recent years. In South Africa, teachers are encouraged to use this approach in their writing classes (Department of Education, 1998).

2.4.5 Focus on content

Writing instruction in this approach is based on themes and topics of interest to the learners (Hyland, 2003). Learners are to make personal responses in new ways. As a result, parallel texts, photographs and other materials are used to stir learners' imagination. This approach too, has become popular in many writing classes.

Hyland (2003) argues that it would be wrong to see each of the approaches discussed here as growing out of and replacing the last. He argues that these approaches are complementary and overlapping perspectives on writing. Observations have indicated that, although process writing approach is hugely popular, teachers tend to emphasise the strong points of focus on writing as a product and that this is very successful. In fact an eclectic method, comprising of the strong points of the different approaches is preferable.

2.5 Writing in NCS (National Curriculum Statement)

In 1998 new outcomes-based (OBE) curricula were introduced for South African schools. The new curricula aim to eradicate all the remains of apartheid curricula that were characterised by rote-learning. In addition, these curricula lay down national norms and standards so that all schools in the same band are to do the same work. The main, broad objective of the languages curriculum with regards writing is stated as:

The learner is able to write and present for a wide range of purposes and audiences using conventions and formats appropriate to diverse contexts (Department of Education, 1998:30)

It is argued that:

Writing is a powerful instrument of communication that allows learners to construct and communicate thoughts and ideas coherently. Frequent writing practice across a variety of contexts, tasks and subject fields enables learners to communicate functionally and cognitively. The aim is to produce competent, versatile writers who will be able to use their skills to develop appropriate written, visual and multimedia texts for a variety of purposes (Department of Education, 1998:30).

This suggests that learners will develop ability to attain high proficiency levels in writing. The ability to manipulate grammatical structures, especially sentence structures, is essential to such skill. In two assessment standards it is stated that the learner should be able to:

- Use a variety of sentence types, lengths and structures
- Use logical connectors such as conjunctions, pronouns, adverbs and prepositions to ensure cohesion.

For the fourth learning outcome (LO), Language, it is stated “the learner is able to use language structures and conventions appropriately and effectively” (Department of Education, 1998:30). Hypotaxis is the main objective, as it is stated that the learner will demonstrate their writing proficiency when the learner is able to:

- Use structurally sound sentences in a meaningful and functional manner
- Use simple sentences appropriately and construct clear and effective compound and complex sentences by using clauses, phrases and conjunctions correctly,
- Create cohesion by using conjunctions accurately

It is recommended that text-based and communicative approaches be used. Observation has indicated that educators often interpret this to mean lack of explicit teaching of grammatical structures.

2.6 Development of writing competence: South African studies

As mentioned earlier, studies in South Africa which investigated the writing proficiency of learners aged between 15 and 17 could not be found. The only studies that investigated the writing of South African children are those of Manyike (2009), Hendricks (2009; 1999), Howie (2002) and De Klerk (2000). Grade 12 is the exit class from the schooling system to higher education (or the workplace). It is therefore, imperative that the learners at this Grade show ability in using the required language skills before they exit the schooling system.

Hendricks's (2009) study of the quality and quantity of Grade Seven learners at four schools in the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa, have indicated that there remain vast differences and inequalities in the amount that learners write at different schools. Partly, this revealed the disparities created by apartheid education provision for different racial groups in the country since the schools studied reflected the material and resource inequalities that existed amongst South African schools during the apartheid era. However, not denying or underplaying the significance of resources, Hendricks maintains that writing does not depend heavily on material resources.

The development of quality in writing depends crucially on the amount of writing that learners do (Hendricks, 2009:7). According to Hendricks (2009), the new curriculum, National Curriculum Statement (Department of Education, 1998) has gone some way to ensuring that all learners in all schools across the schooling system do the same amount of writing. The new curriculum is a national curriculum, implying that it is to be implemented in all schools. Therefore, learners throughout the country, do the same amount of work. However, to develop the fluency of their writing, learners need to receive constructive feedback about the structure and coherence of their texts and the opportunities to write individually and independently. Additionally, learners require explicit teaching of linguistic and structural features of different genres and follow-up grammar lessons to remediate the grammatical errors in their own writing. However, English second language learners in the former Model C schools do not get to learn the grammar of English sufficiently since the curriculum for English Home Language makes the assumption that learners are well-grounded in the grammar of their home language, this being English.



According to Norton (2005) and Datta (2002), ownership of meaning-making is crucial for the development of literacy. That is, learners' writing skills develop adequately when the learners are given the opportunity to choose topic to write on. Hendricks's (2009) has indicated that learners, generally, write more personal expressive writing and that teachers neglect formal and factual genres, making it difficult for learners to experience the benefits of these genres which form the basis for the development of abstract cognitively-demanding academic writing by freeing learners from considering the needs of a reader and enabling them to foreground the subject matter. These pedagogical practices mean that learners are less likely to develop formal, impersonal context-reduced, CALP (Cummins, 1984). The emphasis on personal expressive writing is in contradiction to the aims of NCS which envisages a learner who can write and design texts across a range of genres and modalities, as

well as the broader aim to develop learners' critical, evaluative and problem-solving abilities (Department of Education, 2002). Since writing requires little beyond a pen and paper, the quality of learners' writing reflects teachers' (mis)understanding of curriculum policy and conceptualizations about the purposes of writing and how best to teach it. The study further indicated that text type strongly influences choice of syntactic connections. Expository texts were found to be characterised by more finite and non-finite subordination than narrative texts which were characterised by marked juxtaposition and coordination.

2.7 Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) writing skills

Cummins (1984; 1981) differentiates between social and academic language acquisition. Cummins argues that BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) are needed to interact socially with other people. English second language learners employ BICS skills when they are engaging in conversations on the playground or on the school bus, or in private conversations with their teachers outside class. Social interactions are usually context-embedded and are not demanding cognitively. The language required is not specialized. According to Cummins (1984), such skills develop within two years of learning a second language. CALP on the other hand, refers to academic learning. This includes listening, speaking, reading and writing about subject area content material. This level of language learning is essential for language learners to succeed in school. It takes longer to develop as in some cases learners can go through high school without adequately developed language skills. As learners go through schooling, language becomes more context-reduced and academic tasks become cognitively demanding (Haynes, 2007:2). As a result, BICS become inadequate and learners need to develop CALP to meet the demands of the curriculum.

According to Cummins (1984), in North America, it is often assumed that bilingual children who have attained fluency in English had overcome all difficulties with English and they are taken off language support programmes to join mainstream classes. However, it is often observed that these children frequently perform poorly on English academic tasks. BICS/CALP studies have indicated that bilingual children acquire peer-appropriate conversational fluency very rapidly, but it takes five (5) to seven (7) years for them to approach grade norms in academic aspects of English (Cummins, 1984).

The language learning contexts for bilingual children on whom Cummins conducted his studies were in many ways similar to the language learning situations for English second language learners in the former Model C schools in South Africa. The objectives of these

programmes are often not to develop the learners' first language but to replace it with the 'majority language.' Problems arise when teachers and administrators think that a child is proficient in a language when they demonstrate good social English (Haynes, 2007:1). Academic language tasks are context-reduced and less cognitively demanding, therefore, not on the same quadrant (Cummins, 1984) with writing.

Language for academic purposes is an important concept, not always recognised and developed within the education system (Van Rooyen & Jordaan, 2009:271). The ability to use language for learning can be difficult for individuals who are educated in a second language as they are required to master complex concepts in a language they are still acquiring. Van Rooyen and Jordaan's (2009) study on how learners in integrated schools (that is former Model C schools) performed on comprehension of complex sentences indicated that by the time English second language learners reach secondary school, they have acquired the ability to comprehend complex sentences just like their monolingual peers but perform below their first-language peers, suggesting that they have not quite reached the proficiency levels of the first language peers. They conclude that it may take 8 – 9 years of formal schooling for some individuals to acquire the requisite academic language proficiency, particularly if they are learning in their second language (Van Rooyen & Jordaan, 2009:271).

In order to overcome the limitations of traditional teaching practices and increase learner literacy in South Africa, the pedagogical and political contexts of our schools need to be factored into the teaching of reading and writing (Harris & Keal, 2010:81). This presupposes a review of approaches to language teaching and language policies of schools. Observation indicates that, although indigenous languages have been put on the same level with English and Afrikaans in terms of status, former Model C schools still do not use the advantages offered by English second language learners' home languages in that they are reluctant to offer indigenous South African languages as subjects at school. According to Cummins (1984), cognitively and academically beneficial form of bilingualism can be achieved only on the basis of adequately developed first language skills. That is, the development of competence in a second language is, partially, a function of the type of competence already developed in the learner's first language at the time they are exposed to a second language.

2.8 The Communicative Approach and the teaching of grammar

The NCS languages curriculum recommends that the text-based approach and the communicative approach be used. It is argued that the text-based approach enables learners to

become competent, confident and critical readers, writers, viewers and designers of texts (Department of Education, 2002:43). The communicative approach, it is said, means that when learning a language, a learner should have a great deal of exposure to it and many opportunities to practice or produce the language by communicating for social or practical purposes. Language learning should be natural, informal processes carried over into the classroom where literacy skills of reading and viewing, and writing and presenting are learned in a 'natural' way (Department of Education, 2002:43). These views represent the ideas about second language acquisition which were propagated during the rise of communicative approach which is associated with the work of Krashen, (1982) and Canale & Swain, 1982, cited in Swain (1985). The implementation of the communicative approach soon degenerated into pursuit of communicative competence without giving due attention to the role of grammar in second language learning/acquisition. This approach was found to be inadequate in assisting learners acquire accuracy. The HL curriculum for South African schools advocates the teaching of grammar through an integrated approach. That is, grammatical structures are taught in context, as and when the need arises or according to learners' needs. Observation indicates that, this, together with the insistence that language teaching be text-based, often creates an impression that grammar teaching is not necessary, leading to teachers emphasising communication at the expense of holistic language development. It is not uncommon to find classes dealing with advertisements, cartoons, pictures, and any kind of authentic text without due attention to the grammar used in the texts. As Chung (2005) has observed, such an approach is not useful to a society that had been using structuralist approaches for a very long period of time.

2.9 The effect of grammar teaching on second language acquisition

As argued earlier, with the rise of the popularity of communicative approach in second language teaching, the role of formal instruction, especially as far as it denotes explicit teaching of grammatical rules, was downplayed or even abandoned. However, in the early 1990s, the need for grammar teaching was beginning to receive attention once more. This was mainly because:

(a) The hypotheses that language can be learned without some degree of consciousness had been found theoretically problematic (Schmidt, 1999, cited in Chung, 2005). Schmidt argues that attention to form or 'noticing', was a necessary condition for language learning. Similar sentiments were expressed by Skehan (1989) who argues that it is necessary for learners to

notice TL forms in input, otherwise they process input for meaning only and do not attend to specific forms, and as a result fail to acquire them.

(b) The teachability hypothesis posited by Pniemann (1984, cited in Ellis, 1994) was receiving support. According to Pniemann, L2 learners follow certain developmental sequences in acquiring the L2. The hypothesis suggests that learners may benefit from explicit teaching of certain grammatical structures.

(c) Approaches where focus is primarily on meaning-focused communication and grammar is not given attention were proving to be inadequate. Evidence from French immersion programmes (Swain & Canale, 1984, cited in Chung, 2005) showed that despite prolonged exposure to meaningful input, the learners did not achieve accuracy in certain grammatical forms (Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1997 cited in Chung, 2005).

(d) Grammar instruction was showing substantial gains in studies from laboratory and classroom-based studies and reviews of many studies were indicating the beneficial effects of explicit grammar teaching (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Ellis, 1985; Long, 1983).

As mentioned earlier, NCS recommends text-based, task-based communicative approach to language teaching. For English HL it is stated that language (to be read as grammar) should be taught using integrated approach. Observations indicate that, initially, educators (mis)understood this to be meaning no explicit teaching of grammatical structures. In such situation, teaching revolved around teaching about advertisements, pictures, cartoons, or any form of genuine and authentic text. Grammatical structures were not assessed in formal tasks.

2.10 Second Language Acquisition

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) as a discipline has a long history. Ellis (1994) dates the history of SLA to the late 1960s. According to Ellis (1994), early studies tended to describe the characteristics of L2 learner language and how acquisition takes place, and very generally, were encouraged by developments in L1 acquisition research. Secondly, these studies focused on spoken language in naturalistic settings, and theory construction, hence the plethora of models and theories of second language acquisition today. Currently, the field has become amorphous as it is now drawing from many fields such as linguistics, psychology, sociology and language pedagogy. In turn, it contributes to these fields in significant ways. This, together with the fact that many studies were affected by distinctly varying factors,

makes the findings of many studies highly debatable, thus making generalization to other contexts controversial.

Second language learners differ in (1) how quickly they learn an L2; (2) the type of proficiency they acquire; (3) the ultimate level of proficiency they reach, and (4) the strategies they use to acquire the target language (TL). Traditionally, these differences have been accounted for by looking at various aspects such as social factors, linguistic and cognitive factors. This section reviews studies that have been conducted in these areas to explain writing proficiency of the participants in the current study.

2.10.1 Second Language Acquisition: social accounts

There have been numerous studies conducted to establish the relationship between language learning contexts and the proficiency of L2 learners. Generally, studies have focused on (1) learner attitudes; (2) learners' socio-economic class, (3) learning contexts, and (4) age. Studies in this area have, generally, been concerned with the levels of proficiency that learners could reach. One model that explains L2 proficiency which has made a significant impact in research studies is the one postulated by Cummins (1984; 1981). Cummins makes a distinction between BICS and CALP. BICS refers to oral fluency and knowledge and awareness of sociolinguistic appropriateness of language. CALP on the other hand refers to linguistic knowledge and literacy that are acquired for academic tasks. BICS may be acquired through exposure to the TL, while it takes deliberate and explicit teaching to acquire CALP. As mentioned earlier, second language learners who attend at former Model C schools in South Africa, compared to their peers in rural and township schools, show that they have acquired fairly adequate BICS by the time they begin high school. This section discusses the social factors that have been expounded as accountable for the levels of proficiency that second language learners are able to reach, namely, learner attitudes; age; social class; learning context, and learner beliefs about the TL.

Cummins (1984) argues that conversational fluency (that is BICS), is often acquired to a functional level within about two years of initial exposure to the second language whereas at least five years is usually required to catch up to native speakers in academic aspects of the second language. Observations have indicated that, while it is evident that second language learners who attend former Model C schools acquire conversational fluency fairly rapidly, it is CALP skills that seem to require some attention by both policy-makers and educators. Van Rooyen and Jordaan (2009) found no significant statistical differences between first language

and second language learners in proficiency levels in the study that investigated complex sentence comprehension among English second language learners at a desegregated school in South Africa. However, the study showed that English second language learners scored one scaled score below the first language monolingual learners. They concluded that English second language learners in the study had not quite reached the proficiency levels of the first language learners. Writing proficiency is a CALP skill and requires deliberate and explicit teaching for it to reach desirable levels (Van Walt, Evans & Kilfoil, 1989:253).

2.10.2 Second Language Acquisition accounts: learner attitudes

Learners manifest different attitudes towards the TL, TL speakers, the social value of the L2 and themselves as members of their own culture (Ellis, 1994:198). Studies on learner attitudes have suggested that positive attitudes lead to high levels of success and proficiency, and, conversely, negative attitudes do not strengthen or reinforce efforts to learn the L2 (Gardener & Lambert, 1972, cited in Ellis, 1994). In South Africa, English commands an unassailable position (Alexander, 1999). Observations have indicated that middle class parents in South Africa enrol their children in former Model C schools because these schools are associated with high educational attainment and learners attain better conversational fluency in English fairly rapidly. English too, is regarded as language of access, power and opportunity. Observations have indicated that second language learners who attend former Model C schools are highly motivated to learn the language, hence their rapid acquisition of the language. In a study conducted to investigate the implementation of language policy in a desegregated school, Morule (2007) observed that the participants, generally, do not support their parents' negative attitudes towards other speech communities. Instead, they indicated willingness to learn their own mother tongue, but not at the expense of English, which they felt they needed to acquire, for both integrative and instrumental purposes. Some participants indicated that they even dissociate themselves from their own language groups and relate more closely with white people (*to be read "those who speak English at home*) and in the process they got to know English more than their own languages (Morule, 2007:66). Observations have indicated similar trends among the participants in the current study, especially the group that took Afrikaans at FAL level. This, however, could be the result of the fact that this group tended to share classes more with English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking learners than those who took seTswana at FAL level. The extent to which this contributed to performance in English could not be established as it was not the primary objective of the current study.

Most studies on learner attitudes have been correlational in design (Ellis, 1994:200) and confirmatory. This calls for caution in interpreting their findings. Lanoue's (1991) study showed that the Indian tribe in Columbia rejected their mother-tongue not because they felt positively disposed towards Anglo-Canadian culture and not because of the socio-economic advantages of English, but because they felt English could be used in inter-ethnic communication. English was thus seen as a symbol of pan-Indianism. In South Africa, similar sentiments appear to have been one of the main reasons why during the fight for freedom and democracy, the liberation movements preferred to use English and not Afrikaans which is spoken more widely than English (Alexander, 1999). Observations have shown that studies of learner attitudes cannot explain all of the issues regarding failure rate in English in South African schools. South African learners, in both urban and rural and township schools, are positively disposed towards English because of its value and status as a *lingua franca*, a language of access, power and opportunity, yet many do not reach acceptable levels of acquisition, especially in literacy skills. According to Macdonald (1990), there is an assortment of factors that contribute to this state of affairs. Generally, studies on learner attitudes have tended to focus on proficiency. There is a dearth of research on the effects of learner attitudes on literacy.

2.10.3 Second Language Acquisition accounts: social class

Traditionally, social class has been determined by income, level of education and occupation and it has been customary to distinguish among lower class, working class, lower middle class and upper middle class (Ellis, 1994:204). The participants in the current study were children from middle class families. According to Preston (1989), there is a parallel between sociolinguistic phenomena associated with social class, language change and interlanguage development. In South Africa, despite the possibility of losing their mother-tongue, middle class families enrol their children in former Model C schools (Singh, 2000; De Klerk, 2000). Observations have indicated that this, in turn, encourages other lower social classes to want to enrol their children in these schools, a situation which, according to Singh (2000) could lead to *lingocide* (the death of the indigenous languages) in South Africa.

Although there is compelling evidence for a positive influence between social class (that is, middle class) and L2 achievement, Burstall (1975) argues that there might be other factors which collaborate with social class to influence achievement. In South Africa, for example, there are vast differences in material and resources among schools as a result of apartheid

education provision policies (Hendricks, 2009). Observations have indicated that among other things, black middle class parents enrol their children in former Model C schools for a variety of reasons. However, the fact that these children speak languages that are generally not used at the workplace or in schools puts them at an immediate disadvantage compared to their white counterparts whose home languages are used at the workplace and in schools.

2.10.4 Second Language Acquisition accounts: learning contexts

As it has been mentioned elsewhere in this study, learning contexts in which second language learners find themselves in may facilitate and enhance acquisition or constrain it. Generally, studies have distinguished between naturalistic and educational settings for second language learning. Learning in natural settings has been found to be leading to acquisition of oral proficiency (Cummins, 1981). Second language learning can also take place in majority or minority language contexts. Majority language learning contexts are typically of ethnic minorities such as immigrants. Cummins's BICS/CALP studies were conducted in such settings. In the current study, participants were majority learners learning the language of a minority group. This is the situation for majority of English second language learners on the African continent and former colonies of European countries. English, a language spoken by nearly 10% of the population in South Africa (Statistics, 2001), as a result of the political history and unique sociolinguistic forces operating within the country and by extension in education (Van Rooyen & Jordaan, 2009:272), is the second language for majority of learners in the country. Second language learning can also concern an official or non-official language as it is the case with European languages in some former colonies in Africa, Latin America and the East Asian countries. Two models of second language learning that have received much attention are submersion and immersion programmes. The discussion of learning contexts in this study will focus on the submersion programme as it relates to language learning experience of participants in the current study.

According to Skuttnabb-Kangas (1988:40) submersion describes

A programme where linguistic minority children with a low-status mother tongue are forced to accept instruction through the medium of a foreign majority language with high status, in classes where some children are native speakers of the language of instruction, where the teacher does not understand the mother tongue of the minority children, and where the majority language constitutes a threat to their mother tongue – a subtractive language learning situation.

As mentioned earlier, in South Africa, English is a native language for a small percentage of the population, yet it is the most powerful language in that it is used for official communication in government, business and education. Proficiency in English is, generally, associated with status, power and access to better opportunities. In the former Model C schools, English is the only language used for instruction and teachers, generally, cannot speak the languages of the second language learners that the schools enrol. In some cases the learners' L1 is taught as a second language (formally called first additional, or FAL). According to Cummins (1984; 1981), minority learners in submersion programmes are often assisted in 'pull-out programmes' where they are assisted to learn the target language. However, as soon as there are indications of conversational fluency, these learners are removed from the support programme and are put into mainstream classes. Cummins (1984) argues that failure to take account of the BICS/CALP distinction results in discriminatory psychological assessment of bilingual students and premature exit from language support programmes into mainstream and that these students perform poorly in academic tasks. Observations have indicated that in the former Model C schools, second language learners are, generally, compelled to take English at HL level, and take their mother-tongue or Afrikaans, at FAL level.

With slight variations, submersion programmes are used on the African continent and other former colonies of European countries. The main objective of submersion programmes, although not always deliberately so, is to get the learners' first language replaced by the target language (TL). As a result, in submersion programmes the learners are advised and encouraged to speak the TL, on the school premises and at home and their L1 is rarely used. This, according to Cummins (1981), leads to subtractive bilingualism whereby the learners lose their L1. The South African language policy for schools is influenced by Cummins's theory of additive bilingualism, and the learners' L1 is regarded as significant for facilitating the learning of additional languages (Department of Education, 1996). As mentioned earlier, observations have indicated that the former Model C schools are reluctant to teach the first languages of the second language learners that they enrol. There is a commendable body of research that shows that bilingual education is more beneficial than monolingual education (Bialystok, 1987; cited in Manyike, 2007). According to Cummins (1984), cognitively and academically beneficial form of bilingualism can be achieved only on the basis of adequately developed first language skills. There are studies that have found a linear association between L1 and L2 writing proficiency (Asamdani, 2010; Dweik, & Abu Al Homos, 2007;

Kamimura, 2001; Cook, 1998). In the study investigating the relationship between Saudi EFL students' writing competence and L1 proficiency, Alasamdani (2010) found that L1 experiences do not always transfer negatively to L2 acquisition. On the contrary, they may function as resources for writing teachers to draw upon when designing a course or developing a teaching method. Such an association is stronger when the learners' L1 and the TL do not vary much in orthography and syntax.

In the former Model C schools in South Africa, first and second language English learners are integrated and instructed by educators who teach in English (Adler, 2001). These learners are expected to develop academic language proficiency in their second language, with little or no support in the home language. According to Van Rooyen and Jordaan (2009), there is limited research addressing the extent to which these learners achieve the language competence required to meet the demands of the curriculum. They argue that the only studies that are available suggest that by the fifth and seventh grades, English second language learners are performing significantly below their peers on measures of reading comprehension, confirming the generally held belief that it takes longer to acquire language for academic purposes in the second language. In the case of second language learners in the former Model C schools, it is often assumed that adequate conversational skills reflect proficiency in academic language (Van Rooyen & Jordaan, 2009:272). Cummins (1984) observed that in the submersion programmes in North America, teachers and psychologists often assume that children who had attained fluency in English had overcome all difficulties with English, yet these children frequently perform poorly on English academic tasks as well as in psychological situations. Observations have indicated that teachers complain about the marking workload and often neglect teaching writing skills and instead they focus on teaching the literature networks rather than formal grammar. The new curricula for English HL in South Africa (Department of Education, 2010; 1998) do not recommend explicit teaching of grammar. It is argued that English HL learners (which include both native and non-native speakers of English) have already acquired adequate grammar to perform academic tasks. This, however, seems misguided as observations have indicated that currently there are more English second language learners taking English at HL level in South African schools than native speakers of English. Indications too, are that English is currently among the lowest performing HLs in South Africa in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations.

2.10.5 Second Language Acquisition accounts: age

Age as a variable that influences L2 acquisition has received much attention with numerous studies suggesting that younger learners seem to do better than older learners in conversational fluency, especially with regards accent. As noted in the current study, second language learners who attend former Model C schools show better conversational fluency compared to their peers in rural and township schools, a situation, generally attributed to the fact that learners in former Model C schools receive instruction in English earlier than their peers in rural and township schools. Observations indicate that this could have been the reason why currently the Ministry of Basic Education has announced that English be introduced as early as Grade 1 in the primary schools (Department of Basic Education, 2010). This seems to be contrary to the opinion of the former Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, who suggested that learners should receive mother tongue instruction for the first six years of schooling (Pandor, 2006). Observations indicate that the opinion that indigenous South African languages be developed and used as media of instruction, especially at primary school level, is growing in the country, especially among academics and in the media. However, so far, there have not been any models or plans put forward other than bilingual dictionaries that have been compiled for numerous subjects. It remains to be seen how teachers (and learners) use these dictionaries and to what extent they are making an impact in learner attainment.

Although studies on the impact of age in second language acquisition have drawn conflicting findings, the belief that younger learners achieve better proficiency is widely held (Ellis, 1994; Larsen-Freeman, 1991). According to Ellis (1994:201), studies on this aspect had varied a lot. Some studies were longitudinal, others cross-sectional and others experimental. However, the issue remains important for policy makers and for language pedagogy (Ellis, 1994:201). Research in this area too, has paid little attention on writing proficiency.

2.11 Second language acquisition: cognitive accounts

The view that second language acquisition proceeds in a regular, systematic fashion (Ellis, 1994) was postulated by cognitive linguists in the late 1960s and the 1970s. Initially, researchers focused on the errors that second language learners made. However, soon researchers focused on the entirety of learner language and uncovered that second language learners, just like first language learners, construct 'rules', 'systems', 'theories' or 'hypotheses' about the TL based on their present knowledge of the TL. Additionally, they use

their knowledge of how languages work in general, which includes their native language and any other languages they may already know. They apply these rules in learning the L2. This led to the coinage of the concept “interlanguage”, generally associated with Selinker (1972 cited in Ellis, 1994). It was argued that, as learners actively form ‘rules’ about the TL, the rule system is oversimplified, resulting in errors, which the learner can then use to modify and improve their knowledge of the TL, gradually becoming more and more sophisticated, and errors occur less. According to Ellis (1994), researchers then sought to answer the questions: Firstly: Do learners acquire some TL features before others? Secondly: How do learners acquire a particular TL linguistic feature? The first question led to the coinage of the concept of ‘order’. Evidence in this regard showed that English second language learners acquire, plural –s, negation or relativization, for example, following a particular order. Studies pursuing answers to the second question suggested that learners pass through stages on route to the TL rule (Ellis, 1994:73). This led to the coinage of the concept of ‘sequence’. There is currently a commendable body of research to support the view that second language learners acquire different features in a fixed order and also that they pass through a sequence of developmental stages on course to acquiring the TL rules (Ellis, 1994:73). This section discusses acquisition of syntactical features, focusing on the acquisition of relative clauses.

Several models of cognitive accounts for second language acquisition have been proposed. According to Ellis (1994), early studies have suggested that second language learners go through silent period, formulaic speech and structural and semantic simplification stages. However, researchers have observed that some second language learners do not go through the silent period stage (Ellis, 1994:82). Observations indicate that, unlike L1 learners, L2 learners do not always get the luxury of silent period as classroom learners are obliged to speak from the beginning (Ellis, 1994:83). English second language learners in former Model C schools start instruction in English as early as age four, or even younger. Evidence on whether L2 learners opt for silent period and what its contribution is to development of L2 acquisition is inconsistent and contradictory (Ellis, 1994:83). Formulaic speech has been observed to be very common in L2 acquisition, particularly in the early stages (Ellis, 1994:85). Formulaic speech consists of formulas – one-word sentences and brief sentences that are approximations to TL rules. According to Krashen (1982), formulaic speech occurs when learners are forced to speak before they are ready. Formulas enable classroom learners to meet their basic communicative needs in an ESL classroom where English functions as the medium of instruction. Some researchers have argued that formulaic speech consists of

‘memorised sequences’ which do not show creative utterances, but are, instead, well-formed and typically manifest TL morphology and syntax. Formulas appear to serve only short-term production tactics (Bohn, 1986, cited in Ellis, 1994).

The last stage, structural and semantic simplification, is evident in omission of grammatical functions such as auxiliary verbs, articles and some morphemes like inflection plural –s or past tense –ed and content words such as verbs, adjectives and adverbs. According to Ellis (1994), this occurs when learners do not yet have the specific utterances. This is likely to happen when learners do writing in timed conditions such as examinations. According to Ellis (1994), there has not been conclusive evidence to support this progression in L2 acquisition. Later, research, however, provided better accounts for the existence of a developmental pattern of L2 acquisition. The next section discusses these models.

2.11.1 Krashen’s Second Language Acquisition Model

Krashen (1982) postulated a model comprising five hypotheses. These are:

1. The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis. Krashen argues that ‘acquisition’ and ‘learning’ are two distinct processes. Acquisition involves acquiring language in meaningful interaction in the TL with no attention to form, whereas learning refers to the conscious study and attention to form of the TL.
2. The Monitor Model. The acquired system controls the learner’s fluency in the TL and acts as an ‘editor’ for accuracy. Because this requires time, focus and rule-learning, it is more suited to written than spoken language.
3. The Natural Order Hypothesis. This states that TL rules are acquired in a predictable order and that the natural order is independent of the order in which rules are taught at school.
4. The Input Hypothesis. Krashen argued that language is acquired through comprehensible input and acquisition will occur if input is reasonably beyond the level of the learner. This will lead to both comprehension and acquisition.
5. The Affective Filter Hypothesis. This refers to barriers that prevent the learner from acquisition because of affective factors such as motives, needs, attitudes and emotional states.

Although Krashen's model has been found to be controversial (McLaughlin, 1987; Cregg, 1984), it has been found to be a better account of L2 acquisition. Observations have indicated that many English educators use the process approach to writing which recommends that learners edit and proof-read one another's written drafts before the final version is written. This requires learners to show knowledge of L2 rules which helps in the process of editing errors. This can only happen if learners have acquired sufficient knowledge about the L2. This model endorses views that L2 acquisition follows a developmental pattern.

2.11.2 Bialystok's Second Language Acquisition Model

Bialystok (1978 cited in Ellis, 1994) suggests that there are two kinds of knowledge, namely, implicit knowledge, which is developed through exposure to communicative language use and is facilitated by the strategy of functional practicing, and explicit knowledge which develops when learners focus on the language code. Explicit knowledge is facilitated by formal practicing which involves conscious study of the L2. Unlike Krashen, Bialystok argues that the two types of knowledge interact. In the former Model C schools English instruction is based on the belief that acquisition of an L2 should be based on exposure to communication in the TL. Learners are encouraged to speak the language, even at home and parents are advised to 'fill' their children's environment with English.

2.11.3 The Multidimensional Model

This model was presented by Clahsen, Meisel and Pnieman (1983, cited in Ellis, 1994) based on their study of how participants in their study acquired German word order. The model was developed further by Johnston (1985, cited in Ellis, 1994), following a study of Polish and Vietnamese students acquiring English in Australia classroom studies investigating the role of formal instruction on the acquisition of specific grammatical structures. In addition to endorsing the findings of earlier studies about the existence of a developmental pattern of L2 acquisition, the model presents that learners display variation, both with regards to the extent to which they apply developmental rules and to the extent to which they acquire and use grammatical structures that are not developmentally constrained. The Multidimensional Model has two axes, namely, the developmental axis and the variational axis.

The model allows for learners to be grouped both in terms of their stages of development and in terms of the kind of simplification they engage in. According to Clahsen (1984, cited in

Ellis, 1994), there are three language processing strategies corresponding to the degree of psychological complexity involved in the production of particular word order rule. These are:

1. Canonical Order Strategy: There is no reordering of constituents in a structure and the texts manifest a basic order that reflects a direct mapping of meaning on to syntactic form.
2. Initialization/Finalization Strategy: There is no permutation of an element from within a structure, but movement of an initial element in a structure to the final position, and the opposite is possible.
3. Subordinate Clause Strategy: No permutation of any element in a subordinate clause is possible, but movement from within a main clause to another position in the clause is possible. Table 4 below illustrates this.

STAGE	PROCESSING OPERATION	LINGUISTIC REALISATION
1	Production relies on non-linguistic processing devices. Learner has no knowledge of syntactic categories.	Undifferentiated lexical items; formulas such as: "I don't know" and "I can't"
2	Production of simple strings of elements based on meaning or information focus. Learner still has no knowledge of syntactic categories.	Canonical order; intonation questions. For example: "You playing football?"
3	Learner is able to identify the beginning and end of a string to perform operations on an element in these positions. For example, learner can shift an element from beginning to end of string and vice versa. These operations are still pre-syntactic.	Adverb-processing. For example: "Today I play football"; "Do you play football" or neg+ V as in: "No play football"
4	Learner is able to identify an element within a string and to move this element from the middle of the string to either the beginning or the end. This operation is again characterised as pre-syntactic.	Yes/No questions. For example: "Can you swim?"; pseudo-inversion. For example: "Where is my purse?"
5	Learner is now able to identify elements in a string as belonging to the different syntactic categories. She is able to shift elements around inside the string.	Wh- inversion. For example: "Where are you playing football?"; Internal neg. For example: "He did not understand?"
6	Learner is now able to move elements out of one sub-string and attach it to another element. This stage is characterised by the ability of the learner to process across as well as inside strings.	Q- tags. For example: "You're playing football today, aren't you?" V-complements. For example: "He asked me to play football?"

Table 4: Processing operations involved in the acquisition of grammatical rules (adapted from Ellis, 1994)

The Multidimensional Model has both explanatory and predictive power (Ellis, 1994:384). That is, it provides explanation as to why learners pass through these stages of development, and affords predictions regarding when other grammatical structures will be acquired. Its

proponents argue that the acquisition of grammatical structures is hierarchical. That is, learners do not move to the next stage until they have fully internalised the rules for the preceding stage. Ellis (1994) maintains that The Multidimensional Model explains L2 acquisition better than other models that have been proposed in that it accounts for both the process of acquisition and the variations that occur. The limitation of this model is that it only provides explanation of acquisition in terms of learner production and does not say anything about how learners come to comprehend grammatical structures and how comprehension and production interact (Ellis, 1994:388).

2.12 Acquisition of relative clauses

According to Ellis (1994), pioneer studies in the acquisition of English relative clauses were conducted by Cook (1973), Schachter (1974), Schumann (1980) and Chiang (1980) among others. Schumann's (1980) cited in Ellis, (1994) study shows that Spanish learners learning English begin by attaching a relative clause to a noun phrase that follows the verb, and often include a pronominal copy. In the following examples, the relative clause with the pronominal copy is underlined:

- (1) I know the man who he coming.

The relative clause may be functioning in a similar way to the coordinating conjunction "and" joining two main clauses (Ellis, 1994:102).

Later the pronominal copy is omitted, and it can be said the learner has acquired the use of relative clause. For example:

- (2) Joshua's a boy who is silly (Ellis, 1994:102)

Relative clauses which modify the subject often appear later. For example:

- (3) The boy who doesn't have anybody to live they take care of the dogs. (Ellis, 1994:102)

Gass and Ard (1980), cited in Ellis, (1994) found that the participants in their study began by omitting the relative pronoun. For example:

- (1) I got a friend speaks Spanish (Ellis, 1994:102)

Later they use a personal pronoun. For example:

(2) I got a friend he speaks Spanish. (Ellis, 1994:102)

The relative pronoun is used correctly much later. For example:

(3) I got a friend who speaks Spanish.

According to these studies, the first function to be mastered is that of the subject (Ellis, 1994:102) and then the order of acquisition proceeds as in Table 5 below.

FUNCTION	EXAMPLE
Subject	The man <u>who lives next door</u> was arrested.
Direct object	The man <u>whom I saw at the mall</u> lives next door to us.
Indirect object	The man to <u>whom I gave a present</u> was there too.
Oblique(object of preposition)	The man <u>about whom we spoke</u> came to see me.
Genitive	The man <u>whose wife had an accident</u> was at the scene.
Object of comparative	The man <u>that I am richer than</u> bought a new car.

Table 5: Relative pronoun functions in English (adapted from Ellis, 1994:102)

According to cognitive linguists, common types of errors include: overgeneralisation, transfer and omission.

2.13 Some common errors resulting from learning an L2

(a) Transfer errors

Studies on error analysis have suggested that acquisition of second language features can be negative or positive. The learner’s L1 may interfere with acquisition, leading to errors, or it may facilitate acquisition. According to Gass (1983), cited in Ellis, (1994), facilitative transfer occurs when the TL is structurally similar to the learner’s L1. Observations have indicated that English syntax, like seTswana that is the home language of the participants in the current study, has SVO (Subject/Verb/Object) syntactic structure. Hypothetically then, it should be easy for seTswana-speaking learners to acquire English syntax. According to Kellerman (1987), sometimes learners may pass through an early stage of development where they manifest correct use of a second language feature if the feature is similar to their L1 feature and then subsequently, replace it with a developmental L2 feature before finally returning to the correct TL feature. Observations have indicated that this, generally, occurs with English spelling whereby second language learners would use spell a word differently in

one paragraph or composition. “Re-learning” of the correct TL rule occurs when learners abandon the developmental rule as they come to notice it is incompatible with the input. This may also occur as a result of the effect of formal instruction.

(b) Avoidance or Omission

Some studies have pointed to a tendency for L2 learners to avoid using linguistic structures which they find difficult because of differences between their L1 and the TL. As a result, in such instances the effects of L1 are not shown in what the learners do. Schachter’s (1974), cited in study Ellis, (1994), revealed that Chinese and Japanese learners of English made fewer errors in the use of relative clauses than Persian and Arabic learners because they produced far fewer clauses overall in comparison in the study. According to Ellis (1994:304), this could have occurred because Chinese and Japanese are left-branching languages. That is, the nouns in these languages are pre-modified. In English, nouns are, primarily, post-modified. That is, English is a right-branching language. For example:

- (1) The clumsy penguin *from Canada* distracted the beautiful girl *lying under the tall marula tree next to the dry river*.

In this instance, the phrase “from Canada” modifies the noun *penguin*, while the participial clause “lying under the tall marula tree next to the dry river” modifies the noun *girl*. The phrase “next to the dry river” modifies the noun *tree*.

It is not always easy to identify avoidance (Ellis, 1994:305). Seliger (1989), cited in Ellis (1994) suggests that we can claim avoidance has occurred if the learner has demonstrated knowledge of the form in question, and if there is evidence available that L1 speakers of the L2 would use the form in the context under consideration. According to Kellerman (1992), avoidance can be claimed in three instances. These are:

- (1) The learner knows or anticipates that there is a problem and has at least some sketchy idea of what the TL form is like;
- (2) The learner knows what the TL form is but finds it too difficult to use in the particular circumstances, and
- (3) The learner knows what to say and how to say it but is unwilling to actually say it because it will result in them flouting their own norms of behaviour.

(c) Over-use or Generalisation

Over-use occurs when the learner overgeneralises a TL rule. Observations have indicated that this is quite common with inflections such as –s or past tense –ed in cases such as:

- (1) The heros were buried in tombs.
- (2) The car costed a lot of money.

Often learners are advised, by professionals to avoid certain structures. Leveston (1979), cited in Kamimoto, Shimura and Kellerman (1992), observed that Japanese learners of English overproduced simple sentences because they were encouraged to do so. Comrie and Keenan (1979) cited in Ellis (1994) found that languages vary in the noun phrases that were ‘accessible’ to relativization. They then proposed the following hierarchy:

Subject < direct object < indirect object < oblique < genitive < object of comparative.

This may be illustrated by an example such as this one below:

- (1) The official to whom Mary gave the present is sick.

This hierarchy, as mentioned earlier, is present in seTswana, the home language of the participants in the current study. Jones (1991), however, finds this hierarchy problematic. According to Jones, genitive has a hierarchy of its own. In the following example the genitive has been underlined.

- (1) The boy whose tennis racket was stolen is here.

Ellis (1994) argues that accessibility to relativization is not the only problem second language learners face in acquiring English relative clause. The problem may occur when the relative clause functions as part of the direct object of the sentence. For example:

- (2) The boy *whose tennis racket was stolen* is here.

The relative clause is joined onto the main clause. For example:

- (3) *The boy whose tennis racket I saw* at the hall was not Peter.

2.14 Summary

In this chapter studies on second language acquisition have been discussed. The focus has been on social and cognitive accounts for second language acquisition, especially studies on writing development. Studies in this area have indicated that second language learners pass through developmental sequences on route to TL rules. Research on the role of formal instruction has endorsed long held beliefs that grammar is an integral part of language learning. Concern with meaning and communication only does not lead to accuracy in acquisition of grammatical structures. The effect of this becomes evident when L2 learners are challenged to speak or write in the L2.

3. CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology that was used to gather data for the study. It presents the research design, the participants' profile and describes the instrument used to analyse the data.

3.2 Research design

3.2.1 Method

The research design used in the current study was mixed method. As argued in Chapter 1, this method was chosen as it gives the researcher freedom to use the strong points of both quantitative and qualitative designs in a single investigation (Creswell, 2003). In the current study, data were collected quantitatively by giving the participants a composition to write. The quantitative section focuses on the employment of the hypotaxis index to determine the participants' competency in using subordination in their writing of compositions. Observations that have been made in the studies reviewed in the literature review section were also used. The findings are supplemented by the qualitative section of the research design, which considers what types of sentence structures and clauses the participants used in their compositions. Furthermore, it presents findings on, whether or not there is a correlation between the scores obtained through using the hypotaxis index and the scores the participants obtained in their composition writing as a whole. This research design was chosen because the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods, enrich the findings obtained. This qualitative study operates from theoretical assumptions of earlier studies on children's writing and academic writing. Second language learners acquire language following common developmental patterns (Dulay & Burt, 1973, cited in Ellis, 1994). Observations indicate that there seems to be a discrepancy between the conversational fluency of English second language learners in desegregated schools in South Africa and their writing proficiency.

3.2.2 Sampling

Stratified random sampling was used to select the participants' compositions. The compositions of hundred-and-forty (140) of four (4) classes of between thirty-five (35) and forty-three (43) learners were ranked from the highest to the lowest. Then every seventh composition was selected. The twenty (20) compositions were then analysed for the use of

sentence structures and the type of clauses used. This number was found to be manageable, considering the scope and time for the current study. The population was also within reach for the researcher. Stratified random sampling was chosen as it would give all the participants a fair chance of being chosen and would make the findings generalisable to the population.

3.3 The participants

The participants in this study were twenty (20) Grade 12 second language learners at a secondary school in the Mahikeng Area in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District in the North West Province. The school is situated in a suburban area in Mahikeng and enrolls learners from around the area and its surrounding townships and rural areas. Most of the learners in the school are from middle class families, and typically, they started their schooling in English medium daycare centres and primary schools. The school is regarded as a privileged one as it enrolls learners of different racial groups resident in its locality. The school has fairly adequate infrastructure and good educational facilities. The learner enrolment in the school is fairly representative of the demographics in the area, consisting of black South Africans and people from other African countries, Coloureds and Indians. The school rarely enrolls white children. Observations indicate that the few white families in the area prefer to enrol their children in the schools that have, traditionally, been enrolling white learners only. The staff complement of the school is relatively similar to the learner population. The educators are adequately and appropriately qualified. In many ways, the school has characteristics that are prevalent in the former Model C schools elsewhere in South Africa. Although the school's official language policy states that English is the official language of communication, the learners communicate in expressive, extremely informal type of English. They often code-mix English with seTswana or code-switch between English and seTswana as it is the home language of the majority of learners in the school and it is spoken by majority in the community. Observations have indicated that the learners' English was strongly influenced by the language of American popular culture. This is particularly noticeable in their accent, pronunciation and phonology.

All the participants were black South Africans. They had received English instruction in kindergarten and attended English-medium primary schools. Setswana was their first language and they claimed that they spoke both English and seTswana at home. Thirteen (13) of the participants were taking seTswana at First Additional Language level and seven (7) were doing Afrikaans at First Additional Language level. Observations have indicated that,

although the learners in the school generally perform relatively well in English, their better performance was in seTswana.

3.4 Data collection procedure

The policy for assessment (Department of Basic Education, 2010) recommends that the process approach to writing be used in South African schools. The participants in the current study were given a topic to write at their own leisure (See Appendix A) so that they engage in the various stages of process writing, that is, brainstorming, drafting, planning, revising, editing, proof-reading and then presenting. They were given a period of a week to write the task. Although this method could have disadvantages, such as the participants asking for assistance from older siblings or parents, it was the preferable approach to be used as it would maximize participation. This would also ensure that the learners approached the task with a positive attitude and the seriousness it deserved as it would form part of their formal assessment. To guard against the creeping in of unintended variables and to make comparison possible, only one topic (question) was given. A key component of the process writing approach is peer-response (also known as peer review, peer feedback, peer evaluation or conferencing) in which learners read each other's drafts and provide feedback to the writer. Peer-response gives learners a sense of audience, increases their motivation and their confidence in their writing and helps them learn to evaluate their own writing better (Bartels, 2003:34). The participants were advised to ask someone (father, mother, sister, or a fellow learner) to edit their drafts before they hand in the final piece. However, this was not verified as it was not part of the major objectives of the study.

As mentioned earlier, task-type influences the quality of a learner's writing and determines the types of linking devices they may use. The participants were given an argumentative/discursive essay which would challenge them to use connectives that are more complex than simple coordination. According to Lee (2002:32), research has found that in their writing, ESL students focus almost exclusively on word and sentence levels rather than the level of the whole discourse and that their sense of security comes from what they have learned about grammar. The task requirements, including that the participants use a variety of sentence structures, were explained fully.

To address the second question of the study, the participants' essays that they wrote for the mid-year examinations were selected and analysed for hypotaxis. The focus here was to

investigate correlation, if any, between the scores given and the presence or absence, of subordinate clauses.

3.5 The instrument used

In order to elicit data to investigate the participants' writing proficiency, the participants were given a topic to write a composition on. The compositions were analysed on the index of hypotaxis for the number of clauses used. Hypotaxis refers to the hierarchical arrangement of phrases or clauses. The term originates from the Greek word meaning "subjection" (Nordquist, 2010). Hypotaxis shows grammatical structures in dependent or subordinate relationship. This method has been used over the years in second language acquisition research to measure quality of written texts. It is, therefore, a reliable quantitative and scientific measure of written competence, which gives an indication of the level of competence at which the learner is operating on the language development continuum. Increasing use of subordination or hypotaxis is regarded as a significant feature of writing development (Hendricks, 2009; Allison, Beard & Willock, 2002; Kress, 1994).

Writing proficiency, in the current study, is understood to be referring to the participants' increasing conformity to the TL rules in terms of grammatically constructed sentences. Two aspects that were considered as indication of acceptable writing proficiency were completeness of sentences and correct use of coordinating and subordinating devices. In the hypotaxis index the total number of subordinate clauses was expressed as a percentage of the total number of complete sentences. Writing proficiency, therefore, refers to the ability to construct error-free, accurate and more complex clauses.

Additionally, the participants' compositions were analysed for adherence and compliance to the requirements set in the question. Argumentative essay at secondary school level represents the type of writing tasks that learners are expected to do at tertiary education level, that is, discursive and academic essay. The following were essential:

- (a) Response that is relevant to the topic,
- (b) Adequately developed argument. That is, an essay that has a central point that is developed sufficiently and in detail.
- (c) An organised piece, with an introductory paragraph (a section that states the main idea of the essay); a series of paragraphs comprising the body of the essay, unified by one

idea advancing the main idea; logical progression of the paragraphs and a concluding paragraph leaving the reader with a sense of completion.

- (d) Spelling that is correct and lexis that is not confusing
- (e) Formal style

3.6 Summary

This study relied on the compositions written by the participants at their own time. Enough time was allowed for them to engage in the various steps of writing process that is widely used in South African schools. It was hoped that the topic would lend itself to the use of subordinate clauses as it was not a narrative essay. The instruction clearly showed that the participants were to use a variety of sentence structures so as to show their writing proficiency. The participants' essays written under timed conditions were analysed to investigate correlation between the scores and the use of subordinate sentences.

4. CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND MAIN FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings of the study and analyses them. The chapter answers the following questions posed in Chapter 1:

- What types of sentence structures are dominant in the compositions of Grade 12 English second language learners in former Model C schools?

The secondary questions were:

- What is the frequency of subordinated sentences in the compositions of Grade 12 English second language learners?
- What types of clauses are frequently used by Grade 12 English second language learners?
- To what extent do the compositions of Grade 12 English second language learners display features of written English?
- Is there a positive correlation between a high number of subordinate clauses used and the scores obtained?
- Is there a negative correlation between low subordination and poor compositions?

4.2 The main findings of the study

4.2.1 Types of sentence structures that are dominant in the compositions of the Grade 12 ESL learners

This section presents the results and the analysis of the types of sentences used by the participants and the kinds of clauses and syntactic links they used. As instructed in the task question, all the participants used a variety of sentence structures to varying degrees. Figure 1 below shows the frequency of simple sentences that the participants used. These sentence types were used in relatively the same pattern by most the participants. The analysis of these, therefore, will be general, but extrapolating examples from the texts of certain participants.

As indicated earlier, simple sentences are low on the hierarchy of syntactization. Learner F used the highest number of simple sentences. The percentage of simple sentences was 68%. Learner K had the second highest frequency of simple sentences – 52% of simple sentences. Learner A had the third highest percentage of simple sentences – 47%.

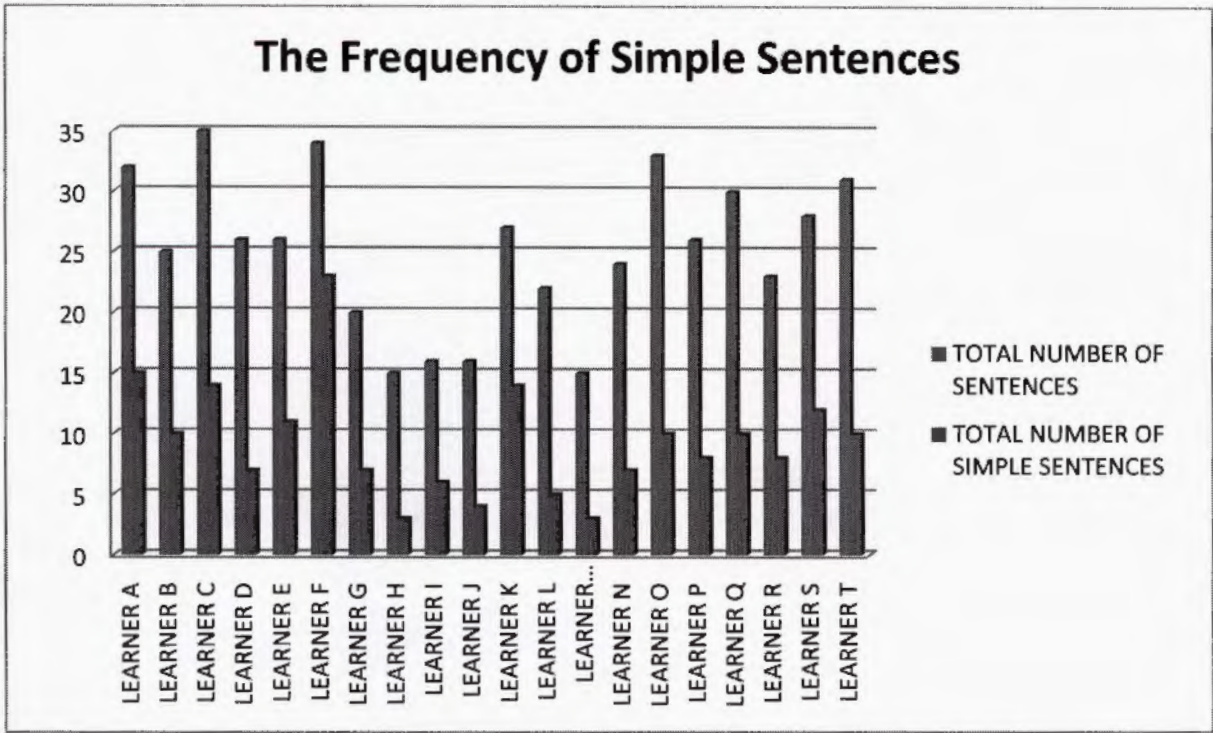


Figure 1: The frequency of simple sentences

Simple sentences are simple constructions that present a single proposition and are easy to handle. The participants used a low percentage of simple sentences in comparison to compound and complex sentences. This could be attributed to the fact that the participants were instructed to use a variety of sentences. They used compound sentences more frequently than simple and complex sentences.

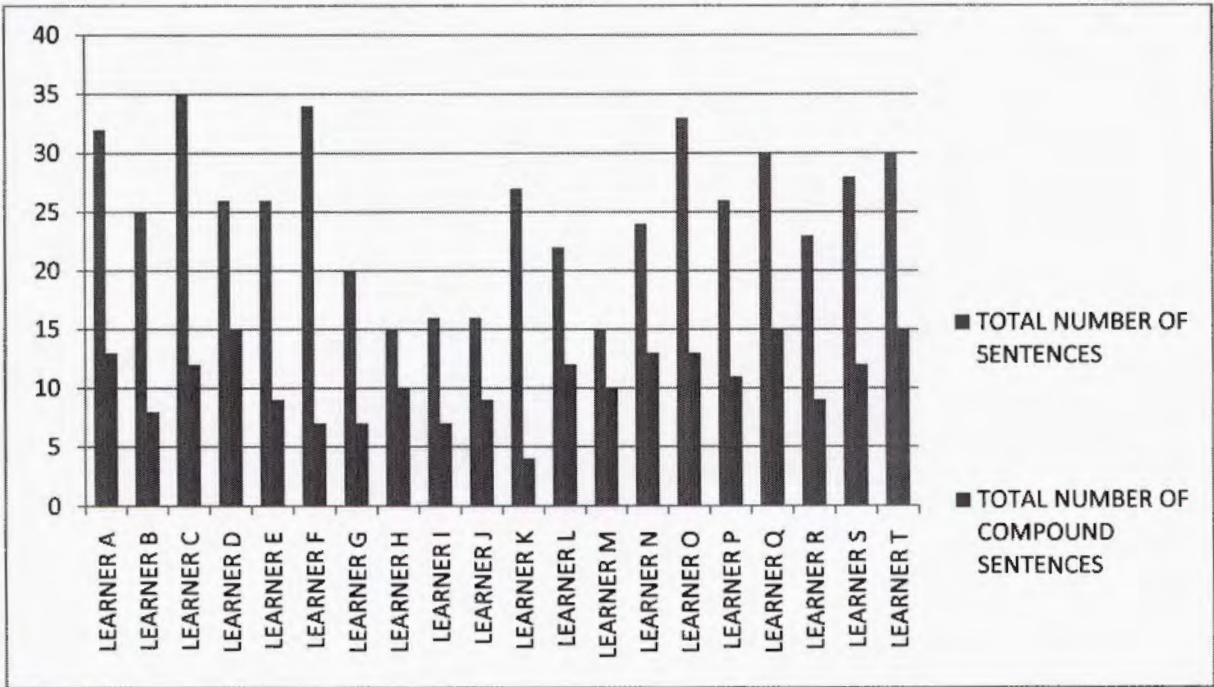


Figure 2: The frequency of compound sentences

Figure 2 shows the frequency of compound sentences. Learner H and Learner M used the highest number of compound sentences. The frequency of compound sentences in their compositions was 67%. The second highest frequency of compound sentences was in Learner D. She used 58% of compound sentences. The third highest frequency of compound sentences, 55%, was found in Learner L's composition.

Compound sentences are constructed by using coordinating conjunctions or juxtaposing and are fairly easy to construct compared to complex sentences. For example:

- (1) It is smart **but** it is cheap (compound sentence)
- (2) **Although** it is smart, it is cheap (complex sentence)

Clauses in a compound sentence occur in fixed positions. For example:

- (3) She is no longer my teacher, **but** I'm still just as afraid of her (compound sentence)
- (4) **But** I'm still just as afraid of her, she is no longer my teacher (compound sentence)

In complex sentences, because clauses have been moved to different positions, the sentence no longer makes sense. Unlike in compound sentences, clauses in complex sentences may be moved to different positions without creating meaningless sentences. For example:

- (5) I'm still as afraid of her, although she is no longer my teacher (complex sentence)
- (6) Although she is no longer my teacher, I'm still just as afraid of her (complex sentence)

Complex sentences take some effort to construct and, generally, do not occur frequently in conversation or spoken texts. The high frequency of compound sentences in the compositions of the participants could be suggesting that, in trying to comply with the instruction that they use a variety of sentences, the participants relied on compound sentences to exhibit competence to construct 'better sentences'. Most relied on the conjunctions "and", "but" and "because" to construct compound sentences.

The coordinating conjunction "and" can be used to connect words, phrases and clauses. According to Biber, Conrad and Leech (2002:228), speakers in conversation are most likely to use the conjunction "and" as a clause-level link, while in academic writing it is most likely

used to link phrases. Conversations often follow a simple mode of grammatical construction in simply adding one clause to another. Biber, Conrad and Leech (2002) state that the conjunction “but” is also used more frequently in conversation than in writing. They further state that academic writing is inclined to rely on phrase-level coordination as this helps build complex, embedded structures.

The conjunctions “and”, “but” and, to a lesser extent the conjunction “or”, can be used as utterance or turn-taking links in speech. For example:

- (1) *And* I can’t have it now?
- (2) *Or* you will call me in the morning?
- (3) *But* that’s not what I had in mind.

Probably because they are fairly fluent in English, the participants used coordination more frequently than subordination. The prevalence of the coordinating conjunctions “and”, “but” and “because”, indicates a tendency to fall back on narrative style which is quite easy to handle than the expository writing.

All the participants used relatively few complex sentences. The highest percentage of complex sentences was found in Learner K. She used 33% of complex sentences. This was followed by the 30% of Learner G. The third highest frequency of complex sentences was found in Learner P’s composition. The lowest percentage (12%) of complex sentences was found in Learner F. Learner A, Learner H and Learner M each used 13% of complex sentences. Figure 3 shows the frequency of complex sentences that the participants used.

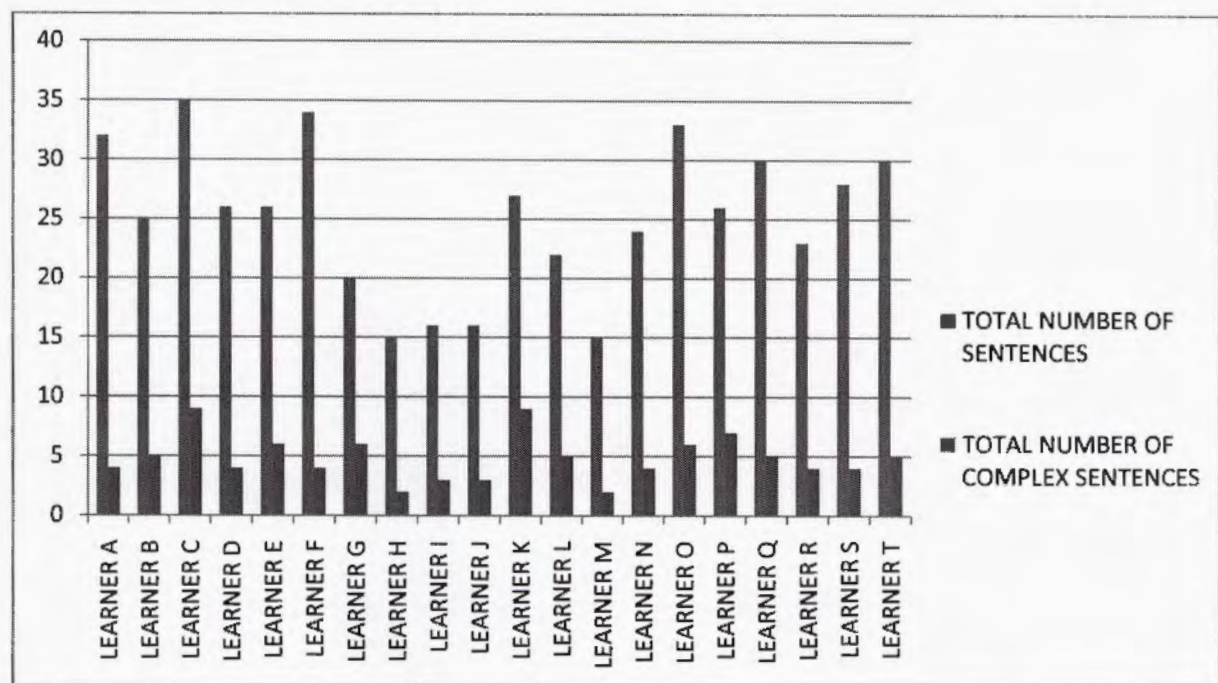


Figure 3: The frequency of complex sentences

To varying degrees, the participants used far fewer complex sentences than both simple and compound sentences. Generally, the complex sentences were constructed with a complete reliance on relativisation. The relative pronouns “who”, “that” and “which” were used quite frequently. Learner J writes:

- (1) The very same people who are supposed to be enforcing this law will be the ones who will be offering ‘alternatives’.

Learner R writes:

- (1) The teenagers will be doing in total control of their lives and won’t be doing unacceptable activities that could lead to serious problems.
- (2) Once the legal age for drinking alcohol is raised to 21, teenagers will not be engaged in serious life disturbing matters that could affect their future.

The picture that emerged from the evidence was that the participants had the confidence to use relative clauses. The studies of Perera (1984) and Allison, Beard and Willock (2002) produced similar results. Perera (1984) observed that relative clauses are initially infrequent, but their occurrence increases significantly during school years. Trying to make their compositions appear more mature, the participants used more compound sentences compared to simple sentences. However, complex sentences were far fewer than compound sentences.

4.2.2 Types of clauses that are frequently used by Grade 12 English second language learners

Generally, all the participants used clauses as described by Halliday (1994). There was a high frequency of paratactic clauses (46%), generally coordinated with the conjunctions “and”, “because” “but”, and to a fairly less extent “or”. Learner J used “and” more frequently than other learners. In sixteen (16) sentences she used “and” ten (10) times. Equally high in the frequency of “and” was Learner J who used the conjunction twelve (12) times in twenty-two (22) sentences. Learner D used “and” ten (10) times in twenty-six (26) sentences. Table 6 shows the frequency of the different clauses that the participants used. Learner D wrote:

Reducing consumption means that alcohol factories won't be producing more alcohol or not reaching their maximum production **which** will lead factories reducing their workforce **and** retrenching. If this happens *the* will be an increase in the rate of unemployment **and** this will lead to poverty. This is bad for the economy **and** will decrease the strength of the economy **which** is a step back.

PARTICIPANT	MAIN CLAUSES	PARATACTIC CLAUSES	PERCENTAGE	HYPOTACTIC CLAUSES	PERCENTAGE
LEARNER A	9	14	44%	7	6%
LEARNER B	10	9	36%	5	20%
LEARNER C	14	13	37%	6	17%
LEARNER D	12	16	62%	4	15%
LEARNER E	8	16	62%	7	27%
LEARNER F	10	7	21%	9	26%
LEARNER G	14	13	65%	2	10%
LEARNER H	9	15	100%	3	20%
LEARNER I	9	15	94%	5	31%
LEARNER J	12	12	75%	5	31%
LEARNER K	11	4	15%	9	33%
LEARNER L	15	17	77%	13	59%
LEARNER M	9	13	87%	4	27%
LEARNER N	8	12	50%	5	42%
LEARNER O	13	8	33%	3	18%
LEARNER P	15	13	27%	6	15%
LEARNER Q	14	12	33%	4	17%
LEARNER R	16	10	39%	5	17%
LEARNER S	9	6	29%	2	11%
LEARNER T	10	7	29%	8	23%
TOTAL	504	223	230	118	132
PERCENTAGE	100	45%	46%	23%	26%

Table 6: Types of clauses that the participants used

Learner J wrote:

Some people think that this law will decrease the number of young people drinking alcohol **and** reduce the number of young alcoholics. In so doing they will be able to concentrate more of their studies **and** brighten up their future **as well as** the future of the country.

On occasions “also” was used. This extract from Learner L’s compositions shows this:

I believe raising the age to all will reduce alcohol consumption amongst young people because it will be hard to buy alcohol. **Also**, young people are most likely to misuse alcohol.

Learner M wrote:

Raising the age for drinking alcohol is going to create problems for the state **and also** going to affect the police which is putting lives at a high risk.

The conjunction “and” was also used simply to join words or phrases. For example, Learner M wrote:

Teenagers are going to flock to the rural area’s tarvern whereby they require no ID for you to enter and be able to purchase.

Although the participants used hypotactic clauses fairly well, their frequency was very low. The frequency of hypotactic clauses was 23%. Most of the hypotactic clauses were formed using the conjunction “if”. Constructions such as the following were frequently used:

- (1) **If** they do not get it they resort to other substances such as dagga. (Learner E)
- (2) **If** the legal drinking age of alcohol is to be raised that means that Thabo and many other young people like him will be left unemployed. (Learner B)
- (3) **If** an 18 year old can make up their minds as to who the potential leader of the country should be, they should have every right to purchase and have the right to drink (Learner L)
- (4) **If** the legal age is raised then the underage drinkers will have limited access to alcohol. (Learner A)

Various types of adverbial clauses were also prevalent. The conjunctions “when” and “that” were used quite frequently. The following extract from Learner E’s composition indicates this.

- (1) ***When youngsters are at a pub or club*** they have a restriction of not drinking too much because the bar tender can refuse to give them more alcohol but ***when*** they are drinking at home, there is no one to tell them that they have had enough or tell them to stop.

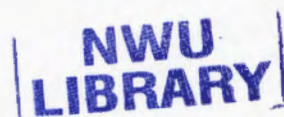
Learner H wrote:

- (2) The government uses the VAT *that is charged on consumer products* to provide goods and services, and therefore if it increase the age for drinking alcohol, alcohol consumption will decrease.

No participant used embedded clauses. Embedding was only attempted with relative pronouns “who”, “which” or “that”, and to a less extent “what” was used. The frequency of these non-restrictive relative clauses was 26%. Non-finite clauses such as the sentence below were not used.

Noticing that people under the legal age for drinking alcohol are not allowed to enter into bottle stores, these adults will make quick money by buying alcohol for these people. (Learner K).

Sentences such as the following were very frequent:



- (1) Current underage drinkers *who are addicts* will not take the new law into consideration and keep on drinking. (Learner A)
- (2) Raising the age for drinking alcohol is going to create problems for the state and also going to affect the police *which is putting their lives at a high risk*. (Learner M).

The high frequency of paratactic clauses and hypotactic clauses, and the very low frequency of embedded clauses indicate the participants’ conversational fluency on the one hand. On the other hand, this indicates that they have not yet acquired the ability to construct complex clauses that are typical in expository, academic writing. Finite relative clauses and no-finite clauses are a serious challenge for ESL learners. The following examples are typical in their writing:

- (1) Peering through the early morning mist, the shape of the island appeared.
- (2) Swimming in the sea, the waves were rough.

(In Hendry, et al. 1993:127)

4.2.3 To what extent do the compositions of Grade 12 English second language learners display features of written English?

As mentioned earlier, written and spoken texts have evidently distinct features. According to Clachar (2003), the writer who uses a strategy of clause-chaining, linking hypotactic and paratactic clauses to form longer sentences, realizes a more oral register, and conversely, the writer who uses a strategy that structures clauses so that they are embedded, typically employs a more academic register. Most of the participants merely strung together clauses using coordinating conjunctions, or used relative pronouns to form hypotactic clauses. The picture that emerged was that the participants had not yet acquired the competence to construct sentence structures typical in expository, academic writing.

Biber, Conrad & Leech (2002) note that the adverbials “so”, “then”, “though”, and “anyway” are quite common in conversation. A high prevalence of these adverbials was found in most of the participants’ compositions. The following extracts indicate this.

- (1) **So** for no one can really tell what effect this new law will have and will just have to wait and see. (Learner J)
- (2) **So** really however way you look at it raising the legal age of drinking any alcohol does not solve any problem. (Learner R).
- (3) **So** basically, raising the age restriction of drinking will encourage underage drinking. (Learner S).
- (4) This policy doesn’t address the underlined problem. The people who are 18 and above have the right to vote. **So** why can’t they let them drink. (Learner O).

That the compositions were typical of spoken discourse was further indicated by the prevalence of short forms such as “doesn’t” “can’t”. Some participants asked rhetorical questions, a phenomenon that is typical in face-to-face conversation. Learner B wrote:

- (1) What happens when good intentions create problems for second and third parties?
- (2) Does this also mean that the legal age of smoking will be raised too?

This extract from Learner E’s composition is an explicitly conversational text:

18 and legal? Our government says that anyone below the age of 18 is regarded as a minor. Meaning that if you are 18, you are responsible. If the age restriction is raised

then the legal age should be increased as well, because technically what they are saying is that people between the ages of 18 – 21 are also regarded as irresponsible and therefore minors.

Some participants used discourse markers typical in conversational discourse. For example, Learner M wrote:

Remember when people do something without permit they make sure to go all out because it is something not done too often.

The word “Remember” in this context is used as a discourse marker whereby the speaker would like to confirm if their fellow interlocutor is following the conversation.

Some participants used anecdotes to support their argument. Typically, this is done in face-to-face conversation or narrative texts. This extract from Learner B illustrates this.

Thabo Mmoki who is a first year student at Wits university has recently turned 19 and works at a night club as a barman and his job provides for him a steady income that helps him pay his rent and tuition fees. If the legal drinking age of alcohol is to be raised that means that Thabo and many other young people like him will be left unemployed.

Some participants used pronouns loosely as it is typically done in conversations. For example, Learner K wrote:

Currently the legal age for drinking alcohol is 18. The main reason for increasing it to 21 is to reduce the consumption of alcohol by those who will be now restricted. Unfortunately, more often than not the opposite effect is induced. A higher legal age might cause them to drink more alcohol thus creating more problems.

The pronoun “them” in the last sentence is placed too far from its antecedent. This suggests that the writer [speaker] assumes that the audience [listener] is aware of who she is referring to. The writer does not see the need to make it clear who she is referring to.

Although the participants could generally write grammatically correct sentences, the informal style and register they used, typical in spoken discourse, indicate that they have not yet acquire the register required for academic discourse. Clachar (2003) argues that non-proficient writers are inclined to transfer speech register into their academic writing. He further submits that, in order to produce a well-written task, students need to have a clear notion of the textual form that this written task will assume and they need to master the lexical and grammatical resources that reflect the textual form. The participants in the current study indicated the ability to use simple sentences and compound and complex sentences with relative clauses. However, they used clause structures typically associated

with spoken discourse, indicating lack of competence to construct clause structures that reflect competence in writing in the style associated with academic discourse. According to Clachar (2003), the production of academic writing lies in the hidden and complex challenge of moving from the lexical and grammatical resources typical of the registers of speech to those resources typical of the register of academic discourse. This could occur if the learner-writer acquires the ability to compress paratactic clauses into complex, embedded clauses through the process of nominalization. Embedded clauses were noticeably absent in the participants' composition, leading to the suggestion that their writing competence had not yet developed to the extent whereby they can construct clauses that are associated with academic writing.

4.2.4 Is there a positive correlation between a high number of subordinate clauses used in English second language learners' compositions and the scores they obtain?

Table 7 below shows the participants' scores on a composition that they wrote in an examination in the first term. The scores are raw scores out of fifty (50). Appendix B is a rubric that was used to mark the composition.

PARTICIPANT	MARKS OBTAINED OUT OF 50
LEARNER A	38
LEARNER B	41
LEARNER C	37
LEARNER D	28
LEARNER E	30
LEARNER F	31
LEARNER G	35
LEARNER H	39
LEARNER I	30
LEARNER J	37
LEARNER K	40
LEARNER L	40
LEARNER M	39
LEARNER N	40
LEARNER O	32
LEARNER P	38
LEARNER Q	34
LEARNER R	40
LEARNER S	40
LEARNER T	34

Table 7: The participants' scores in a composition written for formal examinations

NCS prescribes that learners in Grade 12 write compositions that are 400 – 450 words or (2 – 2 ½ pages) words in length and are written for two-and-half hours. The marking rubric allocates marks for content and language on a scale of 7 codes.

The teachers are advised that they use process writing approach to teach writing. As mentioned earlier, the adherents to this approach are lenient on grammatical errors. Instead, they encourage creative use of language and self-expression.

The participants scored relatively high marks on the selected composition. Clearly this indicates that the low frequency of hypotactic clause and embedded clauses especially, did not have a negative effect on the marking of the compositions. Not much could be deduced from the feedback to the learners as there were no remarks or corrections. The codes for the

marks allocated suggest that the learners' compositions met the requirements for the instruction given. It was concluded that this picture suggests that there was no negative correlation between the low frequency of hypotactic clauses and embedded clauses.

4.2.5 Is there a negative correlation between a low subordination and poor compositions?

The learner who obtained the lowest marks in the composition written in the first term examinations scored 56% (28 marks) and the highest mark was 82% (41 marks). Learner D who obtained the lowest mark committed numerous grammatical errors and was awarded ten (10) out of fifteen (15) for language, style and editing. The composition was only half (235 words) of the required length. Generally, the learner wrote simple sentences and very few paratactic and hypotactic clauses. In comparison, Learner B who obtained the highest score wrote a composition of the required length. There was a fairly high prevalence of paratactic clauses. However, without any explicit remarks or comments by the marker, it was difficult to make conclusions about the correlation or lack thereof, and the scores given, safe to submit that meeting the requirements of the given instruction, and less grammatical errors, could have been the reason why the two compositions were scored differently. Learner D used many simple sentences and the composition appears elementary, while Learner B used numerous paratactic clauses.

4.2.6 Summary

In this Chapter the main findings of the current study have been presented. The participants, generally, used mostly paratactic clauses and hypotactic relative clauses. This style is typically a characteristic of conversational discourse. No clear conclusions could be drawn about correlation between the prevalence of, or absence of subordination and scores that the participants obtained in a composition that they wrote for formal assessment earlier in the year. The study concludes that the high rate of paratactic and hypotactic relative clauses indicates the participants' conversational fluency, and that they have not yet acquired the writing skills required for academic writing.

5. CHAPTER 5: SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

The current study was conducted to investigate the types of sentence structures that are dominant in the compositions of English Second Language learners in former Model C schools and the types of clauses that they are able to construct. The study focused on the frequency of subordinated sentences and embedded clauses in the participants' compositions. Paratactic clauses that are a feature of compound sentences and hypotactic clauses, were considered as features of spoken language and poor writing proficiency, and hypotactic clauses associated with embedding, were considered as marks of advanced writing proficiency and academic writing. This section presents a synthesis of the main findings.

5.2 Synthesis of the main findings

As instructed the participants used a variety of sentence structures. Generally, they all showed competence to handle simple, compound and complex sentences fairly well. There was a high rate of compound sentences and a low rate of complex sentences. Complex sentences were constructed by using relative pronouns. Embedding was noticeably non-existent in the participants' compositions. According to Halliday (1994; 1987) and Clachar (2003), hypotactic and paratactic clauses are features of non-proficient writers and are associated with spoken language. It was concluded that these findings indicate the participants' conversational fluency, and that they had not yet acquired the levels of writing proficiency that are associated with academic writing and advanced writing proficiency.

Cummins (1984;1981) makes a difference between BICS and CALP. The current study indicates that, due to early exposure to English language, the participants have acquired conversational fluency. The low frequency of complex sentences and embedded clauses suggests that the participants lack CALP skills. According to Clachar (2003), learners can only use or construct embedded clauses if they can recognise the syntactic and semantic functions of conjunctions.

Researchers have argued that language acquisition follows a definite pattern of development (Harpin, 1976; Givón, 1979; Perera, 1984; Allison, Beard & Willock, 2002). According to Givón (1979), children's writing develops from pragmatic mode that is associated with spoken discourse, to syntactic mode that indicates maturity in writing development. Although

the participants could write fairly well, they used more conversational style, indicating their conversational fluency and lack of academic writing skills. Harpin (1976) observes that children's writing is characterised by frequent use of the coordinating conjunction "and". This emerged as a strong feature of the participants' sentence structures. This picture confirms the observation made by Perera (1984) that children's writing diverges, at differentiation phase, from speech patterns to syntactic structures.

According to Mazur-Palandré (2007), text type and modality influence the choice of syntactic links that writers choose. In the current study the participants had to present their views on a bill that was being debated. As a result forecasting into the future was required. This resulted in the participants constructing many conditionals using "if". Although the participants were instructed to write an expository text, their compositions were characterised by features of narrative writing.

Despite the low rate of subordination in their compositions, the participants scored relatively high scores in a composition written under timed conditions. This indicates that there was no negative correlation between the low rate of subordination and the scores. It should be remembered, though, that in recent years writing teachers employ process writing approach which encourages leniency on grammatical structures. Teachers, therefore, tend to focus on creativity and self-expression at the expense of grammatical accuracy. Many teachers, too, have adopted the communicative approach to teaching second language. This approach too, is very accommodative of grammatical errors.

5.3 Limitations of the study

The subjects in the current were English Second Language learners in one English-only desegregated school. The research design and the sampling method used ensured that the sample selected would be representative so that the results could be generalised to the whole population. Considering the size of the sample and the population selected, it would be inappropriate to generalise the results to other situations beyond the area selected for the study. As mentioned elsewhere in the current study, English language learning and teaching contexts in South Africa are complex and vastly different.

Studies such as the current study are often conducted with the help of technologically advanced equipment including computer. This study was entirely done manually. Although accuracy was sought, especially in analyzing the texts, human error cannot be ruled out.

However, the study was conducted following acceptable ethics for both researchers and the teaching profession. The participants' identities were concealed and only original texts were accepted.

5.4 Recommendations

Writing proficiency remains one of the challenging areas for schools and it is crucially important for learners to succeed educationally. The study investigated sentence structure, a basic unit of written communication, the weaknesses of which can create problems if not addressed. The writing proficiency and, generally, educational attainment of learners in South African schools remains a serious concern.

The results of the current study point to serious curriculum and policy weaknesses that cannot be underestimated. Currently, English Second Language learners are enrolling in former Model C schools in huge numbers. English in South African public schools presents these learners with a dichotomy. These schools have been enrolling, mainly, Afrikaans-speaking learners and the language of teaching and learning in these schools has, generally, been Afrikaans. English Home Language is offered to learners whose first [home] language is English, and English First Additional Language is offered to learners whose first [home] languages are other languages other than English. Because they do not prefer Afrikaans as language of teaching and learning, English Second Language learners are forced to choose do English at HL level even though it is not the language they speak at home. Even though they have acquired conversational fluency, English Second Language learners require support in English language and appropriate tuition so that they perform at their full potential.

Research on the role of L1 writing skills in L2 writing in recent years have suggested that L1 skills can be used as a resource to develop teaching materials and approaches that are suitable for learners (Alasamdani, 2010; Kamimura, 2001). Teachers of English Second Language learners need to tap on language skills that learners have already acquired in their home language to teach writing skills. English Second Language learners in former Model C schools, however, have not acquired their first languages adequately. Teachers, therefore, need to understand their circumstances and provide appropriate tuition. The current study indicates that the participants in the study lacked CALP skills.

5.5 Conclusion

The current study has shed light on an aspect of English curriculum in South African schools that is crucially important. The picture that emerged is that English Second Language learners in former Model C schools lack academic writing proficiency that is required for them to succeed educationally. Their writing bears features of children's writing and needs to develop to acceptable levels. Conversational fluency is not always an indication of proficiency in language, at least in academics.

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APPENDIX A: The instruction/question given to the participants

TASK 13 Creative writing

ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY

QUESTION

The government of South Africa is considering raising the current legal age for drinking alcohol to twenty-one (21) years of age. Do you think this will curb the rate of alcohol consumption among the youth?

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS:

1. Write an essay of between 400 – 450 words (2 – 2 ½ pages).
2. There **MUST** be evidence of process writing (brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising and reworking, editing, and proof-reading).
3. Hand in both your plan (mind-map, flow-chart, etc.), draft and the final version.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS:

1. Your essay **MUST** have a structure (Introduction, Body and Conclusion).
2. Use formal style and avoid slang. “sms” language is not acceptable.
3. It is in your best interest to write correct spelling.
4. Use a variety of sentences (simple, compound and complex sentences)
5. Provide a suitable heading.

DUE DATE: 24 March 2011.

APPENDIX B: MARKING RUBRIC

APPENDIX C: The participants' compositions

APPENDIX D: Essays written for examinations (Mid-year assessment)

SECTION A: RUBRIC FOR ASSESSING AN ESSAY – HOME LANGUAGE (50)

	Code 7: Outstanding 80 – 100%	Code 6: Meritorious 70 – 79%	Code 5: Substantial 60 – 69%	Code 4: Adequate 50 – 59%	Code 3: Moderate 40 – 49%	Code 2: Elementary 30 – 39%	Code 1: Not achieved 0 – 29%
CONTENT & PLANNING (30 MARKS)	24 – 30 -Content outstanding, highly original. -Ideas thought-provoking, mature. -Planning and/or drafting has produced a flawlessly presentable essay.	21 – 23½ -Content meritorious, original. -Ideas imaginative, interesting. -Planning and/or drafting has produced a well-crafted and presentable essay.	18 – 20½ -Content sound, reasonably coherent. -Ideas interesting, convincing. -Planning and/or drafting has produced a presentable and good essay.	15 – 17½ -Content appropriate, adequately coherent. -Ideas interesting, adequately original. -Planning and/or drafting has produced a satisfactory, presentable essay.	12 – 14½ -Content mediocre, ordinary. Gaps in coherence. -Ideas mostly relevant. Limited originality. -Planning and/or drafting has produced a moderately presentable and coherent essay.	9 – 11½ -Content not always clear, lacks coherence. -Few ideas, often repetitive. -Inadequate for Home Language level despite planning/drafting. Essay not well presented.	0 – 8½ -Content largely irrelevant. No coherence. -Ideas tedious, repetitive. -Inadequate planning/drafting. Poorly presented essay.
LANGUAGE, STYLE & EDITING (15 MARKS)	12 – 15 -Critical awareness of impact of language. -Language, punctuation effectively used. -Uses highly appropriate figurative language. -Choice of words exceptional, mature. -Style, tone, register highly suited to topic. -Virtually error-free following proofreading and editing.	10½ – 11½ -Critical awareness of impact of language. -Language, punctuation correct; able to use figurative language. -Choice of words varied and creative. -Style, tone, register appropriately suited to topic. -Largely error-free following proofreading, editing.	9 – 10 -Critical awareness of language evident. -Language and punctuation mostly correct. -Choice of words suited to text. -Style, tone, register suited to topic. -Mostly error-free following proofreading, editing.	7½ – 8½ -Some awareness of impact of language. -Language simplistic, punctuation adequate. -Choice of words adequate. -Style, tone, register generally consistent with topic requirements. -Still contains a few errors following proofreading, editing.	6 – 7 -Limited critical language awareness. -Language mediocre, punctuation often inaccurately used. -Choice of words basic. -Style, tone register lacking in coherence. -Contains several errors following proofreading, editing.	4½ – 5½ -Language and punctuation flawed. -Choice of words limited. -Style, tone, register inappropriate. -Error-ridden despite proofreading, editing.	0 – 4 -Language and punctuation seriously flawed. -Choice of words inappropriate. -Style, tone, register flawed in all aspects. -Error-ridden and confused following proofreading, editing.
STRUCTURE (5 MARKS)	4 – 5 -Coherent development of topic. Vivid, exceptional detail. -Sentences, paragraphs brilliantly constructed. -Length in accordance with requirements of topic.	3½ -Logical development of details. Coherent. -Sentences, paragraphs logical, varied. -Length correct.	3 -Several relevant details developed. -Sentences, paragraphs well constructed. -Length correct.	2½ -Some points, necessary details developed. -Sentences, paragraphing might be faulty in places but essay still makes sense. -Length almost correct.	2 -Most necessary points evident. -Sentences, paragraphs faulty but essay still makes sense. -Length – too long/short.	1½ -Sometimes off topic but general line of thought can be followed. -Sentences, paragraphs constructed at an elementary level. -Length – too long/short.	0 – 1 -Off topic. -Sentences, paragraphs muddled, inconsistent. -Length – far too long/short.