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Adults learning to write: exploring alternatives to functional writing

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and left him in the pot:

until rabbit was quiet because he was died and cooked.

The complication was only 'resolved' by the death of the rabbit and there was no punishment or revenge on the cruel Jackal. However, Lettie added a comment about Jackal's morality and the nature of his 'friendship':

What a friend can do that, he wanted to eat his friend. You are terrible friend Jackal.

The story is a fairly typical example of a Zulu folktale where animals have human characteristics and there is normally, though not always, a moral. Very often these stories involve a trickster (often the jackal, or the hare) and a dupe, usually a bigger and stronger animal such as the elephant, lion, or hyena (Finnegan: 1970).

10.6

My grandfather's family

I can talk a lord about my mothers side family, My granny was a very nice lady. I remember when my mom smaked me and I left home and go to my granny's house, When I get to my granny's house I made beleave as nothing happen. My granny asked why did I came here and I said I felt like to come and visit her. My mother live for little while and she started to called me. The use to do that shout to each other and tell what their need. My granny went out and answer my mom. What had happen and my mom tell my granny what had happen, My mother tell my granny that she must send me back, I walk all the way gowing back home, I which my granny can said she's not going to comeback today but instead of that she walk with me half way and said you must walk fast I am going to watch you.

In my way I said why did I go to my granny's house because I new my mother was go to called me, now I am walking all this way back again and now I said my stupid granny she's making me walk all that way just because she cannot tell my mom I can't come back today. And is very easy to say that but no go Gqibelo. Now I was bleaming my granny about that instead of myself. My granny when she was asking a streamly question I thought she's not gowing to trast me, because you can show on your face if you telling lie. but never notice anything on my face. Thank you Granny.

Love you so much.

Comment

At first glance this appears to be a somewhat rambling account of a memory, in comparison with the folktale that Lettie told. However, Lettie was doing something different when she wrote this story. It is quite possible that this was the first time Lettie had told this story, at least in writing, whereas she had probably been told the folktale she wrote. Although she embellished it and made it her own, she was using the familiar folktale genre. In this story she was using language for (perhaps) a new purpose and was less sure of herself as she recounted her memory. Derewianka (1990) describes how language enables us to do things, among others, to share information, express attitudes, reflect, order our experience and make sense of the world. In her telling of this memory, Lettie used (written) language to accomplish these purposes for herself. She began with a general comment about her grandmother:

My granny was a very nice lady.

and then continuedwith a specific story to verify this statement. The story was told: the smack from her mother, Lettie's leaving home to go to her grandmother who was within shouting distance from home, the mother telling the grandmother what had happened and asking her to send her daughter back. Lettie realised the need for some contextual information and provided it:

They use to do that shout to each other and tell what their need.

Lettie continued with the story and provided details which give us insight into the grandmother's way of handling the situation, knowing that it was difficult for the child to go back home:

which my granny can said she's not going to comeback today but instead of that she walk with me half way and said you must walk fast I am going to watch you.

At this point Lettie started to reflect on the situation, to the extent that the sequence of events came to an end. She described her thoughts at the time, her anger at being sent back:

In my way I said why did I go to my granny's house because I new my mother was go to called me, now I am walking all this way back again and now I said my stupid granny she's making me walk all that way just because she cannot tell my mom I can't come back today.

She described her present, different perception of what happened:

Now I was bleaming my granny about that instead of myself.

and ended with a feeling of gratitude, which she expressed by addressing her grandmother directly:

Thank you Granny.
Love you so much.

What started as a recount of a memory moved into reflection and finally became almost a letter of thanks to her grandmother.

13.6

Having my first baby

When I had my first baby I was 17 years old but I coldn't care what people go to said. I was very happy I even think I am 10th month pregnant because I was looking forward to see my baby I even called her Lindiwe which mean waiting. I had her in Baragwanath she was a very nice little girl. But I thing in my mind I was still young it was lots of thinks that had happen. I remember I started to go in the clienick when I was 8 1/2 months pregnant and they shouted me but I coulden care. What they sad, In my opinion I sad you nurses you things you God." that knows every thinks. That's my baby and dont tell me what to do.

Comment

Lettie began with an orientation:

When I had my first baby I was 17 years old

and then acknowledged that she was very young by adding:

but I coldn't care what people go to said.

In this text Lettie recounted a few of the series of events that took place, interrupting her telling with frequent personal comments:

but I coldn't care what people go to said
I was very happy
she was a very nice little girl
but I coulden care. What they sad,

She recounted her thoughts at the time, which also expressed her happiness:

I even think I am 10th month pregnant because I was looking forward to see my baby

Even her recount of her words to the nurses was an expression of her opinion:

In my opinion I sad you nurses you things you God" that knows every thinks. That's my baby and dont tell me what to do.

She recounted her naming of the baby, which also expresses her attitude:

I even called her Lindiwe which means waiting.

She included a brief, one-sentence reflection from the present perspective. The doubt she now feels is expressed by her "But...", in contrast to the confidence and happiness of the young mother:

But I thing in my mind I was still young it was lots of thinks that had happen.

and then moved back into recounting the events, ending the reflection:

I remember I started to go in the clienick when I was 8 1/2 months pregnant

This is a personal recount. Lettie made frequent use of the first person singular, a series of events was written about, the simple past tense was used and many personal responses to the events were included.

4.2.3.2 Examples of Florence's writing

Jackal and Rabbit *9.5*

Ones upon the time there two animals, Jackal and Rabit, they were friend. They always stay together. The were looking the people going to church they wearing the white clothes when they going to church and caring the water with the catle (kettle), to wash the feet whe they going in the church.

One day jackal" sayed to the rabit, my friend I like to going to the church with that people. I like the white dress. And the rabit say no you can(t) go to the church because you heat (heart) is out all the time Jackal say No I am going.
Jackal go to the church with that people One day rabit talk him self "I cant stay like that I must mike a plan. rabit go to the mud to roll him self and go to sleep nest to the parth like his dead. When the people going to the church they saw the rabbit they say the rabit is dead, and the(y) tell Jackal that. Jackal start to think I am going to take all the water out in to the catle and I want to tell the people I have no water. he do that, they say you can't come in with us in to the church. jackal happy to hear that and ran fast to eat a rabit when he open the mouth and the rabit get up, he say what is wrong my friend whay you here. Jackal" say no I'm coming to help you. Rabit say" I know you coming to eat me. Rabit say I told you your heart is out side you can't stay long in to the church.

Comment

Florence also chose Jackal and Rabbit for the children's story she told. In some ways it resembles a traditional Zulu folktale, in that the characters are animals who can talk and take part in human activities. There are newer elements as well, such as the church and the white clothes and the custom of carrying water with a kettle to wash their feet. Perhaps Florence heard the story in this form. She might have adapted it herself.

Florence began her story with an orientation. She was familiar with the English "formula" to begin a fairy tale:

Ones upon the time there two animals, Jackal and Rabit, they were friend. They always stay together.

More details were then given, to create the "possible world" (Derewianka, 1990) of this story:

They were looking the people going to church they wearing the white clothes when they going to church and caring the water with the catle, to wash the feet whe they going in the church.

The complication, or problem, arose. Jackal went to church despite Rabbit's protests that his 'heart was outside' (he was bad). Rabbit solved this problem by feigning death in front of the people, Jackal heard about it and ran off to eat the rabbit.

The resolution came when Rabbit got up and confronted Jackal with his intentions. Rabbit emerged as the victor with his 'proof' that Jackal's heart, in fact, was 'outside' and so he could not continue attending church.

The language features are those of a narrative. Florence used the past tense (although she had difficulties some of the time with tenses). She included dialogue, both between the jackal and the rabbit, and the inner thoughts of both animals. Her story included several descriptive details: the church people wore white clothes, the rabbit rolled in the mud, the jackal arrived to eat his friend with his mouth open. Jackal's ruse to leave the church by emptying his kettle was described in detail.

The moral of the story was not stated, but presumably implied: take care, even a friend might be ready to harm you!

My family *23.5*

My father died long ago he died 1954, and my mother still alif she is 85 years she born 1917 July.

My perent were 8 children 6 girls 2 boys, two girls died and the two boys also died. We are four sisters we are lif the old one Carrie, me Florence, Sarah and Janet She is a teacher in secondary school they all married exept me, I unmarried. Carrie got 8 children me 6 my sister Sarah 8 Janet 4. We are stay in one place.
My mother is old I like to go home to look after my mother

My first son is Jabulani, Dudu, Sipho, Ntombi, Veli, Mandla.

Jabulani and Sipho the working here they are the Taxidriver. Sipho and Ntombi they were home. Veli married Dudu died. Jabulani he is Std 9. Sipho, Ntombi, Veli, Mandla all matrec. (matric) Dudu she was Std 8.

Comment

Florence wrote a very bare, almost prosaic description of her family. She used a series of short sentences and only two compound sentences, joined with 'and'. She included many factual details: how many children, their names, their schooling, who was married, who died. No details were given about the causes of death, although so many deaths were mentioned. Unlike Lettie, she included

very little of her own responses to situations, apart from a brief comment about her mother:

My mother is old I like to go home to look after my mother

She left it to the reader to piece together the details. The picture is one of hardship: her father's death when she was very young, her mother left with a big family, half of whom have died. Florence has also lost a child.

Florence included exact details of the levels of schooling her children have had. This is important information. Although she was only partially schooled, a single parent and a domestic worker, most of her children have completed their schooling.

5.6

(No title given)

I remember when I was 19 year old, when my mother work in Johannesburg. My oldest sister she was marrid I was with my tow sister younger than me, we stay at home with my two sisters. Becaus our father was pastaway long ago that is whay my mother working becaus nobody to help my mother to rising me and my sister. My mother she was work very hard for us.

In 1965 I have baby boy his name is Jabulani the day I have pregnant my mother was very cros for me becaus I am not marrid my mother was still working in Jo'berg, whe I still pregnent my mother come home, I was very absad (upset) I know my mother going shout with me I hide in my bedroom, whe I come out I was very scard but she didn't shout so much. 1998 (1968?) I have onothe baby girl her name i Dudu whe she's 4 yeas she stat to cough she was surffer with the chest after she is 18 years some time she not go to school she take one week not at school. But the cous of death is numonia, she left 4 children two girls and two boys.

In 1971 I have baby boy hes name Veli he is at hom. In 1972 I have another boy his name Sipho he is working with his brothe Jabu they are tax driver. 1977 I have baby girl her name is Ntombi. She is married. The last one is a boy name is Mandla he is born 1980 he is nt working yet. And my mother she is till alife she is 85 year she is happy now with my children she foget she was shout with me when I'm pregnent.

Comment

Florence began by writing about the birth of her first baby and then continued to tell about the rest of her children. In this text she provided far more detail and personal comments about the events recounted than in the previous one. She described the situation at home and explained her mother's absence:

Becaus our father was pastaway long ago that is whay my mother working becaus nobody to help my mother to rising me and my sister.

Florence was careful not to let her hearers think of her mother as being neglectful. She provided two reasons for her mother's absence and also described her care for her children, by 'working very hard' for them.

She described the details of the situation when she fell pregnant, including her emotions and those of her mother. She wrote about her mother's anger, her own fear and feeling upset, her hiding in the bedroom when her mother came home, her mother who 'didn't shout so much', after all.

Florence described Dudu, the daughter who died as a young adult, in a brief account of her life, illness and death. After this, the rest of the children are mentioned as briefly as they were in the previous description of her family. She ended with a personal comment about her mother, which 'rounds off' the story:

she is happy now with my children she foget she was shout with me when I'm pregnent.

This text was written two weeks after the previous one. Perhaps the development of the writing in the first part of the text is related to the vivid

memories and emotions surrounding the birth of her first son and the specificity of the events, rather than a generalised description of a large family.

(no title given) *2.5*

I was born to Natal, when I was 21 years I come from Jorberg to look the job. One day the other lady com to my sister she say I coming to tell you, is the people looking the lady to look after the children. I think Florence she can go to talk with them. In the morning I got up to talk with them. I found master I say good morning and he replied me. he say May I help you I say Yes I tell him I'm looking the job, other lady send me here, and he "say yes" I need somebody to look after the children I say yes, then he say I have got lady work for us only the lady going look after the children I say yes every thing he talking with me I say yes he say are you coming tomorrow I say yes. I go back to my siste she ask me what they say I say he say he got lady work for them I think that man he was not going to work because he look the children he weigh for two day then he take onother lady. I was loose the job because I don't know how to talk Eglish.

Comment

Florence began with an orientation, telling us where and when the story took place. She was an outsider, trying to find a way to survive in Johannesburg:

I was born to Natal, when I was 21 years I come from Jorberg to look the job.

The sequence of events continued. Her 'social network' (Fingaret, 1983),'the other lady' and her sister provided her with a job interview. Florence related the interview in detail, making use of direct speech throughout:

I say good morning
he say May I help you

The 'complication', or problem, was not mentioned in the body of the narrative but was stated in the concluding sentence. However, Florence revealed the

problem obliquely. She foregrounded the reason for her misunderstanding, the two messages from the prospective employer:

he say I have got lady work for us only the lady look after the children

and she pointed to her limited understanding of the conversation by her use of repetition:

he say yes I need sombody to look after the children I say yes then he say I have got lady work for us only the lady going look after the children I say yes every thing he talking with me I say yes he say are you coming tomorrow I say yes.

'I say yes', used five times in the passage and echoed by 'he say yes', becomes a poignant symbol of her lack of understanding. This message was emphasised by the 'moral' of the story, the coda with which Florence summed up her telling:

I was loose the job because I don't know how to talk Eglish.

Her coda also provides what Labov (1972) and Toolan (1988) describe as an evaluative function: the requirement that the narrative has a point and is worth telling, for both the teller and the listener. Florence, in an adult literacy class thirty years later, related this story which highlighted her acute awareness of the relationship between fluency in English and economic empowerment.

4.2.4 General comments on the content of writing done in class

Both women wrote with energy and fluency after sharing their ideas in discussion. Generally they wrote for a longer period than I had planned for, with few pauses. Hearing one another's ideas and 'thinking aloud' formed the

'scaffolding' (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1986; Graves, 1983) that motivated the writing and brought possible content to mind.

Both spoke and wrote with great involvement when they wrote about vivid experiences or emotions. Although there were inevitable losses as they moved from the oral to the written mode, the writing frequently included specific, concrete details, contextual information for the reader, direct speech and the creative use of repetition.

Each woman successfully wrote a folktale, with the clear structure of Zulu narrative genre. They were familiar with the 'folktale' genre and were able to draw on their oral knowledge from childhood and bring it into their writing in English.

The students were able to make use of narrative structure when they told personal stories, although generally to a lesser extent than in the clearly defined structure found in their folktales. Florence managed this when she wrote the story about looking for a job, which began with a setting of the scene and ended with a 'moral', the point of the story. In Lettie's stories, she would quite often move from narration into reflection on the events she was writing about, interrupting the sequence of events. Although this sometimes gave her texts a somewhat disjointed feel, this sort of writing was new to Lettie and it had a different purpose for her. Her reflections enabled her to view her experiences from a new perspective and sometimes to change her previously held views, as when she re-considered her grandmother's response to her when she ran away from home, or when she remembered the birth of her first daughter when she was seventeen. Although she might not have considered this to be real learning, Lettie was learning as she wrote, if, as Brady describes it, 'learning is a process by which human beings attempt to make meaning' (1990:43).

Unlike Florence, Lettie was able to write with or without support for her writing. Although her journal entries were sometimes short and she frequently wrote complaints about the lack of things to say, she was able to use journal writing in a number of ways, many of them new to her. She wrote the comment, 'it is very funny to writed down' as she described her grief after her son-in-law's death, obviously not used to writing like this. Lettie was willing to take risks and try out ways of writing that she had not explored before.

The women tended to write rich and detailed texts when their writing was scaffolded by discussion and sharing of ideas, when a familiar oral genre, such as the folktale, was used, or when vivid personal memories were recounted. Growth in their writing was also evident when they were willing to take risks and explore writing in a new way, such as for reflection, although this sometimes interrupted the structure of their narrative.

4.3 Grammatical analysis of writing done in class

I begin with some general observations and then examine some student texts for progress in grammatical control.

4.3.1 The influence of speech on writing

All the writing done by the women has a strong "spoken" feeling. In Halliday's terms (1994), the vocabulary or lexis of the field is 'everyday', rather than 'technical'. and the tenor is informal. Although the women were now reading a range of books and newspapers, they did not come from a long literate tradition and were not well versed in the written mode. In addition, much of their writing was personal.

Lettie sometimes addressed her readers directly, as if they were listeners, much as she would have done in a conversation, using clauses such as, 'Now listen at this' to introduce the next event in the sequence. This also contributes to the strong 'spoken' feeling of her writing.

In spoken language, there is generally a higher count of grammatical (or function) words, in comparison with lexical (or content) words. In written language these proportions are often reversed. Written language tends to be 'denser' than spoken language (Halliday, 1985). Word counts of a number of passages in Lettie's writing, both from her journal and her writing done in class, showed a higher proportion of grammatical words than content words.

An example is the following passage:

I don't like people that sell in the street because they use muti to sell. From now on I am go to think twice before I'm going to buy food at the street, People think money is the only think can make you feel happy. But that's not, if you feel healthy and happy you have enything not money. I hope everyone know that, if you happy you are rich.

In this passage, there are 43 function words (for example, in, the, to, I) and 28 content words (for example, street, food, buy, People, money, happy).

The use of abstract nouns, including nominalised verbs, is another feature which tends to be more common in writing than in speech. Lettie made only rare use of abstract nouns in her writing, sometimes not completely successfully. She wrote the following comment on the Centre:

26.7
but I can said there's no organize in that school.

She overgeneralised the rule for the 'ness' suffix in her attempt to create an abstract noun:

28.8
because if you God's child you can have that tatch, (touch?) and a feeling of sorrynes around you

Other examples from Lettie's journal include words such as happynes, pamission and opportunity. Florence barely used abstract nouns, apart from an occasional reference to a grammatical term, such as nouns or apostrophes, when she was writing about what had happened in class. She once included a reference to the 'cause of death', possibly a 'chunk' of language taken directly from a hospital record or spoken by a doctor. She used 'urgument' correctly, as a noun and incorrectly, as a verb:

is the end of urguement
we started to urgument

It seems that for the main part, both women wrote as they thought or spoke, in informal and everyday language.

4.3.2 The use of the monitor

Krashen (1987, 1997) considers that consciously 'learnt' knowledge is only useful to edit (or 'monitor') utterances made by means of acquired knowledge, when there is enough time to do so. He claims that grammar teaching of any kind is of limited value and that the effects of direct instruction are typically short lasting, not becoming part of a learner's acquired competence.

Lettie, writing in her journal, reported:

3.10
Jenny teach me about present tents and past tents.

It is unfair to generalise on the basis of one sentence but there is an irony here. Lettie, who thinks she is learning about the past tense because the teacher has taught it, has misused tense here. According to Krashen, this is only to be expected: learning about the language can never be converted into knowing the language. While I have reservations about Krashen's hypothesis, the example is revealing. It is like Shaughnessy's example, from a student who had completed a course on abstract grammar: 'We done all the conjugations of the verbs for a semester, but I haven't did any writing yet.' (1977: 105)

Lettie referred to editing when she wrote about learning English:

2.5
But now I am thinking when I talk, but sometimes I'm not thinking.

10.10
From now on I always think when I write and speak a lots to everybody.

Lettie was developing a consciousness of the way she used language, apparently enjoying thinking about the way she used English. Whether this will change the way she speaks and writes remains to be seen.

4.3.3 Students' developing grammatical control of language

In this section I examine students' texts, written throughout the intervention, to discover to what extent the students' grammatical control of language has progressed. The writing is dated and presented in chronological order. I have used a 'traditional' grammatical framework and terminology for this analysis, the metalanguage that both the students and the IEB examiners were using. I

examine those syntactic features which caused difficulties for the students, including the following:

- the use of the past tense;
- agreement between the subject and the verb in the third person;
- singular-plural concord;
- the use of relative clauses;
- prepositions;
- the use of the indefinite 'it';
- the infinitive;
- the present continuous;
- the past continuous;
- use of inversion;
- the negative.

If a particular item was not problematic for either student, it will not be discussed in relation to her writing.

As each student often used particular forms (such as the past tense) inconsistently, I include examples of both incorrect and correct use after each text presented. After examining a number of texts from each woman, I make specific comments about the formal features in her writing, noting any changes. Finally, I make some general comments about the writing of both women.

4.3.4 Examples of Lettie's writing

18.4

A memory

A memory is when I had a toothache then I went to sleep was early in the morning but then I wake up was in the morning again, in my mind I think what happen I been sleeping for two days or what?

Now I am thinking about that why I did not ask my mom, Surelly my mom was go to tell me. What had happen" but to late now because she cannot answer me, My older brother he's also gone, now I started to be upset about this. I dont want to talk about it is realy killing me.

Syntactic features

No use of the indefinite 'it'

was early in the morning

was in the morning again

is realy killing me

Incorrect use of the simple past

but then I wake up

in my mind I think

what happen

Incorrect use of the past continuous

I been sleeping for two days or what?

surely my mom was go to tell me

Correct use of the simple past

My memory is when I had a toothache

then I went to sleep

(it) was in the morning again

Correct use of the present perfect

my older brother has also gone now

How did I learnt English **2.5**

When I was young our neighbours were Indian, but they use to speak Zulu instead of English, only thing I can remember is I could read the story books in English. And I use to speak English with them, but how that start I don't know.

For long time I never knew I am speaking incorrect English, until I start to come to the adult classes, now if my pronounce is not correct they tell me, what I'm suppost to say, before they just take it like we can hear what she's trying to say, but now they try very hard to help me I do feel confidents when I talk to anybody, I am very happy to be here to learn.

What I know you must listen to me careful when I speak, because I can speak very quickly you cannot hear me when I put "she" instead of "he.
But now I am thinking when I talk, but sometimes I'm not thinking.
From now on I like to talk in English, Sometimes they can say I talk too much they don't know I'm trying to improve my English. But I don't care when their said that, because I know what I am doing. Sorry I have nothing to say anymore.

Syntactic features

Incorrect use of the simple past

How did I learnt English

How that start I don't know

until I start to come to the adult classes

before they just take it

Correct use of the simple past

Our neighbours were Indian

I never knew

Correct use of modal auxiliaries

I could read

I use(d) to speak

they use(d) to speak

Correct use of nomimal relative clauses

they tell me what I'm suppost to say

we can hear what she's trying to say

I know what I am doing

Letter to Rotary ***2.10***

Dear Rotary,

I write a note to say thank you so much, that you take your time and come to "Leteracy classes," to show us how to make a candle. That was a very nice things, I know we didn't have time to ask questions. How do you make a wax. I like to know or I can say to learn how to make that.

i will like to have a notes of it, then I can make it at home instead of buying the candle, then I can make them myself.
I know I won't use all the colour like you do but I can do one colur. I will be surprise if you can do that, write it down for me, or I can say for us. For sure others really want to learn about that.
I'm very sorry that we did not say thank you to every one of you. but I know that "Mrs R." did say that for us. I'm sure all of us we appreciated that. Because everybody was so happy, that day. I enjoyed it. was great.
Yours sincerely
Lettie

Syntactic features

Lack of concord between singular and plural

That was a very nice things

How do you make a wax

I will like to have a notes of it

I can make it at home instead of buying the candle

I won't use all the colour like you do

Concord in singular and plural

I write a note

that day

Incorrect use of the simple past

thank you...that you take your time and come to 'Leteracy Classes'

Correct use of the simple past

That was a very nice thing(s)

I know we didn't have time to ask questions

we did not say thank you

we appreciated that

everybody was so happy

I enjoyed it

(It) was great

Omission of the indefinite "it"

was great

Correct use of the indefinite "it" or "that"

That was a very nice thing(s)

Letter to John Langa ***20.11***

Dear John Langa

I am a learner in adult classes at Stone Wood School. I start to attend in 1999. I am very happy to do that because I improve a lots about going to classes. To read about your article it help me more I even find it much more to go to the classes please do not give up to write summore of that articles because is very important for anybody to do things for herself I know lots of times our employee help us to full up our forms. In the mean time is better for ourself if we learn and you can read a newspaper and understand what is happening around you. "I always said to my friends please don't give up." Because sometimes you can not understand the teacher when she speeks because of her asses (accent) but don't give up do your homework that teacher gave it to you and read Magazine - comics. any news letter that you find it is very important Sorry I cannot write summore time is up. but thanks about your help.

Syntactic features

Incorrect use of the simple past

I start to attend in 1999

I improve a lots

it help me more

Correct use of the simple past

I always said to my friends

Lack of subject-verb agreement (3rd person singular)

it help me more

our employee help us

Correct subject-verb agreement, 3rd person singular

you can not understand the teacher when she speeks

(it) is very important for anybody to do things for herself

(it) is better for ourself

time is up

Lack of concord in singular or plural

I improve a lots

that articles

Incorrect use of the indefinite 'it'

is better for ourself if we learn

is very important for anybody to do things for herself

Correct use of the indefinite 'it'

it help(s) me more

read any newspaper ..... it is very important

Incorrect use of the relative clause

do your homework that teacher gave it to you

Correct use of the relative clause

any newsletter that you find

Watching walking long way whole day not gowing to work Friday 'boss' we want money ***5.11***

I was standing near the window. I saw a group of the people walking towards some of the office. There were screaming and singing, but they had sticks dress very funny. I could not believe my eyes what they been doing. I felt like I can stop them but how. You can never say a word to them I was faraway from them but you can notice they way they carry on.
In the meantime a car stop, one of the men went to the car, they mite said something to him and he stop the crowd of people that was dancing. What he said to them I don't know but they started to beached the car. I was at the window I started to scream myself to stop but tha could not help. In that moment I saw the polices car arriving as quickly as they can then I thank you that save my breath that coulden worked.

I thought that was the end of the match but it was not like I think, they carry on matching until they got were they wanted to go, was not far from were I worked so I watched every single things that they do. everyone want to say what is thinking about that day what do they want, for sure they need one person to speak for the. What I cannot believe was they stand in that office for whole day. Why they did not gave them the things and the(n) they can go back to work.

Now listen at this they bought some beer and starte to drink, they fight for know reason I could not believe my eyes. Somebody in there was "shouting" tell them we not gowing to worked whole week! but we need our money on Friday. Our childrens needs foot. I say in my heart if he know that why did he joined the strike.

What I did not like because I knock off with them, they made a such of masses in the street treting other people at the street, At that time police arrive and stop them. If I was the government I will change the way of the strike and do it the other way bit better than this.

Then I sad other people acted good for that but the other they terrible I would not like to be there. They drinks and dont know what they realy need. better you stay home the mad people can go there not what I saw with my eyes. Thanks.

Syntactic features

Incorrect use of the simple past

you can notice the way they carry on

they had sticks dress very funny

a car stop

he stop the crowd of people

they carry on marching

everyone want to say what is thinking about

that day what do they want

for sure they need one person to speak for them

why they did not gave them the things

and then they can go back to work

they ...start to drink

they fight for no reason

I say in my heart

if he know that

why did he joined the strike

I knock off with them

At that time police arrive

and stop them

They drinks

Incorrect use of the past continuous

what they been doing

Correct use of the past continous

I was standing

They were screaming and singing

the crowd of people that was dancing

Correct use of the simple past

I saw a group

they had sticks

I felt like

I was faraway from them

one of the men went to the car

they...said something to him

what he said to them I don't know

they started

I was at the window

I started to scream

I saw the police car

I thought that was the end of the match

but it was not

I watched every single thing

What I did not like....

they made such a lot of masses in the street

Then I said

other people acted good

not what I saw with my eyes

Correct use of modal auxiliaries

I could not believe my eyes (used twice)

that could not help

Lack of the indefinite 'it'

was not far from where I worked

Correct use of the indefinite 'it' or 'that'

it was not like I think

that was the end of the match

Lack of concord in singular/plural

I watched every single things

Our childrens needs food.

they made a such of masses

(For the rest of the passage, her concord in singular and plural was correct.)

Lack, or incorrect use, of the definite article

they stand in that office for whole day

I saw a group of the people walking (no previous mention of 'people')

At that time police arrive

and do it the other way

Correct use of the article

near the window

you can never say a word to them

the way they carry on

In the meantime

a car stop(ped)

one of the men

to the car

the crowd of people

the car

at the window

the police's car

the end of the march

why did he join(ed) the strike

in the street

I will change the way

the others

the mad people can go there

Lack of subject-verb agreement (third person, singular and plural)

They drinks

a car stop

he stop the crowd of people

that save my breath

everyone want to say

our children needs food

if he know that

the other they terrible

they drinks

Correct subject-verb agreement, 3rd person

what (he/she) is thinking about

what do they want

they need one person

(they) dont know

what they really need

the mad people can go there

Incorrect use of the nominal relative clause

everyone want to say what is thinking about

I could not believe... what they been doing

Correct use of the relative clause

the crowd of people that was dancing

I watched every single thing(s) that they do

Correct use of the nominal relative clause

They ..... don't know what they really need

4.3.5 Comment on the formal features in Lettie's writing

A memory 18.4

Lettie did not use the indefinite 'it' at the beginning of a clause. She used the past tense correctly in about half of the writing. She left out 'has' as an auxiliary, but used 'did' correctly.

How did I learnt English 2.5

Lettie was able to use the past tense correctly about half the time. She was able to use nominal relative clauses. Most of her singular-plural concord was incorrect.

Letter to Rotary 2.10

Lettie made a number of mistakes with concord in this text. Nearly all her use of past tense verbs was correct. She sometimes omitted the indefinite 'it' but also used it (and 'that') correctly.

Letter to John Langa 20.11

Lettie managed to use the present tense but made mistakes with most of her past tense verbs. She was inconsistent in her use of relative clauses, conjugation of the third person singular and the indefinite 'it', and used these forms correctly and incorrectly. She also made some mistakes with singular-plural concord.

Watching walking 5.11

In this text, Lettie used the past tense incorrectly in about half of the verbs she used. She made a few mistakes with concord but usually correlated singular or plural correctly. The indefinite 'it' was still used inconsistently. This is puzzling in relation to both Lettie and Florence because in Zulu, one uses an equivalent form to the English , the 'indefinite class':

kuyashisa (**it** is hot)
kuyabanda (**it** is cold)

This is in contrast to languages such as Spanish and Italian where one does not have to use a surface subject in every sentence. So sentences such as, 'Is raining' or 'Is ten o' clock' could be commonly produced by ESL Spanish or Italian learners. (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman: 1983)

Lettie omitted, or misused, the definite article a few times but mostly used articles correctly. Agreement, in the present tense, third person, singular and plural, caused her problems. She was able to use the correct form with an irregular verb such as 'is.' Most of the time she was able to form relative clauses correctly, although she still made some mistakes.

4.3.6 Examples of Florence's writing

(No title given) *2.5*

I was born to Natal, when I was 21 years I come from Jorberg to look the job. One day the other lady com to my sister she say I coming to tell you, is the people looking the lady to look after the children. I think Florence she can go to talk with them. In the morning I got up to talk with them. I found master I say good morning and he replied me. he say May I help you I say Yes I tell him I'm looking the job, other lady send me here, and he "say yes" I need sombody to look after the children I say yes, then he say I have got lady work for us only the lady going look after the children I say yes every thing he talking with me I say yes he say are you coming tomorrow I say yes. I go back to my siste she ask me what they say I say he say he got lady work for them I think that man he was not going to work because he look the children he weigh for two day then he take onother lady. I was loose the job because I don't know how to talk Eglish.

Syntactic features

Incorrect use of prepositions

I was born to Natal

I come from Jorberg to look the job

...is the people looking the lady

he replied me

I say yes everything he talking with me

he look the children

Correct use of prepositions

the lady to look after the children

the other lady come to my sister

Use of the present instead of the past tense

I come from Joburg

the other lady come to my sister