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EXPLORING FEEDBACK PRACTICES AND PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH TEACHERS TO SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS.

by

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Supervisor

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Declaration

I, Sifiso Phineas Mkhwanazi, hereby declare that this research report titled *Exploring feedback practices and perceptions of English teachers to second language learners*, is my own work, and that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination to any other University. I declare that all the sources I have used or quoted have been referenced and acknowledged.

Signed: 

Date: 31 March 2022.

Abstract

Feedback is the main component in formative assessment. It provides the teacher with critical and clear information to scaffold learning. The effective use of formative feedback can play a vital role in the development of language acquisition for second language English learners in the Intermediate and Senior phases. The purpose of this study is to explore English teachers' feedback perceptions and practices to second language learners. This study used a qualitative approach and multiple case study as its methodology. Data was generated through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The findings of this study revealed that teachers mainly provide feedback on the development of students writing skills such as English usage, presentation, grammar and writing structure. Feedback mostly focused on incorrect use of grammar, spelling and presentation without an explanation of why the correction should be made. Moreover, findings from the semi structured interviews indicated that learners have had negative experiences of receiving written formative feedback in grade 4 English second language, specifically- timing of feedback, amount of feedback, specificity of feedback. Notably, English proficiency of learners, parental involvement and dialogic feedback influenced the usability of assessment feedback. Teachers' disclosures about their perceptions and practice of formative assessment feedback provided a preview on the types of challenges they face in their assessment practices. This study suggests that if classroom teachers are to become effective 'mediators' of assessing they must be provided with a better theoretical grounding of assessment feedback. The Department of Education needs to provide more guidelines, practical demonstrations and workshops to assist teachers to understand and implement formative assessment feedback to English second language learners effectively.

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Acronyms & Abbreviations.

CAPS- Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement.

DBE – Department of Basic Education.

ESL- English Second Language.

FAL- First Additional Language.

HOD-Head Of Department.

L2- Second Language.

OECD- Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development

PIRLS- Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

PPN- Post Provision Norms

SBST-School Based Support Team.

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.1.Introduction

This introductory chapter serves to orientate the reader to the study. It outlines the background and overview of the study. It also maps out the objective, rationale for conducting this research, purpose statement and the critical questions that have guided the study. This chapter also gives a brief summary of the methodology adopted and the research design of the study. Additionally, it points out the limitations, ethical considerations, scope of the study and concludes by outlining the structure of the chapters to follow.

1.2.Background

In South Africa, English is used in many schools as the medium of instruction, generally referred to as "Home Language" and "First Additional Language" (Simasuku, Kasanda and Smith, 2014). Using English as the official language of teaching and learning for many learners starts in grade 4. (DBE, 2010, DBE, 2011) making it a mandatory subject for all learners. Learners are required to demonstrate high level of competency in reading, speaking and writing .Yet the reality is that majority of students in many South African classrooms are English second language (ESL) learners who have a poor grasp of the language.

It has been evident, according to Fang (2005) that weak English proficiency levels among English second language (ESL) learners are one of the factors leading to failure or lower results, mainly within South African rural schools. The deterioration in the 2006 International Reading Literacy Report (PIRLS) of reading literacy is further expressed in this claim. Around 30,000 Grade 4 and 5 learners were evaluated and troubling results were recorded, specifically that South Africa's ESL Grade 4 and 5 learners in comparison with their peers from other participating countries obtained the lowest mean scores. (*Pirls* 2006). Fleisch (2008) argued that it was challenging for learners that are used to being taught reading, numeracy and writing in their mother tongue for the first three years of school to switch to a second language (L2) in grade 4, where the learner is required to be able to read across the curriculum using the L2. Such learners have a small vocabulary of approximately 500 words and are unable to read simple sentences of 3-7 words. (Fleisch 2008:130).

The Department of Education expects schools to support learners with limited English language proficiency in response to the various issues faced by ESL learners. Each school's School-Based Support Team (SBST) has a special task team to classify learners at an early stage of learning obstacles. This process helps to recognize differences in learning English as a second-language learner at an early stage and to set up learning support systems. The SBST's most essential duty is to make sure the school meets the learning needs of learners. Learning and instructional materials, syllabuses, teaching and evaluation strategies and procedures are also of critical importance to the process of teaching and learning. Giving assessment feedback to students is also an essential part of teaching, as it ultimately promotes successful learning at school. (Parr & Timperley, 2010; Nicol, Thomson & Breslin, 2013; Wiliam, 2011). Nonetheless, feedback can only be successful if the student accepts it and uses it to enhance learning. Using English (L2) as a language of learning requires students to develop and master the basic skills of communication (listening, speaking, reading and writing), processes and concepts (Department of Education [DoE], 2008; Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2011). Additionally, the requirements of learning English in The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) documents indicate that learners should: use the writing process to produce grammatically correct and well-organized written texts; be able to write particular text types independently; read, speak and listen with understanding; as well as use language structures and conventions meaningfully to develop a meta-language (DBE, 2011). Writing is key to the development of language and thinking skills. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that teachers develop strategies that enable them to appropriately provide feedback that assists learners to improve their writing skills. The CAPS document for English provides a variety of assessment tasks and emphasizes the need for effective feedback to assist learners in acquiring and developing their language skills. For this to come to fruition, English teachers have to view assessment as a two-way communication or open dialogue in which both teacher and learner partake (Ngwenya, 2016; Barac & Du Plessis, 2014). This dialogue foregrounds learner support and the continuous provision of feedback throughout the learning process (Parr & Timperley, 2010).

Through assessment and the provision of feedback, teachers can evaluate students' language ability and get an idea of what learners know or do not know. Learners also get the opportunity to take part in re-planning and modifying upcoming lessons (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Feedback has a great influence on student performance and learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). It is

regarded as a fundamental feature of formative assessment and has a powerful influence on teaching and learning. Feedback is considered as a core feature in formative assessment that influences greatly the process of teaching and learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Sadler, 1998; Rushton, 2005; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). This notion has been emphasized in numerous studies and asserts that formative assessment refers to any activity that gives feedback or feedforward to learners and notifies them about their performance and progress towards the learning goals (Irons, 2008). Yet, feedback is not only given by educators, but is generated by both educators and learners in the process of constructing meaning. It is not a linear process, but a collaborative and interactive engagement between teachers and students, and among students.

Providing feedback is a way of supporting young learners during the crucial period of applying and make meaning of newly acquired language, a phase where most L2 learners lack the knowledge of how to use the language properly. Feedback is viewed as an important feature in the writing context and is given prominence with the development of "the process approach" to instruction writing. When used properly during formative assessment, feedback has a positive and powerful effect on student performance and learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Therefore, the focus has shifted from the final written product to giving learners support through multiple drafts which allows them to receive feedback throughout the writing process. The process approach values constant interaction between teachers and students with regard to text issues and urges teachers to play a supportive role during the writing process by giving students feedback on their numerous drafts. Teacher-student encounters are also valued by genre-oriented approaches where scaffolding learners' acquisition of text forms, process of composing, and purposeful social interactions through writing in the second language are emphasized.

1.3.Purpose of the study

Given the importance of feedback in meaningful learning, the purpose of the study is to explore the formative assessment feedback practices and perceptions of grade 4 English teachers in South Africa.

1.4.Rationale for the study.

Teacher feedback in writing classes is critical in helping students write. While research has generally focused on the meaning, essence and type of teacher feedback, very little attention has

been given to teachers' views on their own feedback practices. It is important to consider why and how teachers provide feedback, as practice is often influenced by values.

The research available on assessment feedback practices in South Africa is mostly done in higher education. Much of it focuses on students' experiences and perceptions of assessment feedback. Too much attention has been given to how students receive, generate, act upon and exploit feedback opportunities. However, "the complementary contribution of teacher feedback literacy has so far been under-explored" (Carless & Winstone, 2020, p2). This lack of research is more evident in primary schools. As such, this study seeks to close this gap.

As an English teacher in the Intersen phase, I have also noticed that most grade 4 learners really struggle with comprehension and writing skills. The majority of the learners find it difficult to construct simple sentences or answer simple questions because it is the first grade after the transition from foundation phase. The dynamics of teaching and learning change from what the learners are used to. In such instances, written formative feedback plays a critical role in assisting students to identify their strengths and weaknesses (Orrell, 2006; Corcoran, Halverson, & Schindler, 2014; Giles, Gilbert, & McNeill, 2014) and improve their educational skills.

Research has also shown that there is a direct connection between feedback and an improvement in student learning. Teachers who engage in efficient and effective principles of feedback are more likely to elicit improvement in student learning (Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2007; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004). Additionally, Ivanic et al. (2000) and McCune (1999) point out that despite the understanding that formative assessment feedback elicits an improvement in learning, this area is still relatively under-researched in the field of education. Hence, I find it essential to conduct a formal, systematic analysis on teachers' feedback practices in order to develop a deeper understanding of feedback issues in teaching and learning, and suggest recommendations that would assist in developing effective feedback practices to enhance student learning.

The CAPS policy adopted a communicative and text-based approach to language teaching that emphasizes the learner's ability to use language and produce various kinds of texts for specific purposes and audiences. The learner is expected to develop competency in producing narrative/descriptive essays, friendly/formal letters, diary/journal entries, invitations, obituaries, directions, procedures, advertisements/posters/notices, dialogues, personal recounts, reviews and newspaper/magazine articles (DBE, 2011). It is therefore evident that writing is used extensively

in almost every occasion and is very important in helping students to learn English genres or texts. Therefore, an understanding of teachers' feedback practices and perceptions can be useful in improving pedagogical practices that would encourage more critical thinking about issues of feedback to second language English students.

1.5.Research objectives

- To explore teachers' written feedback practices to second language English learners.
- To explore teachers' perceptions of the usability of written feedback to second language learners.

1.6.Research questions

The research questions that will guide this study are the following:

- From a formative perspective, what are teachers' written feedback practices to second language English learners?
- What are teachers' perceptions of the usability of written feedback to second language learners?

1.7.Overview of the research design and methodology

This section gives a synopsis of the methodology and research design adopted in this study. Research design can be defined as a plan or strategy that informs how the researcher systematically collects and analyzes the data that is required to answer the research questions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Mugo (2011) describes a research design as the approach implemented to integrate the various components of the study in a logical and coherent way to ensure that the research problem is effectively addressed. Moreover, research design involves preparing for the collection, measurement and analysis of data (Mugo, 2011). This implies that the research design ensures that data collected enables the researcher to adequately and efficiently address the research as clearly as possible. This study used a multiple case study design. Yin (2003) explains by doing a multiple case study, the researcher gets to analyse evidence within a situation and across various situations, which is not possible with a single case study. By using a multiple-case design, a wider exploration of the research question will enable one to acknowledge the similarities and differences

of formative assessment feedback practices and perceptions of grade 4 English teachers between the three multiple-cases studied.

1.7.1. Research paradigm

This study is informed by the interpretive paradigm. The aim of the interpretive paradigm is to give a description of how members of society conceptualize their world, actions and interactions (Cohen et al., 2011).

1.7.2. Research approach

The research approach that will be used in this study is qualitative research. Qualitative research aims to interrogate and understand the experiences and perspectives of participants (Krauss, 2005). It studies a particular phenomenon and how participants act, react or respond to that phenomenon in a real-world setting (Krauss, 2005). This study will investigate formative assessment feedback practices and perceptions of grade 4 English teachers in South Africa.

1.7.3. Sampling

Bertram and Christiansen (2014) and Cohen at al. (2011) posit that research sampling involves the selection of specific participants, events, behaviors and settings to include in the study. The sampling process is about choosing samples for the study (Mugo, 2011). This study will use purposive sampling, which entails deliberately selecting people that will provide relevant and plentiful data (Cohen et al, 2007). It will also engage in convenience sampling, as the researcher knows the schools where the research will be carried out. Participants in this study were English teachers who teach English to grade 4 second language learners in public primary schools and have had more than 3 years teaching experience. Notably, the mother tongue of the three participants from the three public schools is not English, yet they teach this subject. All three participants are Black African South Africans. Teachers' formative assessment tasks were also purposively selected. From each teacher across the three schools, I will sample 6 learners' assessment tasks, 2 for each category (high, average and low performing). The sample is 3 teachers across three schools and 18 learners' scripts across the three schools.

1.7.4. Data generation methods

The study employed document analysis, and semi structured interviews to appropriately get comprehensive information about the formative assessment feedback practices and perceptions of grade 4 English teachers. Underpinning document analysis, the framework of Brown and Glover (2006) will be used. Brown et al.'s (2006) classification system would allow an investigative focus on what teachers write in their feedback to students and the depth of such comments. The audio-taped semi structured interviews were transcribed and analysed and descriptive analysis techniques were used, as encouraged by Creswell (2009).

1.7.5. Trustworthiness

To ensure credibility and trustworthiness of this study I employed the use of triangulation by using various data collection methods. I used semi-structured interviews and document analysis. I did the interviews first, followed by document analysis to validate the data gathered from the interviews. This adds quality to the study through trustworthiness and credibility. Trustworthiness of the interviews was established by comparing information gathered from the interviews to the observation; this is called convergent validity (Cohen et al., 2007). Credibility of the study was also achieved through "member checks".

1.7.6. Ethical Issues

For this study, permission to conduct research was obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand, Department of Basic Education and the principals of the institutions where this study was conducted. Furthermore, I obtained consent from the participants, protected their identity, observed confidentiality and anonymity throughout the study.

1.7.7. Limitation of the Study

The findings of this research cannot be generalized because it is a small-scale study. The findings will therefore be limited to the schools involved, the participants interviewed and their context. However, Dooley (2001) argues that the main purpose of case study research is the quality of the analysis instead of the number of participants. Even though the study is limited to such a small number of English teachers and limited analysis of students' formative assessment tasks, it will

give me a broad understanding of what is happening within classrooms with regards to teachers' practices and perceptions of formative assessment feedback.

1.8. Structure of the dissertation

The first chapter introduces and gives a brief summary of the study. It also defines formative assessment feedback. It introduces the study by describing formative assessment feedback as integral in the teaching and learning process. Additionally, it presents the problem statement and rationale for conducting this study. The chapter also outlines the main research questions and objectives that guide this research study. Lastly, it presents the methodology adopted for this research.

The second chapter presents the literature on feedback perceptions; practices and the theoretical framework employed in this study. It illustrates literature on feedback both nationally and internationally.

The third chapter provides an explanation of the methodological positioning. It explains the methodology, research design, sampling procedure used to choose participants for interviewing and the process by which the data was generated and analysed. In addition, it outlines a model for ensuring trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

The fourth chapter presents the outcomes of the research study and emphasises the formative assessment feedback perceptions and practices of grade 4 English teachers.

The last chapter draws conclusions and summarises the findings associated with formative assessment feedback practices and perceptions of grade 4 English teachers. Lastly, it presents recommendations and provides directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews literature that is relevant to the research and that can help me conceptualize the issues around the provision of effective feedback. Literature review gives you an idea of what is already known about the chosen topic and how other researchers have approached it. Moreover, it provides a critical overview of the existing knowledge and enables one to identify the knowledge gap in the field.

2.2. Defining assessment

Assessment plays a critical role in teaching and learning. However, old conceptions of assessment have proven to be less effective in fostering deep learning. Traditional assessment only focused on meaning and grading students' performance in relation to a given criteria and standards (Gipps, 1994). Such practice was rooted in the behaviorist view of learning, where learners are seen as passive recipients of knowledge. A behaviorist approach focuses on observable behaviors that can be measured (Slate & Charlesworth, 1988). In so doing, they ignore internal thought processes that are integral to meaning making and knowledge construction (Slate & Charlesworth, 1988). The assessment process has evolved from the behaviorist view. Learners are no longer viewed as passive recipients of knowledge but partners in teaching and learning (Shepard, 2000). Assessment is no longer about only measuring, interpreting and grading student performance. It is also used to enhance learning (Sadler, 1989; Gipps, 1994), promote self-regulation in learners (Nicol, 2009) and enables them to make academic judgements on their work and that of others (Carless, 2015).

Assessment refers to all the activities that occur in the classroom that provide information about students' performance, progress in achieving learning outcomes and how well they engage with content knowledge (Carless, 2015; Nicol, 2009; Hattie & Timperely, 2007; Amua-Sekyi, 2016). It is the act of finding out what has or has not been learnt and how meaning has been created (Amua-Sekyi, 2016). It is a very critical part of teaching and learning and informs classroom engagement between teachers and students. It also offers information that can be used to alter pedagogical practice. Assessment involves teachers having assessment literacy to observe, analyze and judge students' work based on a set criteria (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004). Assessment literacy for educators

can be defined as the knowledge and skills associated with designing, selecting, interpreting, and using high-quality assessments to improve student learning and to serve other important educational and policy purposes. The way assessment results are used determines the category into which the assessment falls. If the results are used to test learners' prior knowledge before teaching them new knowledge, then the assessment is diagnostic (Mooed, 2015, Crooks, 2004). If they are used to improve teaching and learning and give feedback about students' current performance, then assessment is for learning, or is formative (Crooks, 2004; Hall, 2006). When assessment results are used to determine students' achievements in a learning program or grade, the assessment is summative (Amua-Sekyi, 2016).

2.3. Assessment for learning.

Assessment for learning refers to the continuous, collaborative evaluation of students' understanding and progress to identify learning needs and adjust teaching accordingly (Black & William, 1998; Gedye, 2010; Shepard, 2000). It is also known as formative assessment. Teachers who use formative assessment approaches are able to cater to the learning needs of various students (Brookhart, 2008; Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2004). Research has indicated that assessment for learning is characterized by six key elements (OECD, 2002). First, assessment for learning is about creating a classroom culture that promotes collaboration and the use of the assessment tool (Brookhart, 2008; OECD, 2002). The aim is to direct students' attention towards mastering tasks while working together instead of competing with each other (Wiliam & Leahy, 2015; Gedye, 2010; Brookhart, 2008).

Second, assessment for learning entails establishing learning goals and monitoring learners' progress towards those goals (OECD, 2002). Once the standard for student achievement has been laid out, learning goals need to be outlined and explained in detail to students. This also means developing and sharing criteria with students and devising systems that will be used to track student progress. Sharing criteria and learning goals makes the teaching and learning process more transparent as students become aware of what they must do to perform well (Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2004; Brookhart, 2008). Most significantly, tracking the progress does not mean comparing students to each other but tracking individual performance towards learning goals using the established criteria. Promoting competition amongst students may cause low performing students to doubt their learning capabilities and therefore demotivate and negatively affect their self-esteem

(Brookhart, 2008). During the learning process, it is important for teachers to consider, or be sensitive, to variation in cultural communication patterns, different emotional styles and individual differences in general (Wiliam & Leahy, 2015; Gedye, 2010).

Third, assessment for learning calls for the use of varied teaching methods to meet the needs of diverse students (OECD, 2002). Fourth, assessment for learning is about using different methods, techniques or strategies to assess student understanding (OECD, 2002). Some students might not perform well in one task, but varied assessments ensure that they have an opportunity to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in other tasks. Moreover, varied assessments give the teacher an idea of students' ability to transfer knowledge to new learning contexts (Brookhart, 2008; Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2004). This ability is essential for students learning how to learn. Fifth, assessment for learning calls for the provision of feedback based on students' identified needs and the adjustment of teaching methods to meet these needs (OECD, 2002; Shepard, 2000; Black & William, 1998). Sixth, Assessment for learning also focuses on the opportunities to develop students' ability to evaluate themselves, to make judgements about their own performance and improve upon it. It makes use of authentic assessment methods and offers lots of opportunities for students to develop their skills through formative assessment using summative assessment sparingly (Shepard, 2000). These elements emphasize the idea that assessment for learning is a co-construction of knowledge and helping learners to make sense of new knowledge. Formative feedback is the driving force that supports assessment for learning.

2.4. Defining Feedback

Over time the conception of feedback has changed from something which is given to students to the notion of feedback as a process in which students play an active role (Boud & Molloy, 2013; Carless et al, 2011). Hattie and Timperely (2007) perceived feedback as information given by an agent, and Shute (2008) understood feedback as information communicated to the learner. Similarly, Carlson (1979) defined feedback as "authoritative information students receive that will reinforce or modify responses to instruction and guide them more efficiently in attaining the goals of the course" (cited in Milton, 1992, p.4). Conversely, Askew and Lodge (2000) define feedback as all the dialogue between teachers and students that support learning in formal and informal situations. Recently, feedback has been conceptualized as a process that leads to improved

performance or work (Boud & Molloy, 2013). This understanding positions the student as a driver of their own learning assisted by the teacher and peers (Dawson et al, 2018). Therefore, feedback becomes a dialogic process between and amongst students and teachers, with the focus on how a student can improve their work or performance. Good feedback addresses both motivational and cognitive factors (Brookhart, 2008). It makes students aware of where they are in their learning and how to move towards the learning goals. Moreover, the effectiveness of feedback is determined by its nature and the context in which it is constructed.

2.5. Written Feedback

This study explores English teachers' practices and perceptions of written feedback in grade 4. Written feedback enables teachers to attend to learners' individual needs and give them a record of information they can use as a point of reference overtime (Brookhart, 2008). Written feedback is divided into two types - form written feedback and content written feedback. Form written feedback focuses on the use of punctuation, grammar and spelling (Ashwell, 2000), whereas content written feedback addresses meaning making and organization of a written text or task. Matsumura et al. (2002) conducted a study that looked at the link between form written feedback and content written feedback given by 29 grade 3 teachers and the quality of students' written assignments. The focus of the research was examining written feedback on a writing assignment that students revised three times and got feedback on all the revisions. What Matsumura et al. (2002) discovered is that teachers provided more form written feedback, very little content written feedback and paid more attention to standardizing the form of students' work. The amount of form content written feedback foretold the quality of the form of the final written assignment. Although the study found that overall, teachers gave little content written feedback, in instances where it was provided, it had a noteworthy impact on the quality of the final draft of the written assignment.

Ashwell (2000) also conducted a study on the provision of content and form written feedback. The research participants were 50 Japanese students from two English writing courses. The focus was on the order of implementation of content written feedback, form written feedback and the impact this had on two drafts and the final written assignment. The participants were divided into four groups. The first group was given content written feedback first, then form written feedback. Group 2 was given form written feedback first, then content written feedback. Group 3 received

both content and form written feedback at the same time, and group 4 received no written feedback at all. The findings show that the first three groups improved the quality and accuracy of their written assignment. Most notably, group 3 showed a greater improvement in terms of content and accuracy. Students in group 4 showed a slight improvement just by reworking their written assignment. What is evident in this study is that providing content and form written feedback simultaneously leads to a greater improvement in student learning.

Written feedback can be direct or indirect. When it is direct, the teacher corrects students' errors by crossing out wrong words or phrases and writing the correct form. What is wrong is clearly highlighted and corrected by the teacher. Indirect feedback entails underlining and circling of errors for the student to correct themselves (Ellis, 2008; Allman, 2019). Unlike with direct feedback, indirect feedback requires students to recognize and correct their own errors. The teacher can write a symbol that gives a clue as to what kind of error has been committed (Bookhart, 2008; Ivanic et al, 2000). These symbols must be part of the systematic grammar instruction to avoid confusing students (Brookhart, 2008). Teachers can use both direct and indirect feedback, depending on the student's needs. Written comments that praise such as 'excellent', 'well done', or 'good work' are insufficient because they are not specific to the task (Hatti & Timperley, 2007). Written comments must be explicit in terms of what has been done well, what has been missed and what steps to take to improve current performance. Writing ambiguous comments that lack accuracy can lead to misinterpretation of the comments by students (Ivanic et al, 2000; Allman, 2019; Ellis, 2008). Often times comments are complex and students find them difficult to understand (Shields, 2015). They need opportunities through dialogue with the teacher or peer to actively construct an understanding of the feedback suggestions (Higgins et al, 2001). Therefore, teachers need to think carefully when giving written feedback to ensure it is understandable and free of errors that may lead to confusion.

2.6. Factors influencing the effectiveness of formative written feedback

The effectiveness of formative written feedback depends on specific factors. A study by Nyambe (2015) found that teachers' competencies and practices in formative assessment feedback were inconsistent, irregular and constrained by various contextual challenges. The contextual challenges included, amongst other things, overcrowded classrooms, lack of resources, and in some cases, teachers' lack of expertise. The mentioned contextual factors may cause teachers to give feedback

when students are no longer mindful of the learning goals and might resultantly not use the feedback. The following section describes some of the factors that influence the uptake of feedback by students.

2.6.1. Timeliness of feedback.

Feedback should be given on time while students are still mindful of the learning goals (Shute, 2007; Brookhart, 2008). Timeous feedback prompts students to act on it to improve their work. Good timing is when a teacher promptly returns the work of students. Research findings from a study done on first year university students about their experiences of negative and positive feedback indicate that delayed feedback makes students anxious and reduces the chance of a student acting upon feedback (Shield, 2015). Therefore, delaying feedback or giving it when students have moved to other learning goals is bad timing. Furthermore, bad timing includes ignoring errors and misconceptions. This gives students the impression that the errors are acceptable. It is important to point out that immediate feedback is desirable when it is focusing on task acquisition as this can increase the rate of acquisition. However, feedback at the process level should be slightly delayed so that it does not disturb fluency building (Hattie & Timperely, 2007). Continuous disruptions at the process level may hinder students' creative effort. Therefore, it is important that feedback is given at the right time for the right purpose. The reality about feedback and student learning is that students value and benefit from timely feedback, which, here, refers to feedback that is provided relatively quickly after the student submits the assignment in question. Wiggins (2012) argues that timely feedback is one of the seven keys to effective feedback, and Shields (2015) found a relationship between untimely feedback and anxiety. Shields (2015) determined that students identified feelings of anxiety between the time that they submitted an assignment and the time that they received feedback. These feelings of anxiety then affected how the students engaged with the feedback.

2.6.2. Amount of feedback

The amount of feedback should not be too little or too much, but just right (Brookhart, 2008). Deciding on how much feedback to give still remains a challenge for most teachers. Too much feedback may cause a negative emotional response (Shields, 2015), while too little feedback can cause frustrations as students would not have sufficient information to work on their task. Findings from a three-year study in the United Kingdom on university staff and students indicate that

lecturers rarely give explanatory comments instead, they just show the expected answers with no explanation (Glover & Brown, 2006). Brookhart (2008) posits that teachers have a tendency of correcting every error on a student's work but "what makes a difference is a usable amount of information that connects with something students already know and takes them from that point to the next level" (p. 12). When deciding on the amount of feedback information to give, teachers must possess a thorough knowledge of the learning topic or targets, knowledge of students as individuals and developmental progression towards learning goals (Carless, 2006; Bookhart, 2008). A good amount of feedback focuses on learning targets, a balance between strengths and weaknesses and a few key points that are clear and specific as to how the student should proceed. A bad amount of feedback provided no comments on good quality tasks and extensive comments on poor quality tasks (Shute, 2007; Bookhart, 2008). Excessive feedback might dilute the message the teacher was trying to convey.

2.6.3. Specificity of written feedback

Effective feedback should consist of information that is specific to students' progress and should specify how students should proceed (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Studies have shown that students often misunderstand written feedback that lacks specificity and mainly point to student errors with no recommendation for improvement (Ene & Kosobucki, 2016). Studies have also shown that teachers tend to provide standardized feedback in a form of general phrases like "Weak work" or "excellent work " which, in turn, leave students confused in terms of what they need to do next to improve their learning (Ene, & Kosobucki, 2016). van der Klein (2019) revealed that students desired written feedback that specified how they could improve and written feedback that specified achievement, showing them what they did well and why. In support of this, one student participant from the study conducted by van der Klein (2019) commented that she wanted "written feedback that explains more on how I can improve on a subject" (van der Klein, 2019, p. 182). However, some student participants in this study have reported that even though they actively sought such feedback, their teachers would not provide them with comments they requested (van der Klein, 2019). van der Klein's (2019) study also revealed that students desired written feedback that is specific to the individual student's work. In support of this, one student wrote, "I think feedback should be less targeted at the whole class and more individual" (van der Klein, 2019, p. 182). Although students desired written feedback that is specific to their individual achievement, some

of these students reported that they did not receive such written feedback, which in turn constrained their learning (van der Klein, 2019). The specificity of feedback partly lies on the researcher's understanding of who the students are as individuals (Brookhart, 2008). Such an understanding enables the teacher to give feedback that is specific to individual work or performance. Generic comments are mostly undesirable as they do not give a sense that the teacher cares about students' progress as individuals (Brookhart, 2008). Language used should not be authoritative but give suggestions and ask questions because feedback is not a linear process of give and take from the teacher to the student. Teachers should tailor their feedback according to the students' needs (Black & Wiliam, 2009). As Black et al. (2009) argued, combining grades and, "feedback can inhibit the learner's attention to any substantive advice on improvement" (p. 24), consequently reducing or annulling the potential positive effect of the feedback.

2.7. Teacher perceptions of the usability of written formative feedback.

There is a consensus amongst teachers that the aim of giving written feedback is to help students improve their work (Gul et al, 2016). Still, the usability of written formative feedback is questionable. Some teachers believe that the use of error codes that students do not understand hinder the usability of written feedback (Lee, 2009; MacLellan, 2010; Lee, 2016). Moreover, there is a belief that marks or grades given draw students' focus away from written feedback. As a result, the feedback might be ignored especially when students are not required to resubmit or redo their work. Teachers also know the value of discussing written feedback with students but rarely do so because of time constraints (Gul et al, 2016).

The usability of assessment feedback is also enhanced through dialogic feedback. Anna Steen-Utheim and Anne Line Wittek (2017) explain dialogic feedback is facilitated when teachers and students enter into trusting relationships in which there are ample opportunities for interaction about learning and around notions of quality. Charles (2010) recognizes that students sometimes struggle to convey their writing intentions in their essays. She acknowledges that students might not have the skills to accurately convey their writing intentions to others, and therefore, they might need an opportunity outside of their essays to discuss the ideas they want to convey but that might not be apparent to a reader. They need an opportunity to explain, articulate, and define the intentions they have for their ideas. When students do not have this opportunity, their instructor can easily misunderstand the ideas presented in the essay and craft feedback that is ultimately

misguided because of their misunderstanding. Charles (2010) argues that misguided feedback is problematic because the students might read the misguided feedback and consider it completely irrelevant. Thus, good feedback should be dialogic as it creates opportunities for students to both explain their writing intentions and discuss their own writing concerns to inform future assignments. For Carless (2002) students might be unable to enact feedback in their own writing without further assistance and support. Dialogic feedback can provide support to students because it creates a two- way relationship, which encourages the students to both voice their intentions and concerns and ask for support and clarification to improve future assignments. Good feedback can position students to actively engage in the conversations about their work, and these conversations can provide ample opportunities for students to negotiate meanings, expectations, and goals. Ajjawi & Boud (2015) provide evidence to support the idea that the dialogic feedback model is one of these good feedback models. In their 2015 research study into the interactions between students and tutors in an online medical education certificate program, they determine that dialogic feedback supports student learning and assists students in developing self-regulation.

As research has shown (Bowden, 2018; Weaver, 2006; Silver & Lee, 2007), students do not respond adequately to the feedback, and make very few changes in their submissions due to low English proficiency and lack of appropriate strategies from teachers in providing explanations that might lead to successful revision by the students in spite of providing feedback. The data in this study revealed that several of them did not understand the feedback. It was noted that the feedback on the student papers was simple and yet the students did not address it successfully, leading to the conclusion that these students had low written English proficiency and may not have been placed at a suitable level. It is important to place the students at appropriate proficiency levels from the very beginning so that they are not overwhelmed by the course content and the course expectations. Carless (2002, p. 331) suggested that teachers should be careful (a) in their own responding strategies, (b) in explaining those strategies to their students, and (c) in helping students learn to revise and holding them accountable for considering the feedback they have received (whether from a teacher or peers) in doing so.

Parental involvement in learners' formative assessment also enhances the usability of assessment feedback. Parental involvement is defined as a direct effort provided by the parent to increase the educational outcomes of a child (Atkin, Bastini, & Goode, 2010). Many learners experience

academic difficulties because they are unable to bridge the gap between their school and their home. According to Epstein (2000) parental involvement in assessment feedback results in the child viewing parents as more similar to teachers, and home as more similar to school, thus providing a link between the home and school environment. Schools should provide parents with information of formative assessment in English, encouraging practice of the language and engagement of formative assessment feedback to facilitate understanding and encourage improvement beyond the classroom. According to Redding (2020), children who witness their parents getting involved in their education are more likely to develop resilience which contributes to academic success. Another African study revealed that learners who obtained higher marks in English as second language learners displayed a positive attitude towards the subject and were usually those whose parents were actively involved in their learning (Nkabinde, 2010). Studies have also shown that parental involvement has a positive impact on second language learners' reading achievements in their early years of schooling (Overstreet, Devine, Bevans & Efreom, 2019). According to Singh et al. (2004) parental involvement and assessment are linked due to the notion that learners tend to adopt their parents' ideology with regard to assessment. In addition to shaping their child's attitude toward assessment parents have the ability to motivate their children and contribute to keeping their morale high in engaging with assessment feedback. The Department of Education (2021) concurs with this, adding that parents who monitor their children's formative assessment feedback promote academic achievement. However, it goes on to state that while parental involvement in education is important, parents need not know all the answers. It is important for them to demonstrate their interest by providing an environment conducive to learning and to encourage children's efforts (DoE, 2021). Singh et. al (2004) revealed that educators were highly frustrated about the lack of support on the part of many parents in terms of homework tasks that are given to their children. Singh et al. (2004) further maintained that in South Africa, high levels of parental involvement in formative assessment and subsequently assessment feedback at home are not a reality as seventy percent of the children in his study went home to parents who were unable to enrich their lives educationally, which led to a high dropout rate. This presents learners with a huge problem since the learning that occurs at school is not reinforced in their homes.

2.8. Conceptual framework.

A conceptual framework is a synthesis of the existing views from empirical or theoretical findings about a particular topic or field of research. It explains factors to be taken into consideration when doing research on a given topic. This section discusses Vygotsky's sociocultural theory as a conceptual framework for this study.

2.8.1. The core principles of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory

The sociocultural theory is based on the notion that human activities take place in a cultural context and are mediated by language and symbols systems (Gipps, 1999; Lange 2002). One of the most essential tenets of this theory is that human action is best interrogated and understood in its historical development. Wertsch (1991, p. 6) posits that "the basic goal of the social-cultural approach to mind is to create an account of human mental processes that recognize the essential relationship between these processes and their cultural, historical and instructional settings". Proponents of this theory put emphasis on the effect of social factors in the development of cognition. Thus, cognitive development is socio-culturally determined because mental functions are influenced by values, beliefs and tools of intellectual adaptation (Vygotsky, 1978). Consequently, cognitive development happens during social interaction and guided learning through the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) between the students and the more knowledgeable other. The feedback process operates within the ZPD. Feedback functions to take learners from a point of misunderstanding to understanding. Vygotsky's constructivist theory focuses on the process rather than the product (Vygotsky, 1978). This implies that to apply formative assessment feedback strategies during classroom interaction subscribes to the process rather than the product that is attainable on completion of summative evaluations.

2.8.2. The Zone of Proximal Development and the More Knowledgeable Other

The Zone of Proximal Development refers to the gap between the potential development level and actual developmental level of a child (Vygotsky, 1978). The potential developmental level refers to a state where a child can only accomplish or finish a task when they are guided by a more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978). The actual developmental level refers to what the child can achieve on their own without any assistance from the more knowledgeable other. The more knowledgeable other has a better understanding of a particular topic or concepts and better

cognitive ability to perform a particular task. This can be a teacher or a peer. Through the use of mediation and scaffolding the gap between the actual and potential developmental level can be closed. Similarly, in the feedback process, teachers need to move learners from a point of not understanding to a point of understanding. The teacher or peer provides support that the learner can use to move towards the desired level of performance.

2.8.3. Scaffolding and Mediation.

Scaffolding refers to the assistance, support and guidance given by the more knowledgeable other to the student. It is not permanent support but is given or removed based on the student's needs or when they reach the potential developmental level. A student has reached this level when they have acquired new skills, knowledge and can work independently to complete a task. Feedback needs to be scaffolded so that students have a fair chance of using it and understanding it in relation to assessment criteria. Vygotsky (1978) argues that scaffolding provides an opportunity for learners to improve their performances on the same task. This allows students to know that the assessment is directed towards providing information about how to improve their performance before the point where a final assessment of achievement is made. Hence scaffolding involves giving constructive feedback to learners that may have a combination of three purposes of formative assessment, namely, diagnosing student difficulties, assessing improvement over time, and providing information about how to improve their learning. Scaffolding is a supportive structure that the teacher creates to assist a learner to accomplish a task that a learner cannot complete alone. Scaffolding is when the interweaving of formative assessment feedback towards a summative event is formalised in a course (Vygotsky, 1978). Mediation refers to the use of tools (signs or spoken language) in socially organized activity (Vygotsky, 1978). Learning needs to be mediated by appropriate assessment feedback. Vygotsky is of the view that learning precedes development because he suggests that instruction is only useful when it moves ahead of development. A learner learns more on his own but may not master all learning activities in a grade, hence formative assistance becomes necessary. This is where the teacher comes into play. Vygotsky's theory advocates mediation by an adult once a child reaches a level of development where working independently becomes difficult (Vygotsky, 1978). Mediated and scaffolded feedback allows for the co-construction of knowledge. Scaffolding and mediation of feedback is important for second language English learners because they do not have a proper grasp of the

language and are therefore susceptible to being confused and misunderstanding certain formative feedback comments.

My study therefore draws on Vygotsky's (1978) theory as it proclaims the pivotal role of mastery learning that is the cornerstone of formative assessment feedback. Mediation of learners' learning by an adult teacher is the one displayed in the application of formative assessment feedback, which is consistent with Vygotsky's theory of mediated learning where the More Knowledgeable Other renders assistance to the child in order to develop the child's cognitive abilities. It is therefore vital that a teacher, as the more knowledgeable other, gives guidance and formative assistance to the learner, who is less knowledgeable in terms of logical reasoning and independent working habits. A teacher is there to assist a learner to reach that level of proximal development. Formative assessment feedback plays a vital role in that regard.

2.9. Conclusion.

This chapter reviewed the literature relevant to my study and discussed the theoretical framework that underpins this study. After reviewing the literature, it has been noted that not much research has been done looking at second language teachers, their practice and perceptions of formative written feedback within the South African context, specifically within quintile three schools. Therefore, this study is important because it seeks to gain a deeper understanding of formative written feedback practices amongst English teachers of second language learners in quantile three schools. In the next chapter, I have described and discussed the research design and methodology that have been applied to this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed literature on formative assessment feedback. The review dwelled on both local and international studies. It also presented the conceptual framework that has been used to make sense of the findings. In this chapter, the research design and methodology used in this study are outlined. It also gives a detailed explanation about the research paradigm, sampling method, data analysis, ethics consideration and limitations of this study.

3.2. Research Paradigm: Interpretivism

A paradigm, according to Wahyuni (2012), is a collection of basic assumptions and beliefs on how the environment is viewed. Positivism, postpositivism, interpretivism or constructivism, and pragmatism are some examples of research paradigms. This study is situated within an interpretive paradigm, which is a paradigm created by the qualitative approach (Henning et al., 2005). The interpretivist paradigm is rooted on the notion that human beings construct meaning in the environment in which they are situated and this meaning is created through collaboration and interaction with others (Hammersley, 2013; Cresswell, 2007). It focuses on how people define and make meaning of a particular situation or phenomena (Cohen et al, 2007). Researchers using the interpretivist paradigm are likely to gain a thorough understanding and complexity of the studied phenomena in context. They attempt to understand the various ways of perceiving and experiencing the world through different circumstances and cultures, while refraining from being bias (Cresswell, 2007; Cohen et al, 2007). The aim of using the interpretive paradigm in this study was to gain an understanding of the world from individuals' perspectives through their experiences. Hence an interpretive research paradigm was the most appropriate paradigm for this study because it assisted me in understanding the reality of formative assessment feedback practices and perceptions of grade 4 English teachers. Furthermore, the knowledge gained about teachers' written feedback practices and perceptions is subjective, having evolved from or been founded on teachers' interpretations and experiences, as well as the researcher's interpretations. Consequently, given that the research study is rooted in the interpretive paradigm, and that its

findings are descriptive rather than predictive, the qualitative research approach as discussed in the following section was chosen in agreement with the research paradigm.

3.3. Qualitative approach.

The research approach that was used in this study is qualitative research. Qualitative research aims to interrogate and understand the experiences and perspectives of participants (Krauss, 2005). It studies a particular phenomenon and how participants act, react or respond to that phenomena in a real-world setting (Krauss, 2005). This study has investigated formative assessment feedback practices and perceptions of grade 4 English teachers in the sampled schools.

Qualitative research is characterized by certain unique features; it looks at a certain phenomenon under real world conditions, gives participants an opportunity to air their view, captures and takes into consideration the context in which participants find themselves and lastly, it relies on multiple sources of evidence to make the findings as accurate and reliable as possible (Yin, 2011). It allows a representation of how participants understand their realities and not just the values and meaning of the researcher (Krauss, 2005). Therefore, qualitative research was appropriate for this study because other research paradigms pay little attention to contextual conditions that influence how participants act in particular settings. Not only does qualitative research explain a phenomenon through existing concepts, it can also give rise to the development of new concepts (Yin, 2011) while attempting to conceptualize the social process. The complexity of real-world setting and diversity of participants means that the use of various sources of evidence such as observations, interviews and inspection of documents is necessary to enhance the reliability and trustworthiness of the research. This study was primarily concerned with meaning and sought to understand formative assessment feedback practices and perceptions of the sampled Grade 4 English teachers in their specific backgrounds and teaching context. Added, Glesne (1999) contends that qualitative researchers engage and talk with participants and their perceptions. In this study, the interaction with participants was in the form of semi-structured interviews. The participants were able to provide their perceptions of the usability of written feedback to second language learners.

3.4. Research Design: Multiple case study design

Case study design is defined as "the investigation of a specific instance in action" (Cohen et al., 2000: 181). Expanding on Cohen et al.'s definition, Sax (1968) demonstrated that a case study not only analyzes the case, but also extensively describes it. For Scott & Morrison (2005, p.15) a case study is "the study of a few cases, sometimes one, in which the intention is to collect large amounts of data and study it in depth". Yin (2003) states that a case study can comprise of either a single study or multiple studies. This study utilised a multiple case study design. Yin (2003) expounds that by doing a multiple case study, the researcher gets to analyse evidence within a situation and across various situations, which is not possible with a single case study.

According to Stake (1995) and Baxter & Jack (2008), in a multiple case study, the researcher studies multiple cases to understand the differences and similarities between the cases. Cresswell (2013) further argues that a multiple-case design explores a real-life multiple bounded system through detailed, in-depth data collection involving several sources of information. A multiple-case design allows for a broad exploration, which enabled the researcher to identify the similarities and differences of formative assessment feedback practices and perceptions of Grade 4 English teachers amongst the three multiple cases studied (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

Using multiple case design enables one to individually analyze each case and possibly provide a unit of analysis within a case. Moreover, all through the aggregate of cases, a multiple case design would permit more vigorous and fascinating evidence across cases (Yin, 2009). In this study, I have employed the multiple case design because it explores similarities and differences among cases and is therefore perfect for comparative cross case analysis. The selection of a case study was also inspired by the fact that it has a capacity for understanding complications in certain contexts (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). In the context of my study, I used multiple cases to compare and contrast the uniqueness of socially constructed, contextualized assessment feedback practices. I did not aim to obtain information that was generalizable, but instead I aimed to portray rich, textured and in-depth accounts of assessment feedback practices in multiple contexts. As a research instrument in this case study one of my main responsibilities was to derive data and carry out an intensive, in-depth analysis of each case to give meaning to this study (Merriam, 2002). Undertaking a case study research project allowed me to conduct the research from beginning to end single-handedly, without the help of assistant researchers. Because the sample was not big, I

was able concentrate all my energies into understanding and unpacking the complexities and uniqueness of each participant's perspectives and world views in their natural setting. This enabled me to unveil several deeply engrained, in-context realities about what participants consider as their truths and why.

Stake (2005) suggests that multiple case studies are instrumental in supporting a more thorough understanding of the phenomena in question. In the context of this study, three public primary schools were the cases selected in order to investigate formative assessment feedback practices and perceptions of grade 4 English teachers. The three schools were also considered as bounded systems (Cohen et al., 2011; Merriam, 1988) where the focus was formative assessment feedback practices and perceptions of grade 4 English teachers within the characteristics of the particular case (Stake, 2005), namely: location, time frame and school students. Creswell (2010) argues that a case study is a qualitative research method in which the investigator investigates a bounded system or multiple-bounded systems over time by collecting detailed, in-depth data from multiple sources of information. English teachers and, more specifically those who teach grade 4 English second language learners in their specific work context, which is **three public school** within the inner-city area of Johannesburg, are the boundaries that define the cases in my study.

Multiple case study research also raises issues about boundaries and distinguishing characteristics. The focus here is on the phenomenon to be studied rather than the participants. By interviewing the participants and analysing their assessment documents I can obtain in-depth information on the phenomenon. Limiting the collection of data to three schools helped to make the amount of data collected more manageable. Yin (2003) points out that an investigator who attempts to cover everything will soon find that they are trying to accomplish the impossible.

3.5. Selection of Research Site

Three public schools situated in the Johannesburg District in Gauteng were selected as the research site. For the purpose of this research, the schools will be called Public School A, Public School B and Public School C. All the mentioned public primary schools are situated in Johannesburg and have between 55-65 learners per class. The schools are under the control of the state. 80% of the learners were black Africans with isiZulu as their home language, and 20% of the learners were

foreign nationals, with home languages such as Ndebele or Lingala. Although most students' home language is isiZulu, the formal medium of teaching in all three public schools is English. However, educators as a normative practice, often alternate between languages in the classroom. All three schools are overseen by governing bodies that consist of parents, teachers and learner representatives. In terms of departmental classification, the three schools were categorized as quintile 3 schools due to them being located within a poor community. The schools are fee-paying schools, wherein learners pay R350 each per annum to cater for the immediate needs of the school. The choice of conducting research in the three selected public schools was influenced by my teaching experiences as an English teacher. My involvement in teaching English at a public school with 100% English second language learners gave me an opportunity through teacher development workshops to work with similar teachers from other public schools within the inner Johannesburg city. Consultations with teachers revealed that they were concerned about the lack of support from the subject advisors, particularly on providing formative assessment feedback to English second language learners. In a number of public schools, subject specialists or advisors do not visit teachers to give support. Teachers also mentioned that support materials were delivered to schools very late. As a result, they lacked expertise on how to provide formative assessment feedback effectively in English to second language learners. It is through reflecting on these experiences that I chose to conduct a formal systematic study in the selected three primary public schools to explore how teachers actually give formative assessment feedback, and what perceptions they hold about the usability of the formative feedback they give to learners. The choice of the schools was based on the number of English teachers who teach English to 100% second language learners and the experience and expertise these teachers have in teaching English to second language learners. Moreover, all learners in the selected school area are second language speakers of English but at school, they learn English as a home language.

I selected the three public schools to find out the similarities or differences in teachers' practices and perceptions of formative feedback. Likewise, I engaged in convenience sampling by picking schools that are easy to reach and accessible to me. I'm very familiar with the area and the schools are not distant to where I live. This afforded me cheaper, easier access to do fieldwork for my study. Bertram & Christiansen (2014) describe convenience sampling as an act by the researcher to select a sample that is convenient, and accessible. These teachers were chosen as a unit of

analysis because it was assumed that they would shed optimal insight on the matters that were under exploration.

3.6. Selection of the participants

When conducting research, it is impossible to study a whole population (Scott & Morrison, 2005). Therefore, the researcher must develop a criteria of who will be selected as a participant in the study. Sampling is the process of choosing a subset of things or people from a large population (Cohen et al, 2007; Scott & Morrison, 2005; Yin, 2011). When selecting a sample, the researcher must take into consideration the research methodology, time and most importantly the purpose of the research (Cohen et al, 2007; Scott et al., 2005; Yin, 2011). This study used purposive sampling which entails deliberately selecting people that will provide relevant and plentiful data (Cohen et al, 2007). It also engaged in convenience sampling as the schools in which the study will be conducted are known by the researcher. Participants in this study were English teachers who teach English to grade 4 second language learners in primary schools and have had more than 3 years teaching experience. Notably, the mother tongue of the three participants from the three public schools is not English, yet they teach this subject. All three participants are Black African South Africans. For the purpose of this study we will name them Cindy who teaches in Public School A, Nolwazi who teaches in School B and Lindo who teaches in school C.

Name	**Teaching Experience**	**Grade**	**Teaching Subject**	**Public school**	**Mother tongue/ Home language**
Teacher (A) Cindy	4	4	English	School A	IsiZulu
Teacher (B) Lindo	4	4	English	School B	IsiZulu
Teacher (C) Nolwazi	6	4	English	School C	IsiZulu

Table 3..1.1: Teacher participants' information

It is noteworthy to state that the main focus in case study research is the quality of the analysis rather than the number of participants. Schulze (2003), states that a qualitative research study comprises only a small number of participants because its objective is strictly to understand and describe a phenomenon as it unravels in an ordinary locale. Hence, three English educators were purposively chosen from three public primary schools to gain comprehensive data concerning their practices and perceptions of formative assessment feedback in the school setting. This is consistent with McMillan & Schumacher's (2010) assertion that a researcher's familiarity with the population enables him to decide which participants will be chosen to get the best data to address the objective of the study.

3.7. Data production methods

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.36), "a case study relies on interviewing, observing, and document analysis." Hence the data was collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. With regards to research question 2, semi-structured interviews were used.

3.7.1. Semi-structured interviews

Interviews are a type of research instrument that is usually used to collect qualitative data. It is a data collection technique that involves asking respondents oral questions, either on your own or in groups. Interviews allow for more in-depth examination of important aspects of a study that may not be covered by other research instruments (Merriam, 2009). Given that Merriam (2009) considers interviews to explore in-depth important aspects of a study, I used semi-structured interviews to allow for free-flowing discussions and to gather comprehensive data about the participants' practices and perceptions of formative assessment feedback in English to English second language learners. In this form of interview, guiding questions are used to collect data. However, the researcher does not rigidly adhere to these questions and is open to discussing unexpected matters.

Accordingly, as Braun and Clarke (2013) affirmed, semi-structured interviews have the potential to generate valuable and abundantly detailed data, given the capacity for researcher control as well as spontaneity, and the flexibility to explore unexpected accounts. While the teachers were telling their stories, I was attempting to make sense of the phenomenon. As a result, the researcher learns

about people's perspectives and views on the phenomenon by listening to them. Instead of evaluating aspects of the social world, social researchers put more focus on discovering meanings through verbal communication (Silverman, 2004). Tuckman (1994) contends that incidents cannot be understood unless one understands how these incidents are interpreted by individuals who take part in them. It is crucial to gather information on teachers' perceptions of the usability of their formative assessment feedback and how this impacts on students' learning.

A major benefit of the interview, according to Bell (1993), is its "adaptability," which allows the interviewer to follow-up on suggestions and probe answers outside the limits of a questionnaire. The researcher was able to probe for replies and encourage participants to elaborate more throughout the interview process. Participants were able to explain and polish their responses through follow-ups; while in a questionnaire, responses must be taken at face value. In reality, semi-structured interviews have more weight than questionnaires, since the latter is dead and silent, with predetermined responses. Participants in this study were interviewed face to face at their schools. These interviews were carried out after school when teachers had no administrative duties. They were informed on the content and purpose of the interview and granted me permission to record the interviews. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. I used pseudonyms (Cindy, Nolwazi & Lindo) to refer to the participants during the interviews and in the research report. Transcripts of interviews were given to the teachers to verify their accuracy and clarity. The interviews lasted for approximately 50 minutes each. Teachers were asked to talk about the usability of the formative assessment feedback they give to learners with the aim of answering the second question.

3.7.2. Document analysis

Document analysis refers to the methodical technique for analyzing or evaluating records for both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) content. Document analysis demands the inspection and interpretation of data to extract context, develop an understanding, and establish analytical proficiency (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Documents include text (words) and pictures that were taken in the absence of the researcher. "Documents of all sorts assists the researcher to reveal meaning, discover insights related to the research issue," (Merriam, 1988, p. 118). Similarly, through reviewing English teacher's feedback on English second language students' formative assessment tasks, an understanding of their feedback practices can be elicited.

Supplementary material, such as documents, is often used in case studies to complement evidence from interviews and observations (Bailey, 2007; Nieuwenhuis, 2007) which is why this method of data production is also particularly useful for this study. I sought permission from the Head of Department (HOD), English teachers and the students to review one of term two's major formative assessment tasks. These formative assessment tasks displayed teachers' feedback. Analysis of these tasks also determined teachers' practices when giving formative assessment feedback. From each teacher across the three schools, I sampled 6 learners' assessment tasks from each school; 2 for each category (high, average and low performing). The sample was 3 teachers across three schools and 18 learners' scripts across the three schools.

Group A from Public School A

Name	**Grade**	**Subject**
Student script A	Grade 4	English
Student script B	Grade 4	English
Student script C	Grade 4	English
Student script D	Grade 4	English
Student script E	Grade 4	English
Student script F	Grade 4	English

Table 3.1.2: Learner participants' information

Group B from Public School B

Student script G	Grade 4	English
Student script H	Grade 4	English
Student script I	Grade 4	English
Student script J	Grade 4	English
Student script K	Grade 4	English
Student script L	Grade 4	English

Table 3.1.3: Learner participants' information

Group C from Public school C

Name	**Grade**	**Subject**
Student script M	Grade 4	English
Student script N	Grade 4	English
Student script O	Grade 4	English
Student script P	Grade 4	English
Student script Q	Grade 4	English
Student script R	Grade 4	English

Table 3.1.4: Learner participants' information

3.8. Data Analysis.

The most essential underpinning for qualitative research is that there should be transparency and openness at all stages of data collection and analysis (Scott et al., 2005). To answer the first research question *"From a formative perspective, what are teachers' written feedback practices to second Language English learners?"*, three teachers' end comments on 6 learners' essays (2 high, 2 average and 2 low performing) were analysed using the work of Brown and Glover (2006). Brown et al.'s (2006) classification system allowed an investigative focus on what teachers wrote in their feedback to students and the depth of such comments. Feedback comments were coded according to the following five categories:

(1) Comments relating to the content of a learner's answer (e.g. appropriateness of what has been included, accuracy of the material, the balance of the material, omission of relevant material, the quality of the examples or evidence used, quality of the argument, etc.);

(2) Comments which assist a learner to develop appropriate skills (e.g. generic matters such as the structure of the response, the style and clarity of the writing, correct use of English, referencing, etc.);

(3) Comments that encourage further learning (e.g. reference to future study or assessment, reference to resource materials, etc.). Comments in the first two categories can also be analyzed in terms of depth, which reflects the extent to which feedback may help students improve their learning: Level 1: Acknowledge a weakness; Level 2: Provide a correction; Level 3: Explain why the learner's answer is incorrect/why the correction is a desired response.

(4) Comments that motivate (e.g. praise and encouragement);

(5) Comments that demotivate (e.g. use of negative words or phrases and judgemental language)

Type of Comment	**Relation to Principles of Good Feedback Practice**
Category 1 : Comments on the Content of Students' Assignments	
Error/ misconception Omission of relevant material Irrelevant material included	Helps clarify what good performance is (expected standards), provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance, delivers high quality information to students about their learning.
Category 2: Comments Designed to Develop Students' Skills	
English usage Critical analysis Referencing/ bibliography Research Presentation Academic register Writing structure	Helps clarify good performance (expected standards), provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance.
Category 3: Comments That Encourage Further Learning	
Dialogue with a student encouraged Further study/assessment referred to Resource materials referred to	Encourages teacher dialogue around learning, facilitates development of reflection in learning.
Category 4: Qualitative Assessment of Students' Performance – Motivational Comments	
Praise Encouragement	Encourage positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem, but acknowledge if a performance gap exists. Provide feedback on areas where work was acknowledged as excellent
Category 5: Qualitative Assessment of Students' Performance – De-Motivational Comments	
Negative words/phrases (e.g. 'you should never') used Judgement of a student's performance is personal and negative (e.g. 'careless')	Discourage positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem. Good feedback should acknowledge a weakness: i.e. acknowledge a performance gap exists, and provide a correction: i.e. give the student the information needed to close the gap. Explain why the student's response is inappropriate/why the correction is a preferred response. This then closes the feedback loop

Table 3.1.5: *The modified coding system used for the analysis of audio and written feedback comments (Source: modified from Brown & Glover, 2006, p.84)*

The first four of these overarching categories help students to improve their work and motivation (Brown and Glover, 2006). The final category includes 'final vocabulary' (Rorty, 1989), which includes "value laden, judgmental words that may inhibit further learning by damaging students' self-esteem" (Brown et al., 2006, p. 83). The classification system used to assess the data engages with literature to evaluate the quality of feedback provided to students.

For the second research question, *"What are teachers' perceptions of the usability of written feedback to second language learners?"*, I followed the Creswell's (2009) six steps for the process of analyzing data. While the steps are defined in linear order, Creswell described "an interactive practice" to analysis. Therefore, they do not imply a linear process of analysis.

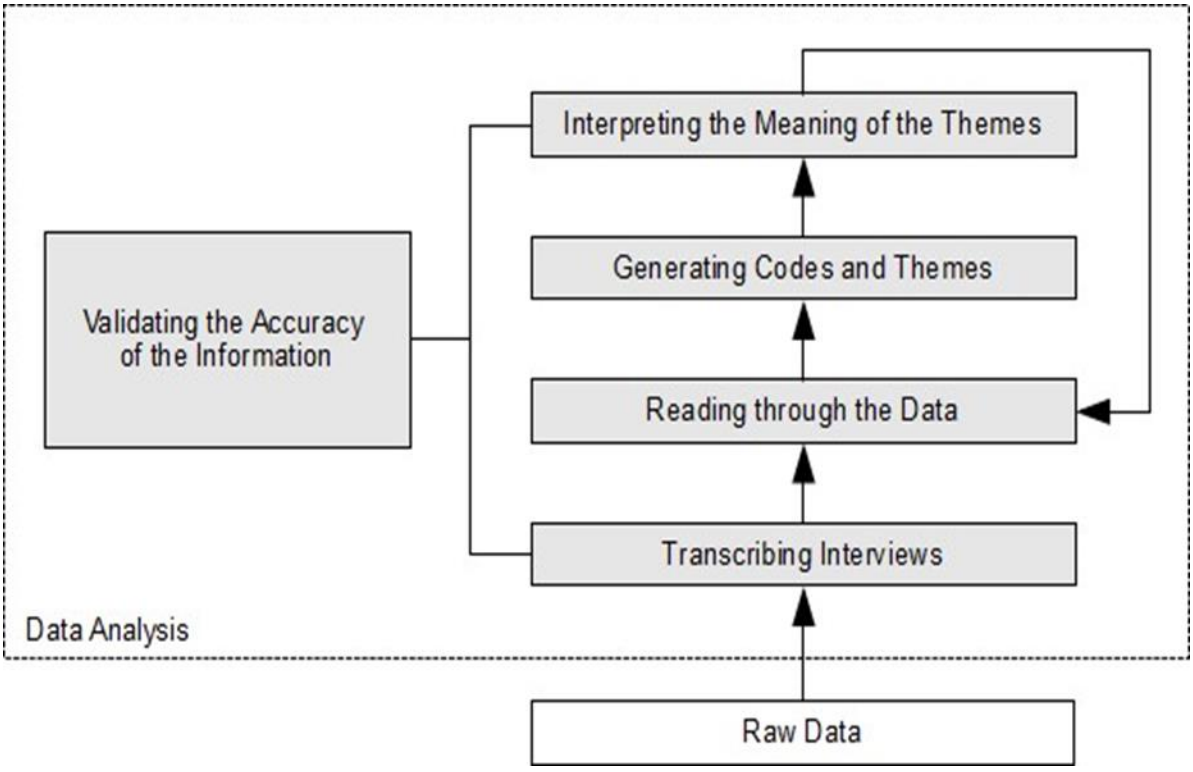


Figure: 1: Steps of qualitative data analysis (**adapted from Creswell, 2009, p.185**)

Step 1: Organize and prepare the data to be analyzed. This step involves reviewing audio recordings from the interviews and transcribing participants' responses.

Step 2: Read through the data. This step is in line with Esterberg's (2001, p157) directive to "get to know your data". Here the researcher reflects on the general meaning to get a sense of the data and viewpoints conveyed by the participants.

Step 3: Start with detailed analyses using the coding process. I used Creswell's procedure of organizing the material into fragments by taking the collected data and segmenting sentences into classifications. After that, the classifications or categories have to be labelled with terms taken from the participants' actual languages.

Step 4: The coding process is used to generate a description of the participants, settings and the classification for analysis. Using the same process, codes for description are then generated which might give rise to a few themes or patterns. Afterwards, the themes that emerged is analyzed.

Step 5: In this step the description of the themes is denoted in a qualitative narrative. The emergent themes are then woven into narrative passages to ensure the logical emergence of participants' responses.

Step 6: Interpretation of data to create meaning. Creswell acknowledges a researcher's commitment to a theoretical lens and background plays a vital role in the meaning making process. As I was interpreting the data to create meaning I realized that my experience as an English teacher played a role in the way I made meaning of the participants' stories. Nonetheless, to accurately convey participants' experiences and perceptions I dwelled on their intentions for future practice and the conclusions they drew. The themes that arose in this exploration came from me being cognizant of the tension between my biases as a researcher and participants' processes for meaning making

3.9. Credibility and Trustworthiness

In qualitative analysis, Maree (2007) defines validity and reliability in relation to credibility and trustworthiness. He argues that using a variety of data gathering techniques increases the study's credibility (Maree, 2007). To ensure credibility and trustworthiness of this study, I employed the use of triangulation by using various data collection methods. I used semi-structured interviews and document analysis. I did the interviews first, followed by document analysis to validate the data gathered from the interviews. This adds quality to the study through trustworthiness and credibility. Trustworthiness of the interviews was established by comparing information gathered from the interviews and documents; this is called convergent validity (Cohen et al., 2007). Credibility of the study was also accomplished through "member checks".

Part of the raw information was analyzed by other specialist researchers in the field of assessment feedback other than the investigator and supervisor. Member checks (Merriam, 2002) were also conducted by giving participants a copy of interview transcripts to confirm the accuracy of the data. Moreover, the recordings of the interviews were played back to the participants to verify the accuracy of what was transcribed. This was to also corroborate the meanings participants constructed and not based on the researcher's assumptions, thus reducing bias and enhancing the trustworthiness of the data. Also, direct quotations were used, taken verbatim from the recordings and transcripts certify the trustworthiness and transparency of the findings, from transcripts of interviews are used to ensure transparency and trustworthiness of the findings (Tong, Sainsbury & Craig, 2007).

3.10. Ethical Issues

Ethics refers to the moral standards that guide the way individuals conduct themselves (Cohen et al., 2000). Collecting data for qualitative research has moral and ethical implications because of the intimate nature of the collaboration between participants and the researcher. To avoid moral and ethical problems, the researcher must first abide by the principle of informed consent (Scott et al., 2005). Moreover, the participants' interest must be protected because at times interviews may entail the collection of sensitive information that can cause harm to the participant or compromise their character especially in the workplace.

For this study, participants have been given enough information about their right to privacy, protection from harm or discomfort, confidentiality and fair treatment. Before conducting the interview, I sent a request research form to the Gauteng Department of Education to obtain permission to do research in the public schools identified. Informed consent was obtained from participants, relevant authorities and institutions. Participants were given invitation letters and consent forms that explain the purpose of the research and the conditions of partaking in the study. Additionally, I made participants aware of the fact that they can withdraw from the research whenever they wish to do so. I also applied and was granted ethics approval from the Wits Ethics Committee.

3.11. Limitations of the study.

The findings of this research cannot be generalized because it is a smallscale study. The findings are therefore limited to the schools involved, the participants interviewed and their context. However, Dooley (2001) states that focus of case study research not entirely on the number of participants but on the quality of the analysis. Though the study is limited to such a small number of English teachers and limited analysis of students' formative assessment tasks, it has given me a broad understanding of what is happening within classrooms with regards to teachers' practices and perceptions of formative assessment feedback. Case studies do not lead to statistical generalizations because of small samples that can lead to misleading results (Bailey, 2007).

3.12. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the methodology and discussed the interpretivist paradigm as a school of thought in which this study is rooted. Then I gave a description of the qualitative approach and its implications for this study. The methodology adopted by this study is multiple case study. Its relevance to this research was briefly stated. In addition, the sampling method and context was described. The methodology to be employed in this research, which is a multiple case study, as well as its relevance to this study, was defined. The context used and the sampling done were also described. An outline of the data collection methods (document analysis and semi-structured interviews) was also provided. Lastly, I dealt with the trustworthiness, credibility of the data, ethical issues and limitations of the study. In the following chapter, I analyzed the data in relation to the critical questions, and the gave a discussion of these under particular themes that arose from the data.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the research methodology and design which underpins this study. This chapter presents data produced through semi structured interviews and document analysis..The purpose of this study was to explore the formative assessment feedback practices and perceptions of grade 4 English teachers in South Africa. The research questions were as follows: *From a formative perspective, what are teachers' written feedback practices to 2nd Language English learners? What are the teacher' perceptions of the usability of written feedback to second language learners?* In this study, I adopted the interpretive paradigm, used qualitative approach and a case study as my research design.

The analysis of data is facilitated with interrogating the research questions. Document analysis using Brown and Glover's (2006) framework is used to answer the first research question of teachers' written feedback practices to 2nd Language English learners. Six learners assessment task from each school was sampled; 2 for each category (high, average and low performing). In total 18 learners' scripts across the three schools were analysed. Semi-structured interviews was the tool used to answer the second research question of teacher' perceptions of the usability of written feedback to second language learners.The findings from the semi-structured interviews are then discussed by the use of thematic analysis.

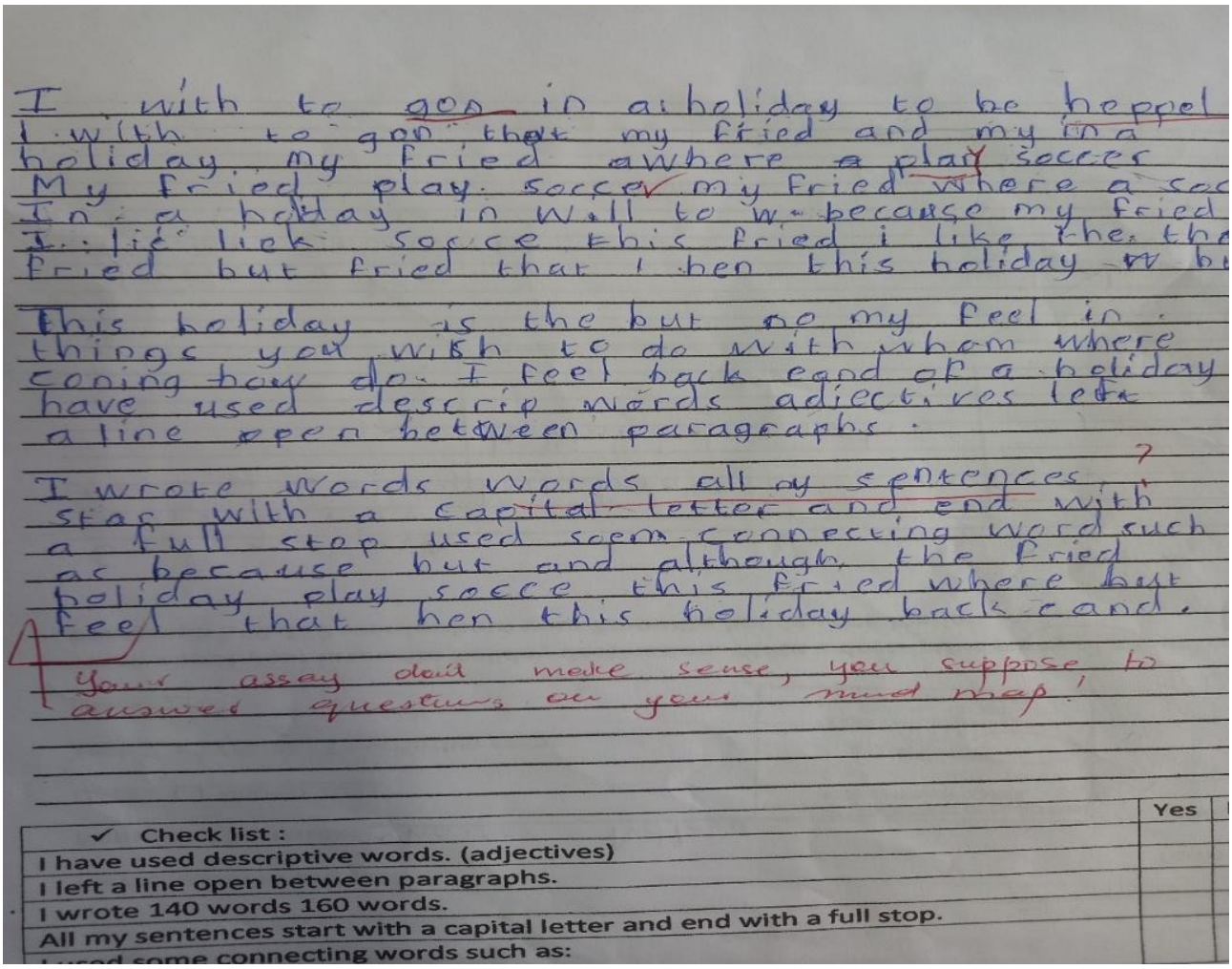
4.2. Teachers' written feedback practices to 2nd Language English learners

To answer RQ1, the three teachers' end comments on the final drafts of student's descriptive essays were mainly analyzed. The final comments were mainly the area of focus because it was more detailed and related to various aspects of student writing. That is, they are "longer, more substantive, and more discursive comments" on students' overall writing (Hyland & Hyland, 2001, p. 190). As a result, this study focused mainly on end comments provided to assess the teachers' written feedback practices. The 18 scripts collected have been analysed based on the five categories highlighted by Glover and Brown (2006) ; (1) Comments about the content of a student's response, (2) Comments that aid a student to develop applicable skills, , (3) Comments

that inspire further learning , (4) Motivational comments, (5) Demotivational comments. During the process of this stage of the study, the classification system used to assess the data engages with literature to assess the quality of feedback provided to learners. The scripts have been arranged from Low Performing to High Performing students per teacher.

<u>Teacher A- Cindy</u>.

Script A-Low Performing



I with to gon in a holiday to be heppel
I with to gon that my fried and my in a
holiday my fried awhere a play soccer
My fried play soccer my fried where a soc
In a holiday in will to w because my fried
I lie lick socce this fried i like the the
fried but fried that i hen this holiday w b

This holiday is the but no my feel in
things you wish to do with whom where
coning how do. I feel back eand of a holiday
have used descrip words adiectives left
a line open between paragraphs.

I wrote words words all my sentences ?
star with a capital letter and end with
a full stop used soem connecting word such
as because but and although the fried
holiday play socce this fried where but
feel that hen this holiday back eand.

Your assay don't make sense, you suppose to answer questions on your mind map!

✓ Check list :	Yes
I have used descriptive words. (adjectives)	
I left a line open between paragraphs.	
I wrote 140 words 160 words.	
All my sentences start with a capital letter and end with a full stop.	
I used some connecting words such as:	

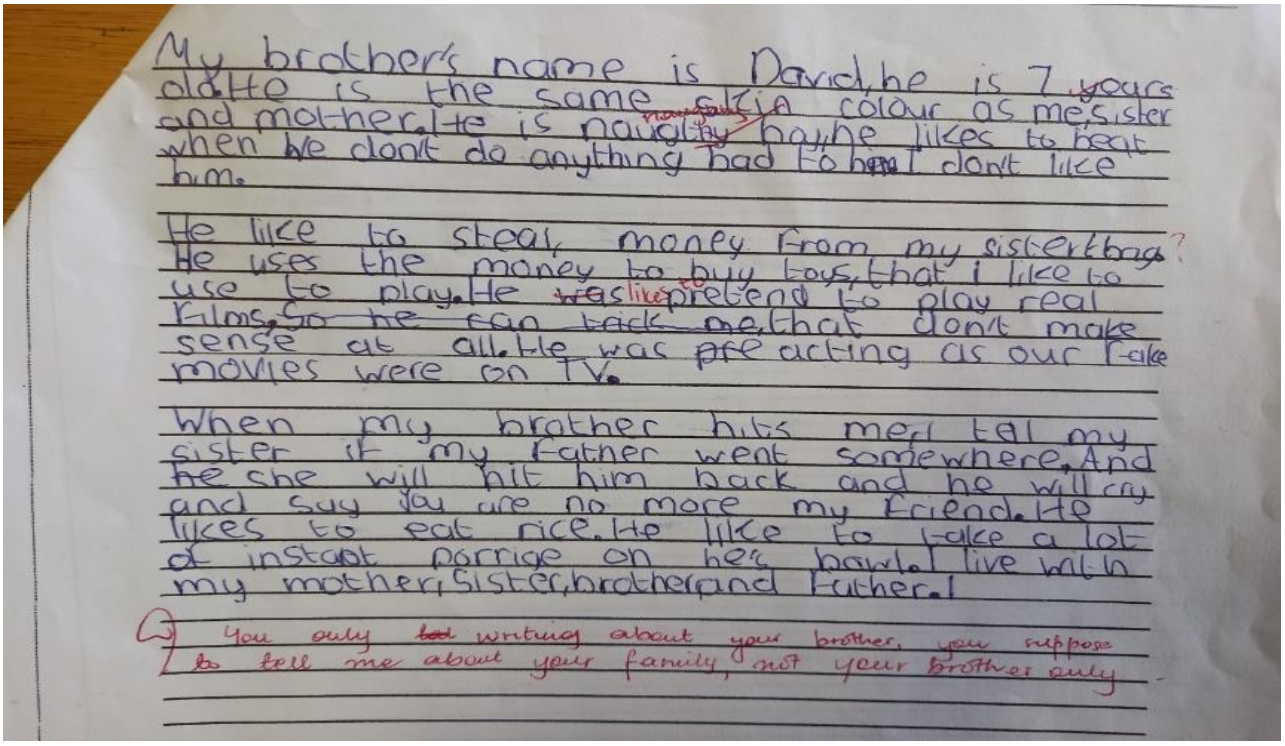
Teacher's comment: Your essay don't make sense, you suppose to answer questions on your mind map.

The comments on Script A (Low Performing learners) fall under Category 1 because it points to the content of the students response. On Script A, Cindy add very brief comments on how the learner can improve their essay. She draws the learner attention towards the deficient of his/ hers

response. Feedback is also communicated through underlying of text. This form of feedback is not helpful as there is no indication as to what the underlined aspects of the essay means in relation to the assessment criteria. The learner is left to his devices on what to do with the limited feedback provided. If the teacher used corrective symbols as hints to what the learner needs to be considered or mindful of, he will then reflect on past learning experiences in his head and try to come up with potential responses to improve his work further. Further deprived of appropriate learning experiences to inform interpretation, the learner may not be able to develop his/ her own plan/strategies to improve. Looking at this from a constructivist viewpoint, detailed feedback can assist in the learner moving from a position of "common sense" understanding, or a pre-existing construction of particular knowledge's, to redeveloped mental structures that integrate new knowledge with existing knowledge, and challenge existing knowledge in the process.

The feedback should be scaffolded to learners, what does not make sense?, by clearly indicating how their particular efforts resulted in a particular performance. For example what about the mind map has an influence on his grade. The teacher could point out a piece of text and give a specific example of where the essay was lacking, and what they expect to see if the question is adequately addressed. This scaffolding will assist the learner, even those for whom it does not come easily, "learn how to learn. Hence the feedback given to the learner is ineffective feedback as it is not in descriptive language and does not motivate and encourage the learners to do well. The tone of feedback should be motivational. After getting effective feedback that stimulates them, students preserve for longer at a task. Learners thrive on constructive criticism. The feedback should be explicit so that the learner can act on it and seek clarity from the teacher in question to develop a thorough understanding of the topic if they are unsure.

Script B- Low performing.


My brother's name is David, he is 7 years old. He is the same skin colour as me, sister and mother. He is naughty boy, he likes to beat when we don't do anything bad to him. I don't like him.

He like to steal money from my sister's bag. He uses the money to buy toys, that I like to use to play. He was like to pretend to play real films, so he can tack me, that don't make sense at all. He was pretending as our fake movies were on TV.

When my brother hits me, I tal my sister if my father went somewhere. And he she will hit him back and he will cry and say you are no more my friend. He likes to eat rice. He like to take a lot of instant porrige on his bowl. I live with my mother, sister, brother and father.

You only writing about your brother, you suppose to tell me about your family, not your brother only.

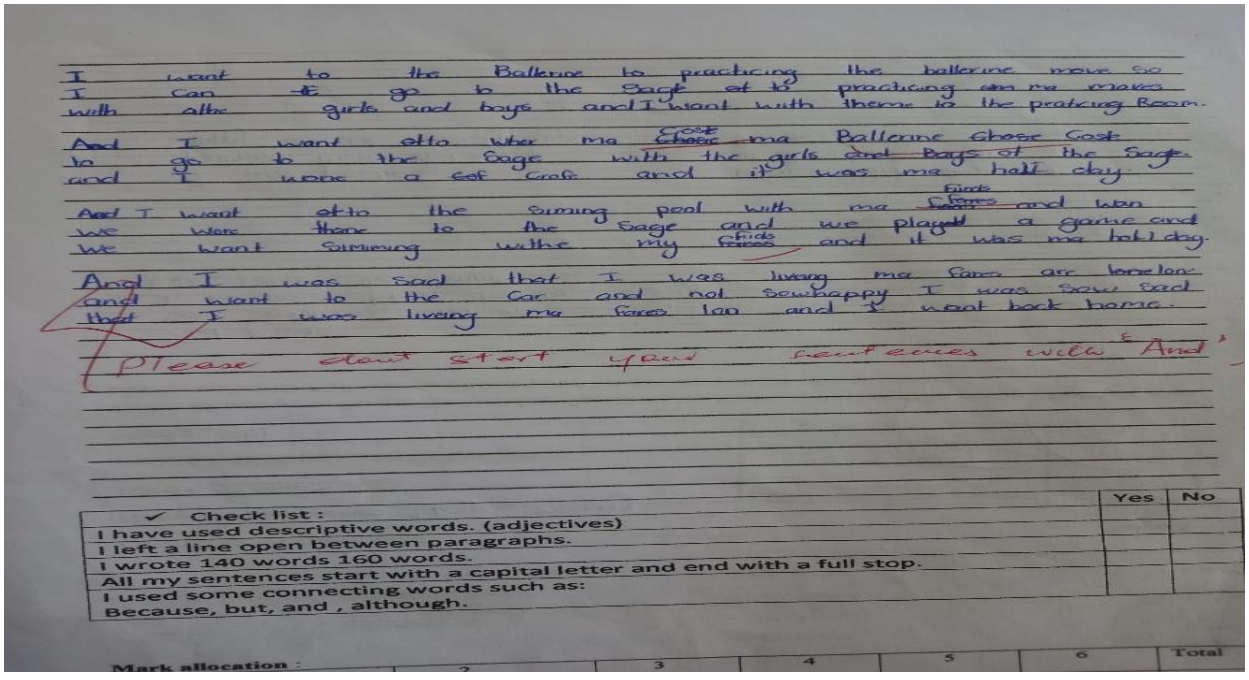
Teacher's comment: You only writing about your brother, you suppose to tell me about your family, not your brother only.

The comments on Script B (Low Performing learners) fall under Category 1 because it points to the insufficient content in the learner's essay. On Script B, Teacher Cindy provides feedback to the learner to give more details by including other family member in the essay because it was about the whole family. Whilst the teacher does provide feedback on the learners work in relation to the essay topic, the teacher does not provide clarity on the relationship between the learning target and where the learner needs to improve. The feedback could have been more explicit. For example, *"The essay asked of you to be able to . . . so you need to discuss in detail. . . ."* Adding the comment "*you suppose to tell me about your family* "is too vague to be helpful. The language is aimed at the learner and is demotivating. The teacher could reframe this comment to be targeted at the work, not the learners, and also to be more encouraging. For example "Overall I have marked this essay in the 'poor' category. You have written well about your brother, which is good writing practice, but …" The feedback provided by the teacher does not give the learner a clear understanding of the depth or quality of the work, in relation to the set criteria. In essence the feedback was

inadequate as it did not give learners information about how they approached the task, information about the relationship between what they did and did not do correctly and information about possible alternative approaches to the topic that could also be useful.

In the essay, the teacher has also corrected the tense and spelling for the learner. This is considered bad feedback as the teacher has made visible what the student has done wrong but without offering any insight into how to improve. When the learner looks at his feedback, the corrected tense and spelling can be easily overlooked because the teacher did not write any comments about the learner's incorrect use of spelling and tense. Thus, this feedback is ineffective to the learner because no learning or improvement will occur. The teacher should explicitly make the learner aware of where their mistakes are by ringing, underlining, placing question marks or dots on the error. This is followed by brief comments for example if a word is underlined, briefly add spelling so that the learner knows what error was made. By alerting the learners on their errors, the teacher is not providing the correct answer but rather picking out some areas that need special reflection. This technique develops the learner's capacity to self-monitor and self-correct their work.

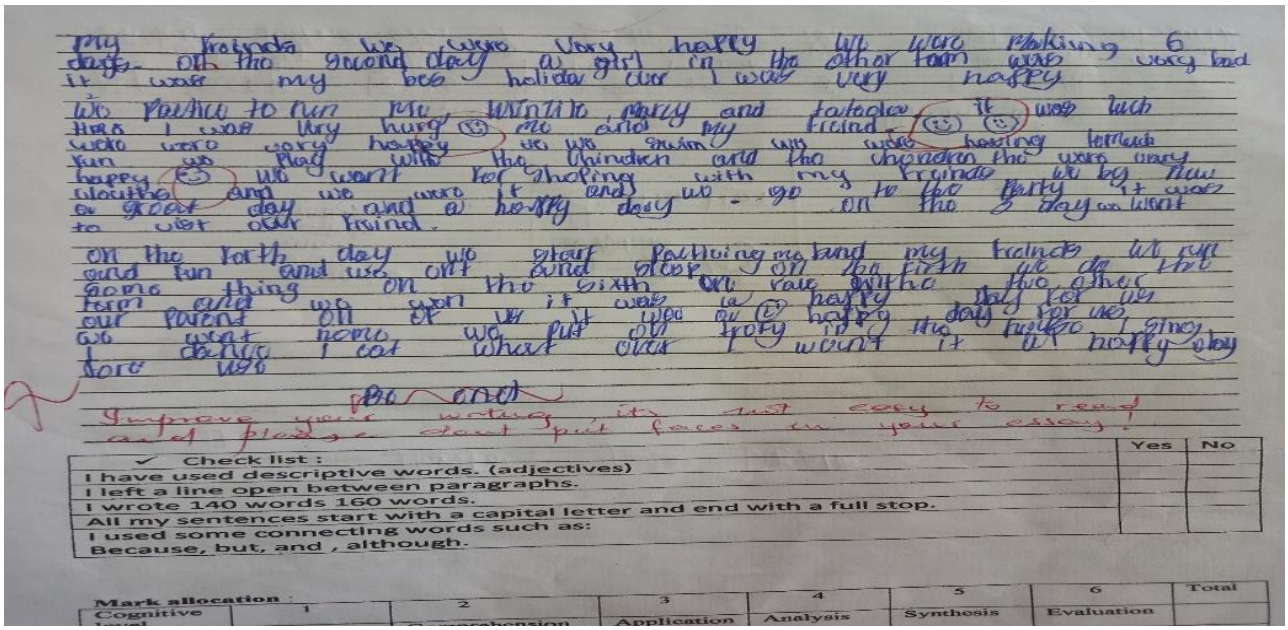
Script C- Average Performing.



Teacher's comment: Please don't start sentences with "And".

On Script C (Average Performing learners), Cindy only acknowledged weaknesses on the learners' response; focusing on the correct use of English and handwriting. These falls under Category 2. The feedback points to the incorrect aspect of the work without explaining to the learner why their work is incorrect. Whilst the feedback point to the usage of a conjunction in formal writing, the feedback is ambiguous and too limited to help the learner improve next time he/she does a similar task. This feedback does not indicate to the learner why the usage of "And" at the start of the sentence is incorrect and does not include suggestions for learner to improve. Such feedback prompts learners to draw on their own assumptions because of the limited information provided. Merely pointing out faults to the student so that they know that they have erred may not be adequate to support them improve learning. The feedback should be descriptive and provide details of what the learner did correct and where the learner should improve in relation to the assessment criteria.

Script D-Average Performing.

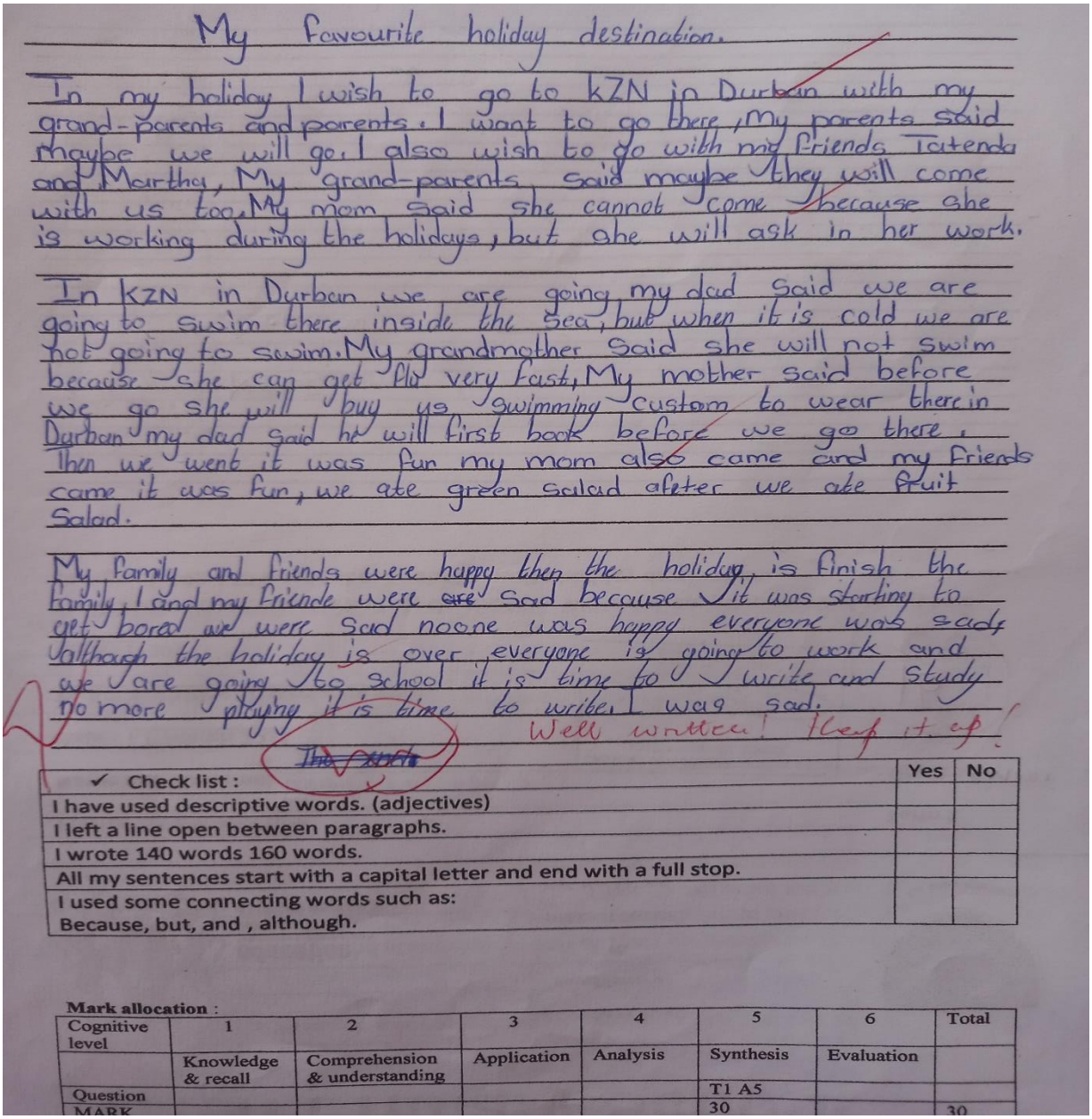


Teacher's comment: Improve your writing, it's not easy to read ad please don't put faces in your essay.

Script D (Average Performing learners), falls under Category 2.The comments mainly focus on students skills in writing. The comments points to the usage of English, presentation of essay and writing structures. There are no comments on the content of the learners' response; how they have performed in terms of the learning goals of this particular activity. This written feedback is mostly

focused on informing the learner about progress with no reference to learning goals or forward-looking strategies. The comment “Improve your writing” is vague as it does not tell a learner what particular aspects of the required writing he is deficient in. The feedback does not give the student information about their current performance and how they can move-forward or what do next to improve. For example, which aspects of the learning objective has the learner done acceptable work? Which aspects of the learning target would the student benefit from improving upon next? Feedback should inform students on next steps they need to take to improve. The feedback is merely criticism as opposed to constructive criticism. The tone of the feedback does not light the path forward to give suggestions for the student to improve. The effect of feedback on performance depends crucially on the nature of the feedback – is it positive or negative. The teacher’s feedback does not reflect positivity. Being positive means clearly indicating where improvement is needed and suggesting things the student could do about it. Just highlighting what is incorrect without giving suggestions on how to make it correct is not helpful. The feedback does not have task-focused comment that describes the work completed. This feedback criticizes a particular feature of the task but does not explain the reason for the criticism, or suggests what the learner can do about it. The feedback could have compared the work with the criteria and informed the student what he has done correctly and what needs to improve. For feedback to be effective it must encourages and motivates learners to succeed. It must have a motivational tone. After receiving stimulating and effective feedback learners persevere for longer on the task (Clarke, 1998).

Script E-High Performing



My favourite holiday destination.

In my holiday I wish to go to KZN in Durban with my grand-parents and parents. I want to go there, My parents said maybe we will go. I also wish to go with my friends Tatenda and Martha, My grand-parents said maybe they will come with us too. My mom said she cannot come because she is working during the holidays, but she will ask in her work.

In KZN in Durban we are going my dad said we are going to swim there inside the sea, but when it is cold we are not going to swim. My grandmother said she will not swim because she can get flu very fast, My mother said before we go she will buy us swimming custom to wear there in Durban my dad said he will first book before we go there. Then we went it was fun my mom also came and my friends came it was fun, we ate green salad afeter we ate fruit salad.

My family and friends were happy then the holiday is finish the family, I and my friende were ~~are~~ sad because it was starting to get bored we were sad noone was happy everyone was sad, although the holiday is over everyone is going to work and we are going to school it is time to write and study no more playing it is time to write. I was sad.

Well written! Keep it up!

✓ Check list :	Yes	No
I have used descriptive words. (adjectives)		
I left a line open between paragraphs.		
I wrote 140 words 160 words.		
All my sentences start with a capital letter and end with a full stop.		
I used some connecting words such as: Because, but, and , although.		

Mark allocation :

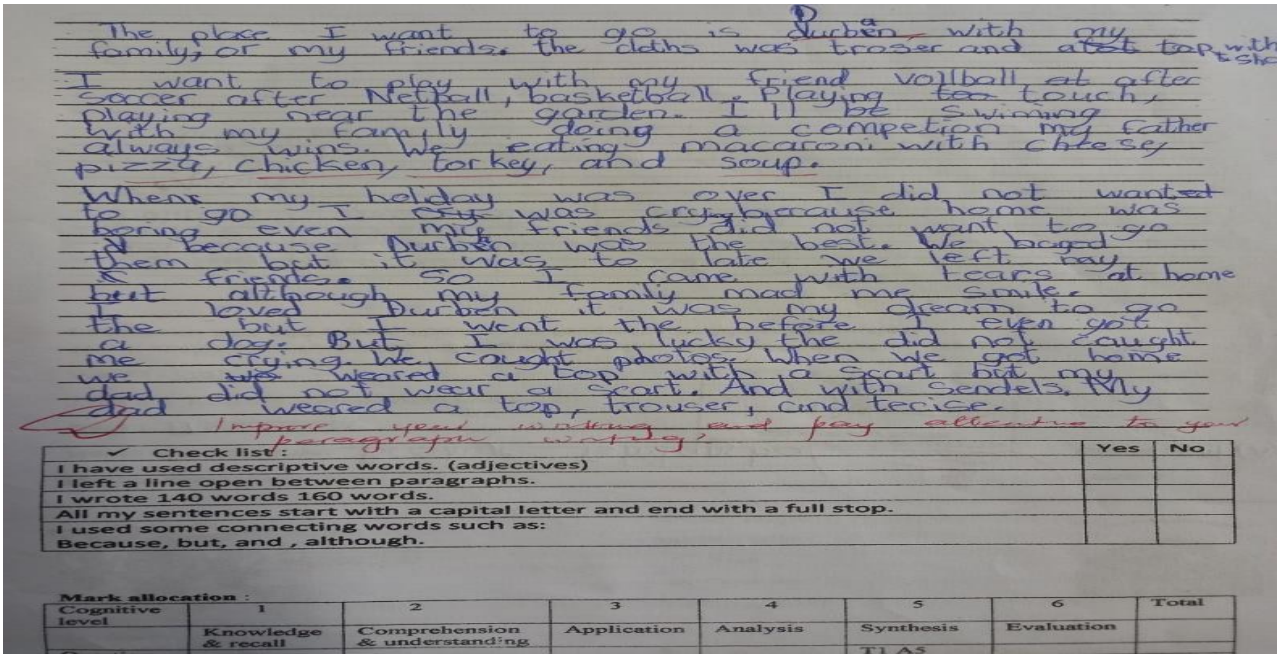
Cognitive level	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
	Knowledge & recall	Comprehension & understanding	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation	
Question					T1 A5		
MARK					30		30

Teacher's comment: Well written! Keep it up!

For the high performing learners, Cindy provided motivational comments (Script E) which is Category 3. This kind of feedback was used as praise, therefore does not provide much useful information related to specific learning tasks. A well written and keep it up comment does not tell the student how or in what way he may have done well. A point worth noting is that general praise boosts a student's self-esteem but does not improve learning unless it spells out where the student

has done well. This type of feedback is rarely converted into increased engagement, commitment to learning or deeper understanding about the task. The praise may encourage learners but it does not assist them to improve their learning. When learners are praised without any clear explanation of what they have excelled in, they are unlikely to learn from feedback. The feedback should describe what precisely has the learner done well? What specifically should the learner do to attain the same success in the following task? Even though a students has done well, there is always something they can work on to improve their work. The teacher can identify things that the student can work on to excel in future assignments. Although effective teachers have to provide feedback on whether the student got it right or not, this must be followed by actionable information that incorporates high degree of specificity with explicit reference to the objective to be accomplished and information about accuracy in relation to the task. This feedback can, nonetheless, be considered affective support, imperative for motivation.

Script-F-High Performing



The place I want to go is Durban with my family, or my friends. the cloths was troser and a top with she

I want to play with my friend vollball at after soccer after Netball, basketball. Playing too touch, playing near the garden. I ll be swiming with my family doing a competion my father always wins. We eating macaroni with cheese, pizza, chicken, torkey, and soup.

When my holiday was over I did not wanted to go I was crying because home was boring even my friends did not want to go because Durban was the best. We baged them but it was to late we left my friends. So I came with tears at home but although my family mad me smile. I loved Durban it was my dream to go the but I went the before I even got a dog. But I was lucky the did not caught me crying. We caught photos. When we got home we weared a top with a scart but my dad did not wear a scart. And with sendels. My dad weared a top, trouser, and tecise.

Improve your writing and pay attention to your paragraph writing.

✓ Check list :	Yes	No
I have used descriptive words. (adjectives)		
I left a line open between paragraphs.		
I wrote 140 words 160 words.		
All my sentences start with a capital letter and end with a full stop.		
I used some connecting words such as: Because, but, and , although.		

Mark allocation :

Cognitive level	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
	Knowledge & recall	Comprehension & understanding	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation	
					T1 A5		

Teacher's comment: Improve your writing and pay attention to your paragraph writing.

Script F aligns with which is Category 2. The teacher provides feedback on the writing structure and presentation. The feedback *"Improve your writing and pay attention to you paragraph writing"* is not descriptive and does not provide learners with a better understanding of what to do

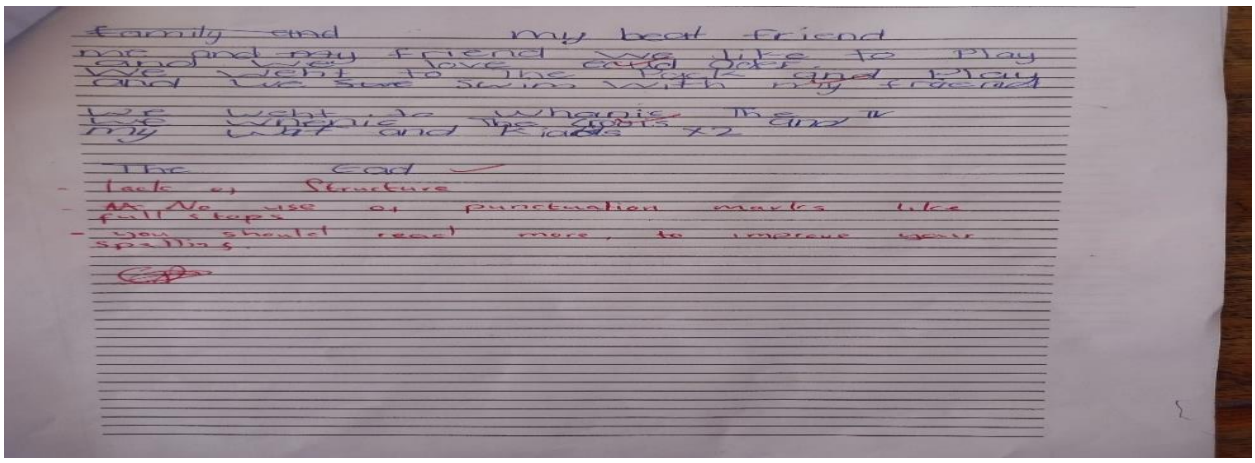
or what steps to take to succeed if they come across a similar task in future. if the learner's reasoning is vague or incorrect then descriptive feedback will help the learner "understand exactly what needs to be fixed and how to fix it .Moreover, this feedback has to be explanatory so that students have more information about their response and ultimately have a better understanding of why they excelled. Merely underlying specific words in the text does not shed light to learners as to why they need to improve. Hence such feedback can be easily overlooked. For learner to act on feedback it needs be descriptive and in depth. The feedback fails to highlight areas for development (enrichment) and provides no suggestions on how students can be able to tackle these.

Another issue concerning the feedback is comprehensibility. The audience of the feedback is children. The legibility of written feedback is essential if feedback is to be comprehensible. The feedback provided by the teacher is futile due to the illegible writing. Such unreadable written feedback hampers reading and understanding of feedback.

Teacher B-Lindo

Lindo's comments on the Low Performing learners (Script G & H) focus on the weaknesses of the students' response, more specifically on the structure of the response and use of English which fall under Category 2. There are no comments on the content of students' response; this might be as a result of the learners not writing much but a single paragraph.

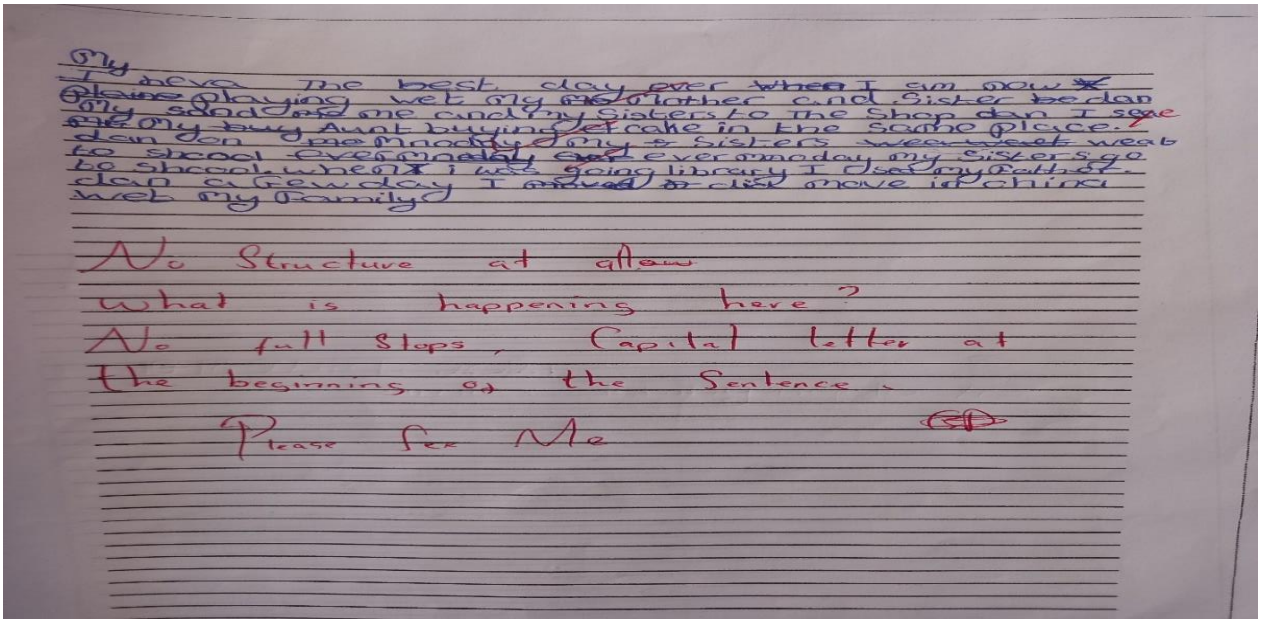
Script G-Low Performing.



Teacher's comment: Lack of structure. No use of punctuation marks like full stop. You should read more to improve your selling.

Whilst the teachers comment in the text provides some important feedback to the learner, the feedback focuses more on identification of faults than indicating strengths. The teacher's places emphasis on the learner's errors without recognizing the learners' strengths. The feedback given by the teacher bears very little reference to information which can be used to guide him / her towards achieving a specific outcome and identifying gaps in their existing knowledge or skills. The teachers should have included self-regulation feedback examples with hints and reflective prompts to direct the learners towards understanding particular writing conventions. Feedback suggesting how the learner can source examples to support her essay, or insightful clues to consider editing her work for errors would be useful for application in future assignments. If preparing for an assessment on a similar task, a precise sample would be more beneficial and much easier to put into practice going forward.

Script H-Low performing



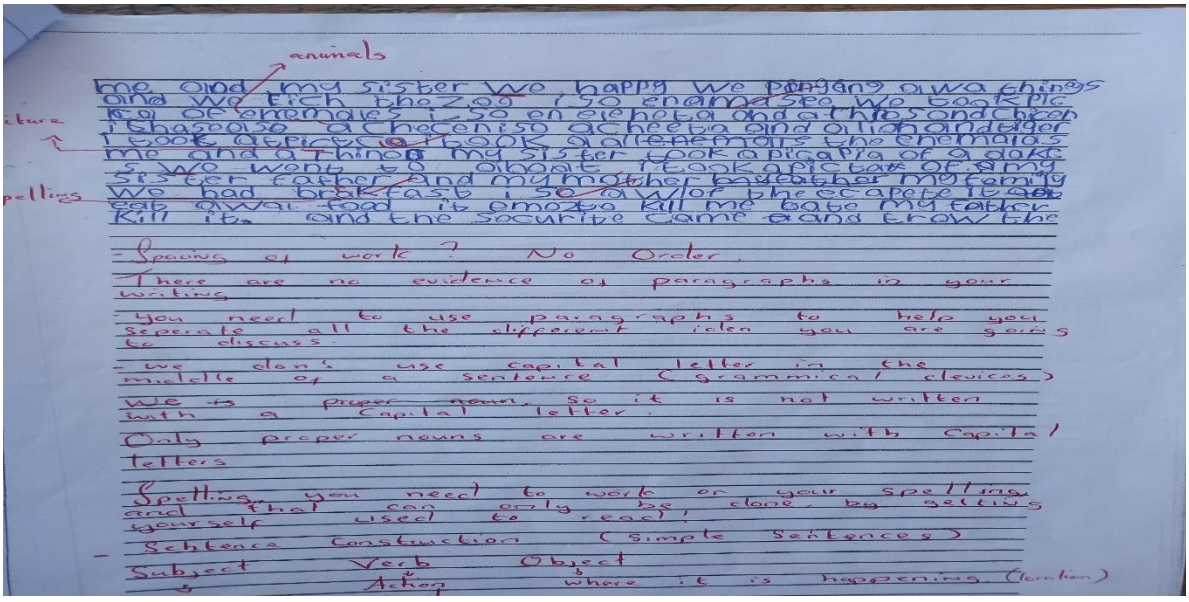
Teacher's comment: No structure at all. What is happening here? No full stop. Capital letters at the beginning of the sentence. Please see me.

The tone of the feedback is negative, condescending, and not sensitively handled. The teacher points to the learner all the negative aspect of his/her work without providing suggestions for further development. This feedback does not help students to move ahead one or two steps with reasonable effort. The feedback does not provide comments about mistakes and does not provide

specific recommendations for improvement, which motivates the learner to concentrate thoughtfully on the task. Learning is not enhanced since feedback is not complemented by corrective measures, which prepares the learner to engage subsequent assignments with greater success. The teacher's feedback should balance criticism of the student's work by suggesting ways to improve. Through feedback the teacher should indicate what is deficient in a student's work by first identifying what is there or has been done satisfactorily. Providing feedback to the learner on what they did not achieve without information them on how they can improve does not help him/her to 'close the gap between current and desired performance.

On Script I & J (Average Performing Learners) Lindo gave a lot of feedback. All the comments where about the use of English and the structure of the response. There are a few lines that highlight spelling errors and in one instance he has written the correct spelling for the learner. These feedback comments fall under Category 2.

Script I-Average Performing.

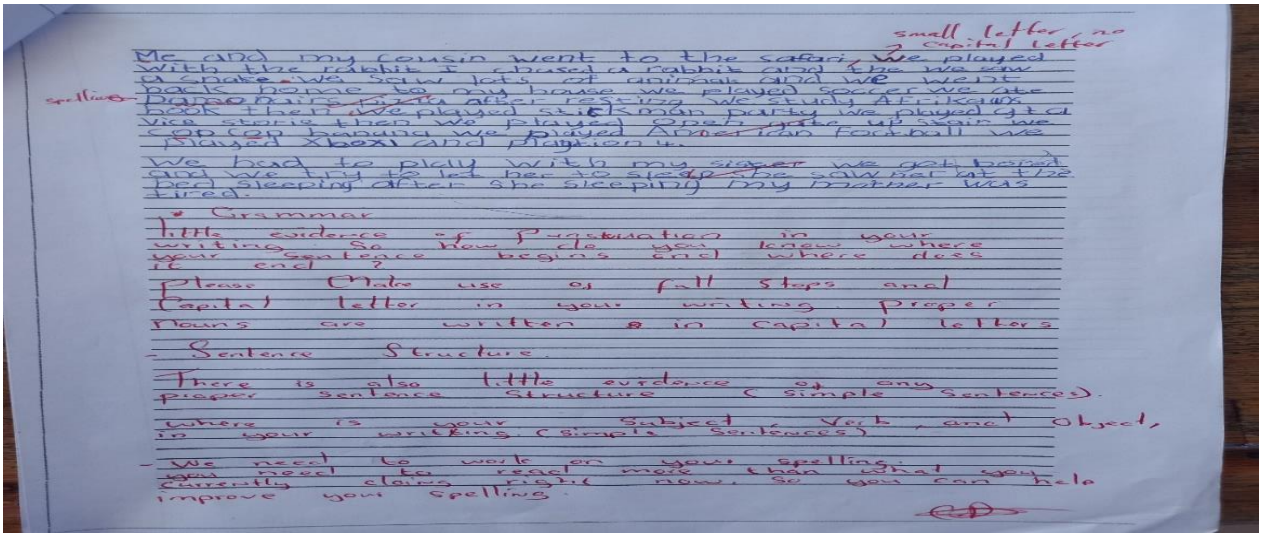


Teacher's comment: Spacing of work? No order. There are no evidence of paragraph in your writing. You need to use paragraphs to help you separate all the different ideas you are going to discuss. We don't use capital letters in the middle of a sentence. Only proper nouns are written in capital letter. Spelling, you need to work on your spelling and that can only be done by getting yourself used to read! Sentence construction. Subject verb agreement.

The teacher's feedback is helpful toward the learner, in both acquiring an understanding of the parts that need to be worked on and by recommending that the learner work on areas of writing. The feedback provides suggestions to help learners improve their work. The teacher provide elaborate feedback that may assist the learner in developing and untangling their writing, in order to move beyond where they are at present. The feedback included illustrating how the work should be done, negative examples that have to be avoided and precise writing ques guiding students to finish the work, were provided. However the comments do not indicate to the student which part of the task they did well. This could negatively affect the learner's confidence in doing a similar task in future and cause the learner to put less effort on the subsequent task. Balance is fundamental in providing effective feedback.

Whilst the teacher must also state what the learner done incorrectly and demonstrate ways of fixing it for subsequent tasks if they are to help a learner improve, the teacher should also comment on the positive aspect of the work to motivate learners to work harder. The amount of feedback on the students work is also a lot. There is a good number of explicit actions to be considered by the student but it may be overwhelming. It would have been better if the teacher prioritised three areas of improvement to work on for the following task. Commenting about spacing first mislead the student into believing that this is the most important part of the feedback. In reality, spacing is important, however the marks in the task are weighted more for the discussion and writing convention element. Perhaps putting the two points related to the discussion and writing conventions first will help the learner to prioritise the components they need to work on.

Script J- Average Performing.



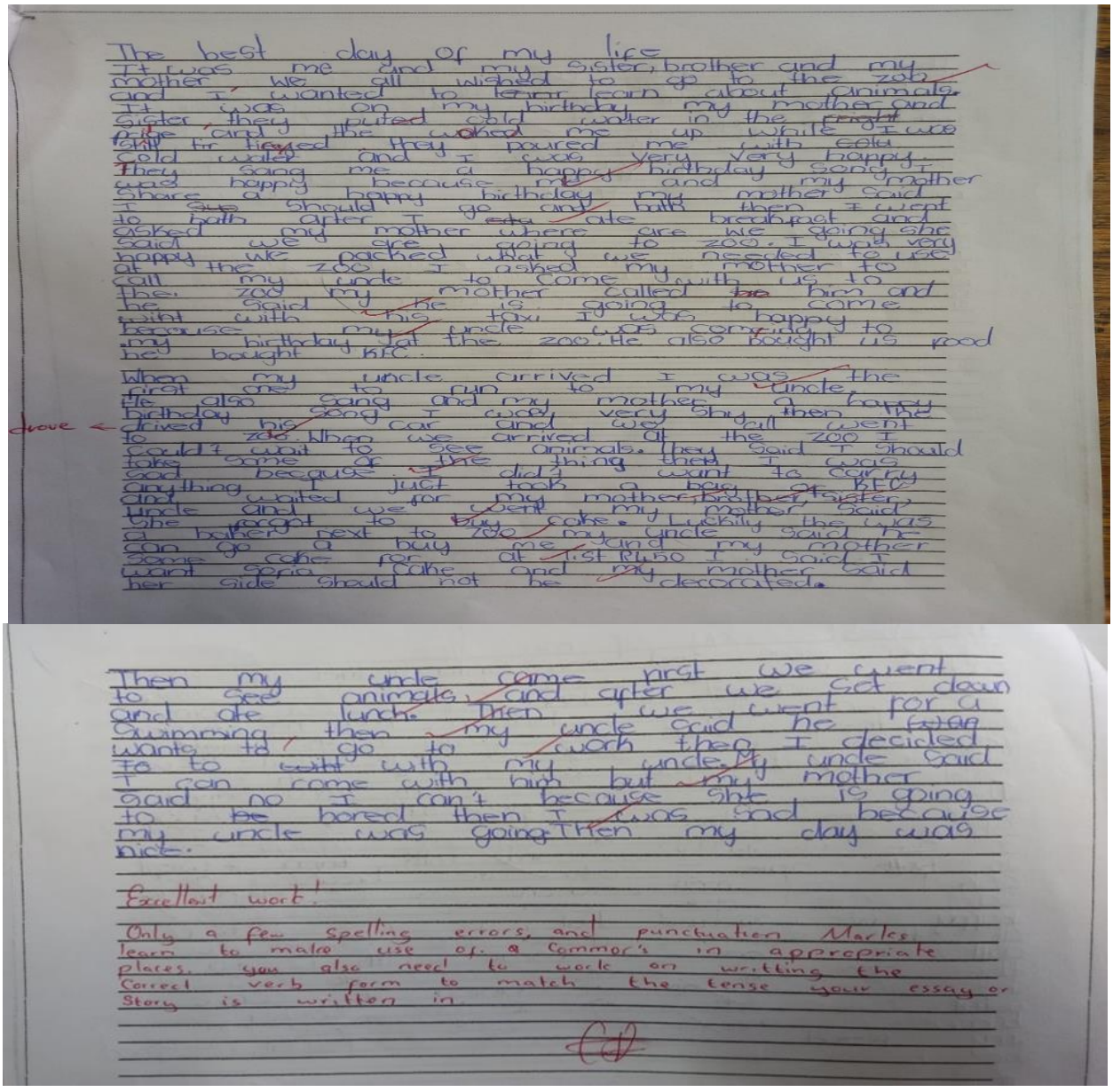
Teacher's comment: Little evidence of punctuation in our writing so how do you know where your sentence begin and where does it end. Please make use of full stop and capital letter in your writing. Proper nouns are written in capital letters. There is also little evidence of any sentence structure. Where is your subject, verb and object in your writing. We need to work on your spelling. You need to read more than what you currently doing right now, so you can help improve your spelling.

This type of feedback s very disheartening to a learner. Receiving no encouragement for their hard work may affect some learners negatively and cause them to be distraught. On the other hand, the feedback is explanatory and informs the learner where they can improve their work. The teacher provides feedback on how the text has been organized, where there might be gaps in the argument or inconsistencies, where the wording might be changed for greater impact and where the "rules and conventions" have not been applied. What could have enhanced the feedback is appropriate correction of the work as the feedback does not enlighten the student of the right way to use writing conventions or spell, rather it just shows the learners where the mistakes are. While the sentence structure and grammar errors in the work were highlighted, the teacher failed to clarify why it was wrong or even explain/illustration how it could have been improved. The feedback directed at the task is predominantly focused on answering the question "How am I going?" and overlooking the key question "Where to next?" which would provide learners with the information they need to improve in subsequent tasks. The feedback foregrounds a good number of detailed

actions to be considered by the learner but it might be overwhelming. The teacher could have prioritised and emphasized the top three actions the learner can take forward and improve.

For the Script K & L (High Performing Learners), Lindo gave motivational comments/praise (Category 3) and commented on the use of language (Category 2) however there are no comments on the content or what it is that the learners are being praised for. Additional there is a comment about spelling errors on Script K, some of the errors have been corrected and some underlined.

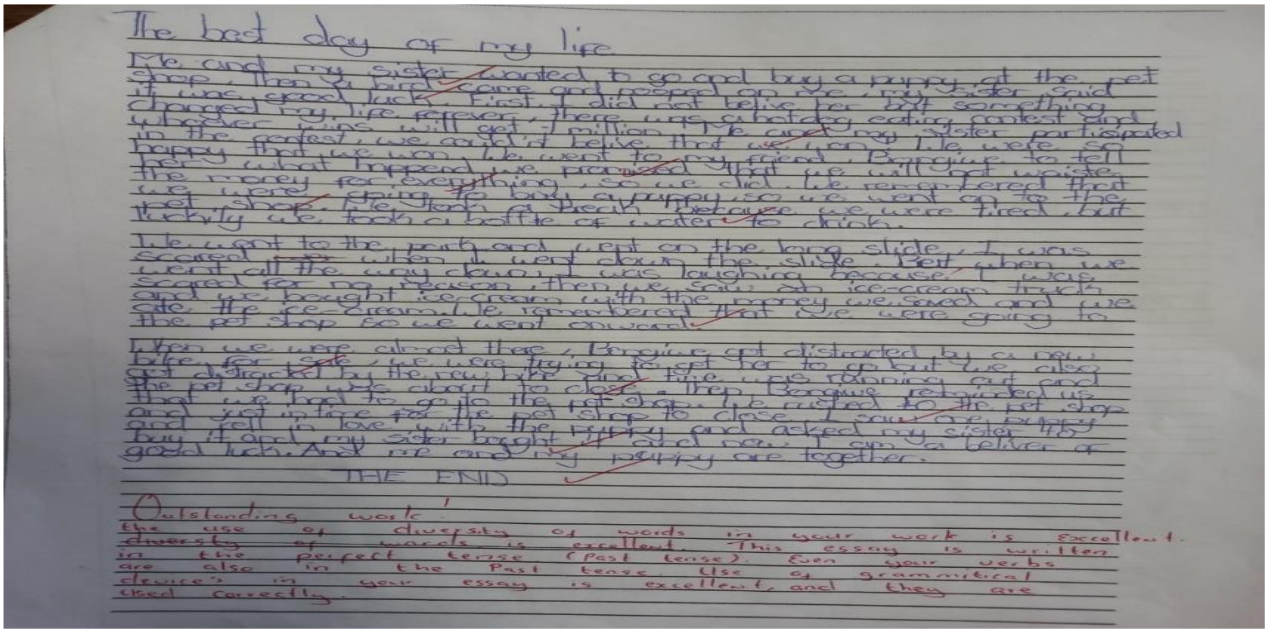
Script K-High Performing



Teacher's comment: Excellent work! Only a few spelling errors and punctuation marks. Learn to make use of commas in appropriate places. You also need to work on writing the correct verb form to match the tense your essay or story is written in.

The feedback provided by the teacher is constructive. The teacher is not only flagging errors, but also providing the correction to develop a deeper understanding in the learner. There is specific and direct feedback indicating where errors have occurred but, most importantly, communicating what is wrong with it. However the feedback is given without explicit praise of what the student has done well. This feedback does not sufficiently acknowledge appreciation for effort. Feedback should have a balance between error flagging, corrections, and positives of the task. Whilst the teachers did indicate the work was excellent, there are no comments on what a student has done well on in their piece of text .This may not enhance improvement on their next task.

Script-L-High Performing.


The best day of my life

Me and my sister wanted to go and buy a puppy at the pet shop then a bird came and pooped on me, my sister said it was good luck. First I did not belive her but something changed my life forever, there was a hot dog eating contest that whoever wins will get 1 million. Me and my sister participated in the contest, we could'nt belive that we won. We were soo happy that we won, We went to my friend, Bongiwe to tell her what happened we promised that we will not waste the money for everything, so we did. We remembered that we were going to buy a puppy, so we went on to the pet shop. We took a break because we were tired, but luckily we took a bottle of water to drink.

We went to the park and I got on the long slide, I was scared when I went down the slide but when we went all the way down I was laughing because I was so scared for my life, then we saw an ice-cream truck and we bought ice cream with the money we saved and we ate the ice-cream. We remembered that we were going to the pet shop so we went on cool.

When we were almost there, Bongiwe got distracted by a new bike, she was trying to get her to go but we also got distracted by the new bike and we were running out and the pet shop was about to close. Then Bongiwe reminded us that we had to go to the pet shop. We rushed to the pet shop and just in time for the pet shop to close I saw a puppy and fell in love with the puppy and asked my sister if I can buy it and my sister bought the puppy for me. I can't believe it good luck. And me and my puppy are together.

THE END

Outstanding work!
The use of diversity of words in your work is excellent. Diversity of words is excellent. This essay is written in the perfect tense (Past tense). Even your verbs are also in the Past tense. Use of grammatical devices in your essay is excellent, and they are used correctly.

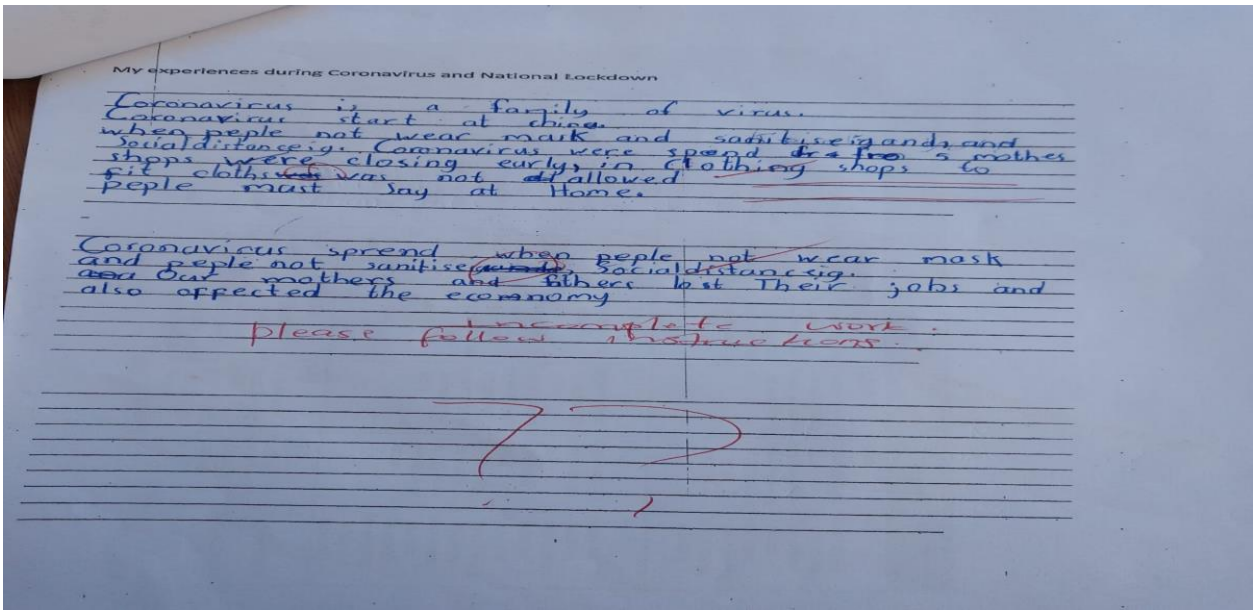
Teacher's comment: Outstanding work! The use of diversity of words in your words is excellent. This essay is written in the perfect tense (past tense) even your verbs are in the past tense. Use of grammatical devices in your essay is excellent and they are used correctly.

This feedback specific in terms of the work in relation to the criteria. The learner is given detailed feedback on the strength of the work, including information on why their work was perceived as being excellent. However even though this learner has performed well in a task he/ she still needs

to know what they should take forward to future assignments. What exactly can the learner do to achieve the similar success in subsequent tasks? The teacher also failed to inform the learner on areas of improvement even if they concern future learning. The teacher could have identified aspects that would help him/her in upcoming tasks, even if they were beyond this task.

Teacher C-Nolwazi.

Script M- Low Performing.

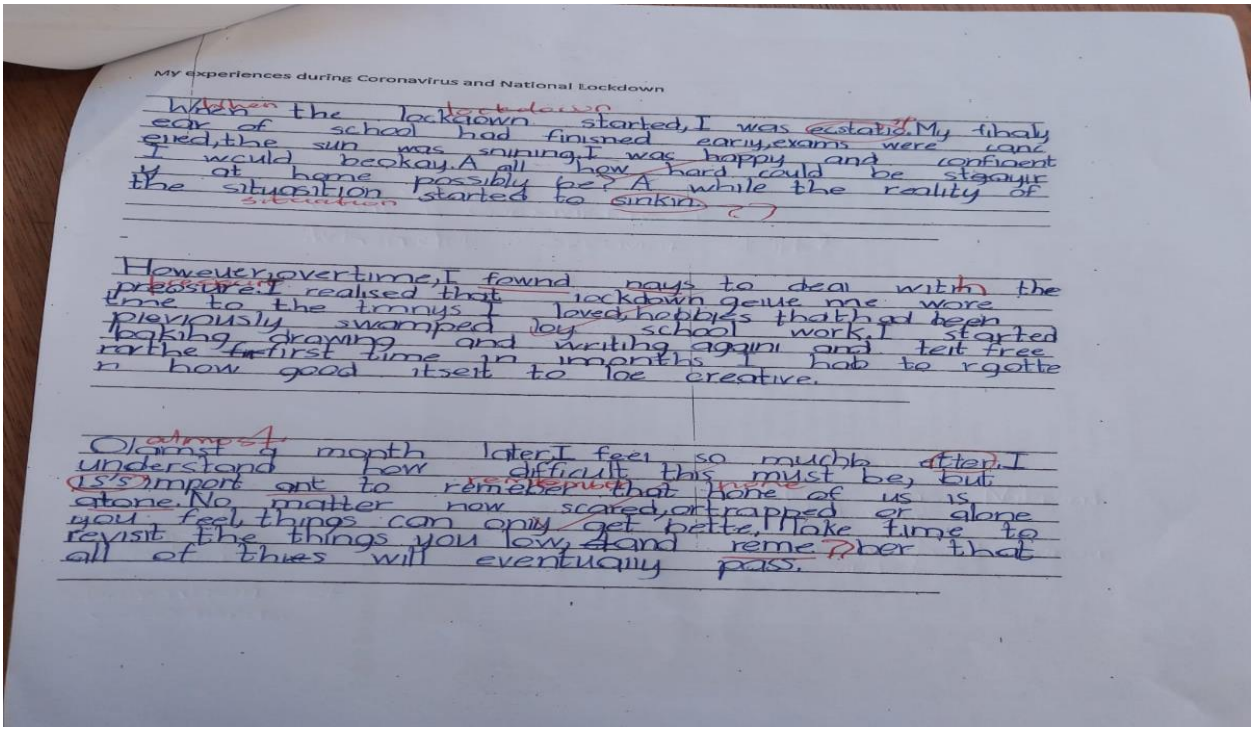


Teacher's comment: Incomplete work. Please follow instructions.

Nolwazi's feedback comment on Script M (Low Performing Learner) focus on structure (Category 2). Some words have been circled and redlines have been drawn next to the end of paragraph 1. It is not clear what message these symbols are meant to convey. There are also two big question marks at the end of the tasks. The feedback is vague. The feedback does not provide the learner information of how to bridge the gap between their current knowledge and the learning target. High-quality and good feedback provides information that speaks to the learner's performance on the assignment explaining the strengths, weaknesses of the work presented and explanations on why certain components are wrong. This feedback should be specific. On this script there is no specific guidance on how the learner can work towards reaching the desired performance. The teacher could have provided some specific actionable bits of feedback that the learner may possibly implement in their following assessment task. The teacher must not just ring errors as this leaves

the learner with no confidence for next time. Specific examples could have been used to show exactly where and how they could improve.

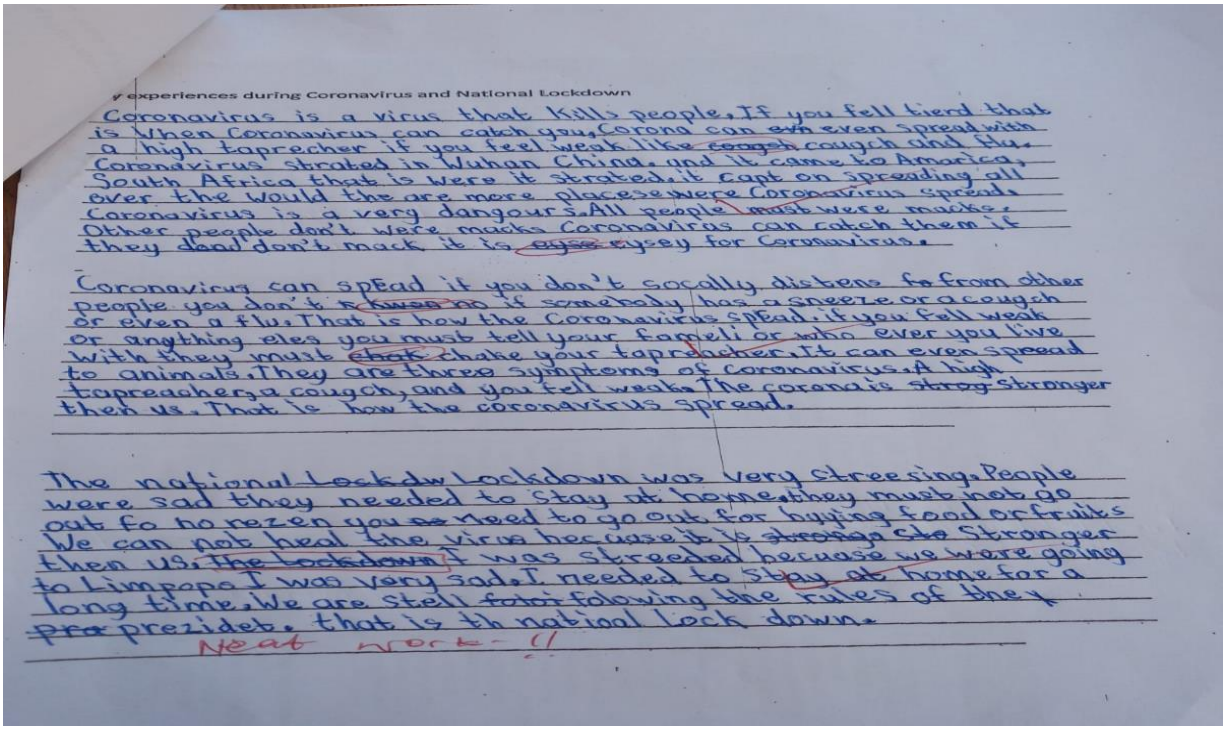
Script N- Low Performing.



On Script N (Low Performing Learner) she has mostly provided corrections on spelling errors (Category 2). Some words are circled or underlined but there are no comments on how well the learners has performed or where they have to improve. The feedback given by the teacher is ineffective. The teacher needs to be more specific with what they want the learner to write. They can provide learner with distinct examples on what can be done to obtain a better mark in future. One kind of deeper level feedback that is effective in improving learner understanding is feedback that uses cues. The reason that cues are so beneficial is that rather than merely flagging or fixing errors, this feedback helps the student in the retrieval and use of effective strategies to successfully perform the task (Butler & Winne, 1995). For instance, instead of rectifying a spelling mistake, the teacher give a prompt for a strategy or recommend proofreading. On the other hand, the teacher

might give a cue that enables error detection, and promotes self-regulated learning over time. (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Script O- Average Performing


experiences during Coronavirus and National Lockdown

Coronavirus is a virus that kills people. If you fell tierd that is when Coronavirus can catch you, Corona can even spread with a high taprecher if you feel weak like cough and flu. Coronavirus strated in Wuhan China. and it came to Amarica, South Africa that is were it strated. it capt on spreading all over the would the are more placese were Coronavirus spread. Coronavirus is a very dangours. All people were macks. Other people don't were macks Coronavirus can catch them if they don't mack it is eysey for Coronavirus.

Coronavirus can spEad if you don't socally distens from other people you don't if somebody has a sneeze or a cough or even a flu. That is how the Coronavirus spEad. if you fell weak or anything eles you must tell your fameli or who ever you live with they must chake your taprecher. It can even spread to animals. They are three symptoms of Coronavirus. A high tapreacher, a cough, and you fell weak. The corona is stronger then us. That is how the coronavirus spread.

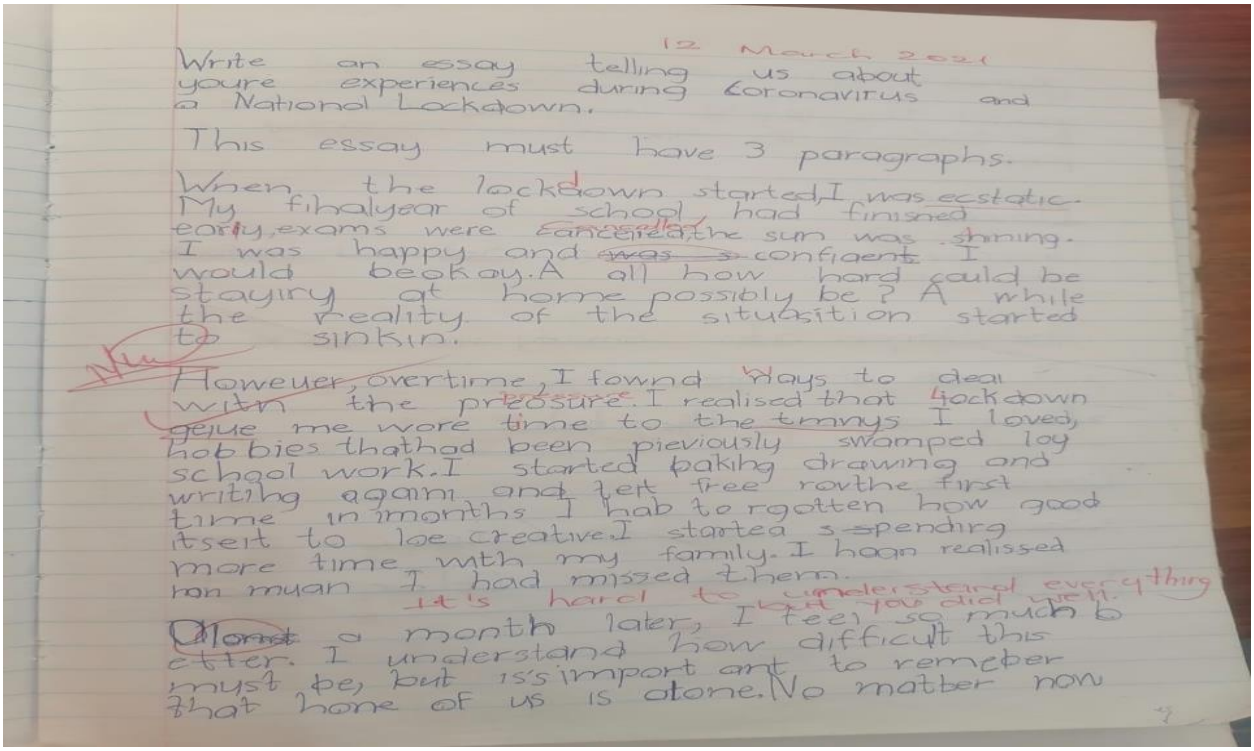
The national Lockdown was very streesing. People were sad they needed to stay at home. they must not go out fo no rezen you need to go out for buying food or fruits We can not heal the virus becuase it is Stronger then us. I was streeded becuase we were going to Limpopo I was very sad. I needed to stay at home for a long time. We are stell following the rules of the prezidet. that is th national lock down.

Neat work-!!

Teacher's comment: Neat work!!

On Script O (Average Performing Learner) gave praise only as feedback. She circled words that the learner has cancelled. Other than that there are no comments on where the learning is with regards to the learning goals and what to work on for future learning. The feedback given by the teacher is ineffective. The feedback has little to no effect on achievement because it gives the learner no information about how they performed on the task, or the processes that made them to commit errors or led to their successes. The feedback is not useful or specific in showing to to progress. Moreover, it does not refer to the assessment criteria the task is assessed against. Whilst the feedback is helpful in developing good writing skills and motivation, it does not help the learner improve their work.

Script P- Average Performing.



12 March 2021

Write an essay telling us about youre experiences during Coronavirus and a National Lockdown.

This essay must have 3 paragraphs.

When the lockdown started, I was ecstatic. My fihalyear of school had finished early, exams were cancelled, the sun was shining. I was happy and was confident I would beokay. A all how hard could be stayiny at home possibly be? A while the reality of the situasition started to sinkin.

However, overtime, I fownd ways to deal with the pressure. I realised that lockdown geave me wore time to the tmnys I loved, hobbies thathad been pieviously swamped by school work. I started baking drawing and writing again and felt free rovthe first time in months I hab to rgotten how good itseit to loe creative. I started spending more time with my family. I hoan realissed hon muan I had missed them.

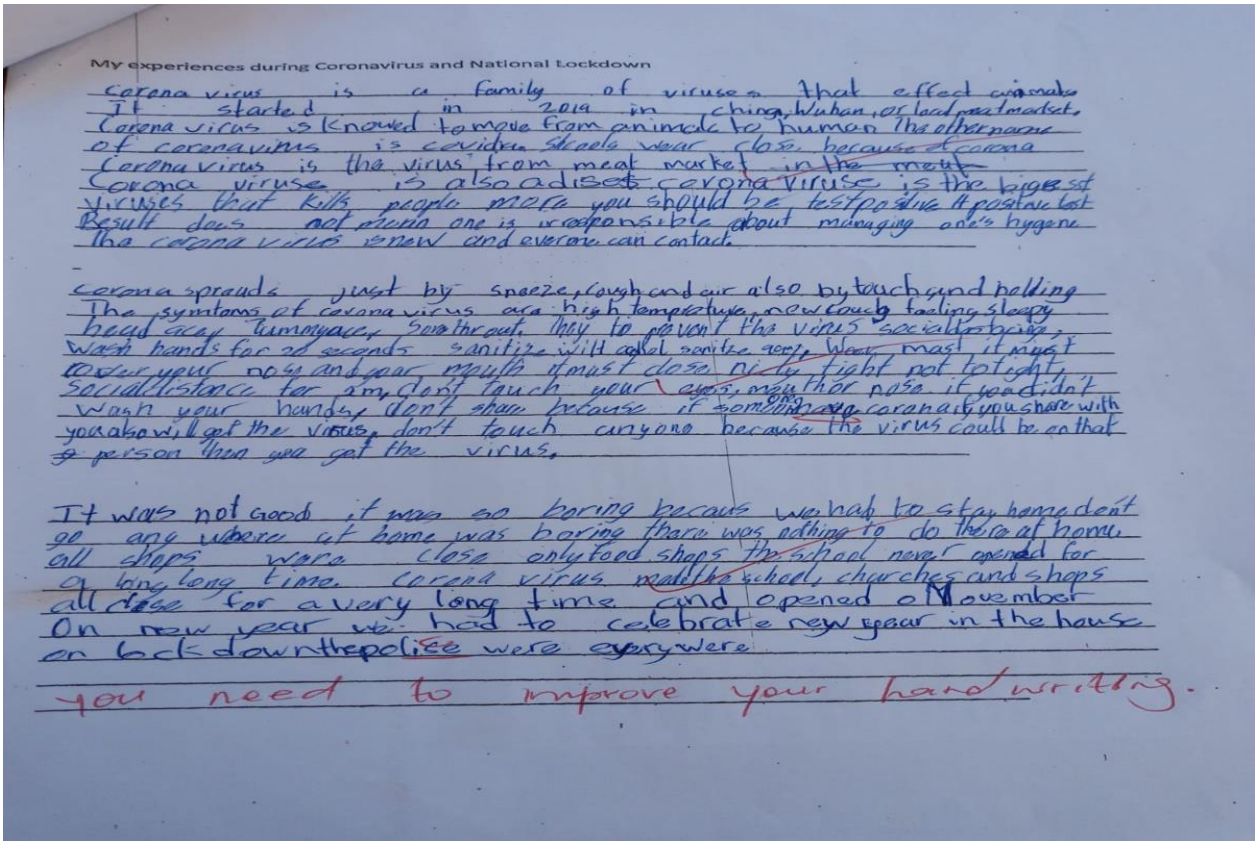
It's hard to understand everything but you did well.

Morrst a month later, I feel so much b etter. I understand how difficult this must be, but is's import ant to remeber that hone of us is alone. No matter how

Teacher's comment: It's hard to understand everything but you did well.

On Script P (Average Performing Learner) the teacher corrected spelling errors (Category 2) and praised the learner (Category 3). The comment stated that the teacher couldn't not understand everything but the learner did well however there is no explanation on where the learner did well. The comment "it's hard to understand everything but you did well" is in contradiction. The comments state "it is hard for the teacher to understand "but no feedback is provided what exactly is hard to understand about the learners work. For example where did the student go wrong and where they need to improve. The feedback does not give learners a clear understanding of how to act moving forward. Hence, this feedback is vague as it does not point to the learner's mistakes and how to identify their errors and strategies to improve their capacity. The feedback also does not indicate what aspect of the work in which the learner did well. Good feedback should promote deeper learning, however in this case it does not. The teacher corrects all the incorrect spelling and grammar for the learner. This does not provide opportunities for critical thinking and does not leave students anything to do.

Script Q-High Performing.



My experiences during Coronavirus and National Lockdown

Corona virus is a family of viruses that effect animals
It started in 2019 in China, Wuhan, or local meat market.
Corona virus is knowed to move from animals to human The other name
of corona virus is covidia. Strools wear close, because of corona
Corona virus is the virus from meat market in the meat
Corona viruse is also a diset corona viruse is the bigest
viruses that kills people more you should be test positive it positive test
Result does not mean one is irresponsible about managing one's hygene
The corona virus is new and everone can contact.

corona spreads just by sneeze, cough and air also by touch and holding
The symtoms of corona virus are high temperature, new cough feeling sleepy
head acey tummyace, Sore throat. They to prevent the virus social distance,
Wash hands for 20 seconds sanitize with alcohol sanitize 90%. Wear mast it must
cover your nose and your mouth it must close nicly tight not to tight,
social distance for 2m, don't touch your eyes, mouth or nose if you didn't
wash your hands, don't share because if someone have corona if you share with
you also will get the virus, don't touch anyone because the virus could be on that
person then you get the virus.

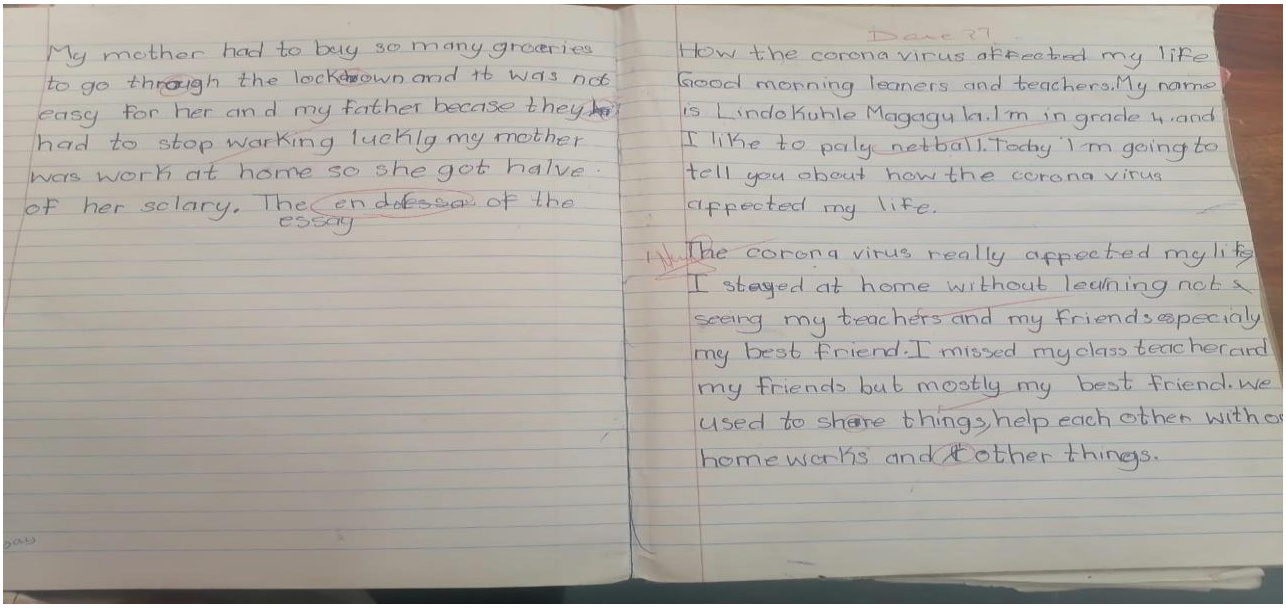
It was not good it was so boring becaus we had to stay home don't
go any where at home was boring there was nothing to do there at home.
all shops were close only food shops the school never opened for
a long long time. corona virus made the school, churches and shops
all close for a very long time and opened o November
On new year we had to celebrate new year in the house
on lockdown the police were everywere

you need to improve your handwriting.

Teacher's comment: You need to improve your handwriting.

For Script Q (High performing learner) the comment is urging the learner to improve the handwriting. There is a correction on spelling error. Again, there are no comments on the tasks; how the learner has performed. This feedback falls under category 2. The feedback given is vague, too general, lacking in guidance, focussed on negative aspects and unrelated to the learners learning criteria. The teachers gave feedback on surface features like handwriting with inadequate information for learner's construction and development of knowledge. The feedback does not provide the student with information of what they did wrong or right in relation to the assessment standards. The feedback does not confirms for the learner if his / her the work satisfies the learning objective. Hence, the feedback is irrelevant for subsequent assignments or future learning.

Script R-High Performing.



My mother had to buy so many groceries to go through the lockdown and it was not easy for her and my father becase they had to stop warking luckly my mother was work at home so she got halve of her salary. The end of the essay

How the corona virus affected my life

Good morning learners and teachers. My name is Lindokuhle Magagula. I'm in grade 4. and I like to paly netball. Today I'm going to tell you about how the corona virus appected my life.

The corona virus really appected my life I stayed at home without learning not s seeing my teachers and my friends especialy my best friend. I missed my class teacher and my friends but mostly my best friend. we used to share things, help each other with o homeworks and other things.

No category identified. The teacher had marked learners work but has not given feedback. In order to improve, learners need to receive and act upon feedback. No feedback is given to the learner which point to weaknesses and suggestions for improvement. Without feedback, the learner cannot generate performance-relevant information to enhance his/ her work or learning strategies. Learners will not develop the skills to self-regulate and monitor their performance. Lack of feedback makes learner unaware of their misconceptions or deficient task strategies. The task itself becomes pointless. Whatever the relationship between teaching and the assessment system, in most cases each learner's sense of individual accomplishment, enthusiasm, courage and prospects of improvement will be directly associated with the nature and usefulness of the feedback that they are given on their work. For it is assessment feedback that has the ability to turn this work into a tool for the further development for the learner.

4.3. What are the teacher' perceptions of the usability of written feedback to second language learners? (Participants' responses to the interview questions).

As already outlined in the methodology chapter, once I collected all the data, I carefully listened to and transcribed the participants' responses from the interviews. After I carefully read through the transcripts and identified the patterns which I open coded and developed themes. From the participants' responses, six themes arose and gave an insight about teachers' perceptions of the usability of written feedback to L2 learners**.**

4.3.1. Timeliness of feedback

The first sub-theme which emerged from teachers' perceptions of the usability of written feedback to L2 learners was the issue of timing of feedback. The teachers' talk revealed how the issue of timeliness had influenced the usability of assessment feedback. Teachers spoke about how feedback was not adequately utilized in improving learners writing due to delayed feedback. The feedback was considered not helpful because when received, learners would have already forgotten the content that was assessed and moved onto the next topic. The teachers spoke of how overcrowding in their schools served as an barrier to providing timely feedback, resulting in learners not putting into action the feedback. Responses extracted from the interviews read:

"My feedback is often delayed … If I had more time or less learners I think I would give better feedback while students are still mindful of the topic. There are too many learners in the classes and too much admin work to do. By the time my feedback reaches the student they forget how the feedback is useful. Some they don't even bother about the feedback." (Cindy)

"Our classes are overcrowded and our children suffer because they are not getting the feedback on time to improve their writing. After a few weeks when I do return their assessment task and provide feedback on grammar and choosing the suitable words, they have forgotten the task. The feedback becomes useless. They repeat the same mistakes". (Lindo)

"Giving formative feedback takes long because of the number of learners that I teach. When the learners receive their feedback for example on the content of their essay, they consider the feedback ineffective. I usually do not receive any queries or follow up when the feedback is received." (Nolwazi)

The excerpts above reveal that delayed written formative feedback disallowed the effective usability of written formative feedback because second language learners received it after they had forgotten the assessed topics and there was no time for them to act on the feedback. No teacher reported an instance when they gave timely feedback. By implication teachers' delayed written feedback to second language learners' written formative assessment constrained the identification of areas of strength and gaps in learners' writing at the time when it was needed. Delayed formative assessment feedback was exacerbated by overcrowded classes. Overcrowding in the class influenced the way in which educators gave feedback. Teachers frequently gave assessment feedback after a long period of time because of challenges overcrowding and the pressure associate with their work. Because of the delayed feedback learners did not seek out and act on the feedback provided to improving the quality of their learning. They ignored the feedback received and replicated the same errors. All teachers asserted that when feedback is delayed, student regards it is useless as it is not useful to move students in their learning.

4.3.2. Amount of feedback

The second sub-theme which emerged from teachers' perceptions of the usability of written feedback to L2 learners was the issue of amount of formative feedback. Teachers in this study reported that the amount of formative assessment feedback influenced learner's usability of the feedback. In particular, teacher's formative assessment feedback was inconsistent in relation to both quality and quantity. Where a learner's attention was drawn to a misunderstanding, there was brief or no supporting comment. Teachers perceived this as particularly unhelpful to the student. Teacher's talks also revealed that learners value grades as a yardstick to measure their performance, and do not ask for formative comments to help with their comprehension. The teachers 'responses read:

"I don't really get time to give a lot of feedback to the learner although it is the ideal way of helping the learner to understand the work. So when the answer is wrong I would then write the answer for them with the hope that they will go back and look at it. My feedback is very brief on the task. For example I write "There is no topic sentence in this paragraph" My learners do not use the feedback because I see the same mistake over and over."(Cindy)

"My formative assessment feedback is not as detailed as I know it is supposed to be. This is due to curriculum constraints. In creative writing for example I just write "Nice story". I don't waste time writing long feedback as learners just want one comment: "You passed" (Nolwazi)

A teacher also reported that she devotes numerous hours to providing feedback that is habitually disregarded or misconstrued. She spoke of her lengthy feedback could help learners identify their strengths and weaknesses and bring about a sense of achievement yet learners are often scared to act on the feedback.

The amount of feedback I give depends on the context. When the work is very impressive I will make a comment. When the learner is really struggling I will also make a comment for the purposes of having learners see what they did well and what they are lacking in. I spend long hours giving very lengthy comments and I think learners get scared and maybe that's the reason they do not use it (Lindo)

Teacher Cindy and Nolwazi spoke of how shortage of instructional time and curriculum constraints served as possible barriers to the implementation of effective formative assessment for learning in the English subject. For teacher Cindy time was a barrier in her giving detailed feedback. She would do the correction for the learners without providing cues. Her feedback was brief hence she maintained that students did not see the value. For teacher Nolwazi curriculum constraints prevented her from implementing formative assessment feedback strategies for the rationale of improving students learning. Her comments on student's formative task were not detailed because learners just wanted evaluative feedback and was not interested in the feedback for future improvements. For teacher Lindo good formative feedback was given to learners when they perform well or poorly in their writing activities. However, teacher Lindo maintained that sometimes her comments are lengthy and students do not use it.

4.3.3. Specificity of formative feedback

The third sub-theme which emerged from teachers' perceptions of the usability of written feedback to L2 learners was the issue of specificity of formative feedback. The specificity of feedback influenced how learners understood and acted on the feedback. All of the teacher's feedback focused on knowledge or errors of as opposed to and suggestions for improvement. Teachers in this study reported that gave written comments that helped learners see their mistakes. However,

the feedback that pointed out specific sections and/or areas of their work that were incorrect was not supported by constructive feedback to provide a pathway to improvement for the learners to enhance their work. The participants feedback were brief statements of they work which did not enhance student learning and motivation. Responses extracted from the interviews read:

"My feedback focused mainly on the incorrect response and spelling mistakes. I would expect my learners to fix the incorrect responses for the next essay but usually they do not. For example I would write "what's the meaning of this sentence? in their essay. I am not sure if they understand the comments and my expectations". (Cindy)

"If I'm making any corrections to their writing that takes forever because half of it is wrong, spelt incorrectly, sentences that do not make sense. My comments indicate to learners mainly of their mistakes. But it is frustrating to note that they usually do not take that feedback. Instead they see my comments as fault picking. They don't see the value of the feedback" (Nolwazi)

"There are too many learners that need individual attention but I can't help all of them every day. I just focus on a few that really need help in their writing. For example: your work does not make sense and add all the issues in their task. I think students may need more than "your essay doesn't make sense" and adding corrections in the work. Maybe than the argument can improve".(Lindo)

All three participants gave feedback which pointed to knowledge of errors as opposed to descriptive feedback. For teacher Cindy her feedback focused mainly on learner's incorrect responses and technical issues of the work such as spelling. Similarly, teacher Nolwazi focused on focused on learner's errors and mainly pointed to learners' errors without suggestions for improvement. For teacher Lindo the feedback provided to learners also mainly pointed to the incorrect responses in the learners' work. All participants add that learners were unlikely to take heed of the feedback due to them not understanding what to do with the comments. For teacher Nolwazi learners saw her comments of the errors as fault picking. What emerged from the excerpts above is that teachers who took part in this study provided feedback which did not specify areas in their work that was well done and areas that needed improvement, thus the feedback was considered to be unhelpful in preparing learners for future learning events. The responses above suggest that learners did not understand and value the written feedback because the feedback did not specify their learning progress and how they could improve. The written feedback only

specified the weak sections of learners work without providing provide information that can led to greater possibilities for the learning of English to second language learners.

4.3.4. English Proficiency of L2 learners.

The fourth sub-theme which emerged from teachers' perceptions of the usability of written feedback to L2 learners was the issue English proficiency of L2 learners. Teachers who participated in this study reported L2 English learners had limited exposure to the language hence a poor grasp of the formative assessment feedback given. The teachers spoke of how learners who might have acquired incorrect prior knowledge of English or in some cases very limited knowledge found it challenging to engage with the formative assessment feedback.

"It is not even their second language, some of them it's their third or fourth language. There is no difference, if I make the learner do an activity three times. They are still going to make the same mistakes because of the way they understand the language. They just don't grasp it when it's written- they just don't write correctly. They write it the way they are used to speaking no matter how many times you give them feedback saying this is how it is written" (Cindy)

"I don't know, their English skills has not been developed well so they are still not understanding our feedback which is written in English. They are not reading and writing regularly so when we give them feedback in English they struggle. At home they switch to their mother tongue and this adds to their lack of understanding" (Lindo)

"These kids are young too young. They didn't do grade 3 properly. Some of them do not understand even if you ask them to read simple sentences. They can't. So when I mark and add a brief comment they can't understand". (Nolwazi)

What emerged from the excerpts above is that learners do not possess sufficient English to understand teacher's feedback. For teacher Cindy, learners whose English is not sufficient struggle to make sense of the feedback despite constant reiteration. The absence of willingness or what seemed to be lack of interest in the learning of English amongst the learners seems to be the result of the lack of crucial English language proficiency in understanding the assessment feedback. For teacher Lindo learners adopt their mother tongue at home and often code switch and this in turn

affects the learners' understanding of the assessment feedback. Such failure hinders the likelihood of any feedback being utilized or acted upon in a formative manner. By implication than it is not only the learners' internal motivation that matters, but the attitudes of the family towards the English language in aiding learners to understand the assessment feedback. The above responses also emphasize the importance of feedback language in clarifying feedback information to learners. The findings suggest that feedback provided in a language that learners do not understand decreases its usability. The findings also suggest that feedback that is too complex contributes to the lack of engagement and retention of feedback on the side of the learners.

4.3.5. Parental Involvement.

The fifth sub-theme which emerged from teachers' perceptions of the usability of written feedback to L2 learners was the issue parental involvement. Teachers spoke of how to learn English, L2 learners have to continuously develop and master speaking, reading and writing skills. Teachers expressed that, oppotunities to do so seem to be limited to the classroom as parents also struggle to grasp the language English and some seem to be preoccupied to help their children with basic skills resulting in poor or incorrect understanding of the assessment feedback. Teacher's responses are as follows:

"*I think its support structures at home. Children who have less support struggle more. So if they don't get enough time to practice the English language they suffer when we give written feedback. Parents need to encourage learners also to start reading, writing and speaking in English at home. If they encourage constant use of home language, then our efforts in school is pointless". (Cindy)*

"*Some leaners make the same errors over and over. It is disappointing. I try to call the parents but they don't come. The learner themselves do not care. Involving parents in assessment feedback can provide teachers with useful information to assist with each child's learning but the parents don't care. They do not support us as teachers in helping their children" (Nolwazi)*

"*The parents of our learners do not support their English proficiency. When we give assessment feedback we expect the parent to read the learners assessment and assist the learner to improve the English proficiency. Reading, in particular, improves greatly when parents and children read*

together at home. Reading aloud with a child contributes significantly to the child's reading abilities. But parents don't attend our meeting to understand the feedback we give. Hence learners themselves don't bother to take our feedback seriously" (Lindo)

What emerged from the excerpts above is that lack of parents' involvement to engage with formative assessment contributes to poor academic performance of their children in the English subject. Parental participation in assessment feedback was limited because of illiteracy, ignorance, and neglect of English. Learners failed to use the assessment feedback because there was a lack of support from parents to encourage deep learning of the second language. Most students would learn English reading, writing and speaking at school but go home and speak their mother tongue. This disjuncture exasperated the poor literacy of their English as there is support from parents to assist or encourage their learners and hence learners did not see how the feedback given could support their learning.

4.3.6. Dialogic Feedback.

The fifth sub-theme which emerged from teachers' perceptions of the usability of written feedback to L2 learners was the issue of dialogic feedback. Teachers who participated in this study reported that learners are passive recipients of the formative assessment feedback. Learners assume that assessment feedback is done to them. Hence there is minimal dialogue of the feedback when received by learners. The use written formative feedback is not utilized because learners do not understand how to use it due to lack of dialogue of feedback information. This was reported by teachers as follows:

"Generally they are just receiving feedback but they do not really do anything with it. They are just getting feedback from me with no conversation about the feedback. There is no time for this process. A few learners do tell me they don't know what to do with the written feedback" (Cindy)

"Most of learners are just recipients of the feedback. When I give them formative feedback on their task they don't engage with it .When I ask if they require clarity on any comment they don't respond. I think this is because they do not understand some of the words I use to comment on their work." (Lindo)

"Learners do not want to use the written feedback if it is negative. They assume that feedback should be positive only. Okay if the work is incomplete for example, I expect them to complete it.

If I know they need more details on their task …sometimes I write "Please see me", they never do. If we have more hours in a school day I could have sat with each learner and discussed their progress against the rubric."(Nolwazi)

What emerged from the above responses is that learners are passive recipients of feedback and not co-constructors and active participants in the feedback process. Learners are not in conversation with the feedback they are given and do see how the feedback will be beneficial in their learning. Time constraints serves as a barrier for students and teacher engaging in the assessment feedback. Teacher Nolwazi asserts that learners also do not want to engage in the feedback if it is negative, they prefer positive feedback. Learners probably feel demotivated by negative formative feedback which is not accompanied by suggestions for improvement. Further effective feedback should focus on both positive and negative aspect of the students work. Assertions from all three participants reveal underlying perceptions of feedback as something that is given to students. Furthermore, teacher's perception of feedback might still be rooted in traditional or behaviorist ideology. It suggests that teachers still perceive feedback as a unidirectional process instead of a bidirectional one as expressed in teachers' conceptions of feedback.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter outlined the findings of the study. Semi-structured interviews and document analysis were as data-collection method with the aim of giving participants a voice about their understandings of the usability of formative assessment feedback. The data was analyzed using Brown and Glover's (2006) framework to address research question one and Creswell's (2009) six steps of analysis to address research question 2. Analysis of the content of teacher's comments on student's assignments showed that the teachers mainly provided feedback on the development of students writing skills such as English usage, presentation, grammar and writing structure. Feedback was pointed to the incorrect use of grammar, spelling and presentation without an explanation of why the correction should be made. Without an explanation when providing skills-based feedback, students cannot use to feedback into their future work. In terms of category 2-comments on content, the teacher corrected learner's grammar and tense without providing cues to the learners. Such corrective feedback robs the learner of the opportunity to correcting his own errors. The feedback from all three teachers also was also minimal in terms of encouraging students to engage with their feedback and improving their later work and learning (Category 3). A small

amount of motivational feedback, intended to inspire positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem was evident in the written feedback (Category 4). Encouragingly, there was no feedback was that was demotivational (Category 5). Teachers did not provide personal judgement of a student's performance.

The findings from the semi structured interviews revealed that learners have had negative experiences of receiving written formative feedback in grade 4 First additional language, specifically- timing of feedback, amount of feedback, specificity of feedback, English proficiency of learners, parental involvement and dialogic feedback influenced the usability of assessment feedback. In the semi-structured teachers revealed that when learners received which was delayed feedback, it hindered the usefulness of formative feedback. In terms of specificity of formative assessment feedback, teachers in this study reported that learners did not use feedback information, as they were unsure about what was required of them to improve the quality of their work. The amount of assessment feedback teachers gave to learners were sometimes too brief with details contained in feedback inadequate to allow the learner to proceed or too lengthy which overwhelmed learners to act on the suggestions for improvement. The teachers spoke of how learners who might have acquired incorrect prior knowledge of English or in some cases very limited knowledge found it difficult to engage with the formative assessment feedback. Further, teachers expressed that opportunities to engage in assessment feedback was limited to the classroom as parents appeared to be preoccupied to help their children make sense of the feedback resulting in poor or incorrect understanding of the English language and finally teachers who took part in this study reported that students were passive recipients of the formative assessment feedback. Learners assumed that assessment feedback is done to them and not with them. Having discussed the findings that emerged from the study, the following section presents a synthesis of the data and the theoretical understandings.

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CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. **Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I analyzed the data generated through document analysis and semi-structured using the thematic analysis. This chapter concludes the thesis by synthesizing the core arguments and present my conclusions. In this chapter, I firstly outline a summary of the chapters in this study and discuss the findings of this study. Thereafter, I address some limitations of this study and offer suggestions for addressing the challenges that arise from the findings. Lastly, I provide recommendations for future research.

5.2. Summary of the Chapters

There are five chapters in this study with each chapter having a particular focus of its own. Nonetheless, the chapters are not disjointed; they are interrelated and as a whole explore feedback practices and perceptions of English teachers to second language learners.

Chapter 1 clarified "Home Language" and "First Additional Language". A brief discussion of the weak English proficiency levels among English second language (ESL) ensued. Providing assessment feedback in schools as an important part of the teaching and learning was further discussed. The increasing importance that writing has for schooling as then discussed Provision of a variety of assessment tasks and effective feedback is then emphasised in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for English, to assist students obtain and develop skills. Assessment and Teacher feedback is then discussed as a way of giving support young learners throughout the critical period of application of their newly acquired language. Given the significance of assessment feedback in meaningful learning, the purpose of the study is to explore the formative assessment feedback practices and perceptions of grade 4 English teachers in South Africa.Chapter 1 also outlined the research objectives and key research questions, and gave a brief discussion of the study context, theoretical framework, the research design and methodology that was utilized in this study. The chapter concluded with an outline of the chapters.

Chapter 2 provided a literature review for this study. The literature review was presented thematically – this was useful in helping me identify academic discourses relating to this study as

well as in helping me identify the gap in knowledge, which gave relevance to this study. The literature revealed that most teachers and students have had negative experiences of written formative feedback due to factors relating to timing, amount of feedback specificity, proficiency of the receiver of the feedback, issues concerning parental involvement and the dialogic nature of formative assessment feedback. The general pattern was the mismatch between students' feedback needs and feedback supplied.

Chapter 2 also discussed the theoretical framework employed in this study and its relevance for this study. The theoretical framework used in this study was the social constructivism theory (Vygotsky, 1978). From the social constructivist perspective, feedback is viewed as any information about the gap between the learner's actual level and the potential level of development, which is used to modify the gap in some way (Vygotsky, 1978). For learners to move from their actual to their potential level of development, teachers should provide effective formative feedback.

Chapter 3 discussed the research methodology and design, were I gave reasons as to why I chose to adopt a qualitative case study approach and to locate this study in the interpretive paradigm. The chapter firstly outlined the philosophical and methodological positioning in general and then discusses the case study approach that was used to explore the formative assessment feedback practices and perceptions of grade 4 English teachers in South Africa. Thereafter, it provided a description of the research context, the sampling strategies and data generation methods that were used in this study. The study used purposive and convenience sampling strategies and employed semi-structured interviews and document analysis as data generation methods. The chapter also discussed the data analysis methods employed in this study. Thematic analysis was a suitable to address research question two and to identify key themes and address the research questions. The chapter concluded with appropriate and necessary considerations of the research by taking into consideration issues of trustworthiness, ethics and methodological limitations.

Chapter 4 presented the findings of this study. Analysis of the content of teacher's comments on student's assignments showed that the teachers mainly provided feedback on the development of students writing skills such as English usage, presentation, grammar and writing structure. Feedback was pointed to the incorrect use of grammar, spelling and presentation without an explanation of why the correction should be made. Without an explanation when providing skills

based feedback, students cannot use to feedback into their future work. In terms of category 2- comments on content, the teacher corrected learner's grammar and tense without providing cues to the learners. Such corrective feedback deprives the learner of the opportunity to rectify his own errors. The feedback from all three teachers also was also minimal in terms of encouraging students to engage with their feedback and improving their later work and learning (Category 3). In addition, a small amount of motivational feedback, intended to inspire positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem was evident in the written feedback (Category 4). Encouragingly, there was no feedback was that was demotivational (Category 5).Teachers did not provide personal judgement of a student's performance. The findings from the semi structured interviews revealed that learners have had negative experiences of receiving written formative feedback in grade 4 First additional language, specifically- timing of feedback, amount of feedback, specificity of feedback, English proficiency of learners , parental involvement and dialogic feedback influenced the usability of assessment feedback.

Finally, chapter 5 discusses the findings with reference to the theoretical framework and in relation to the literature discussed in Chapter 2. In addition, the chapter outlines the summary and addresses some limitations of this study. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

5.3 Discussion of findings

In this section, the findings of the study are discussed in relation to existing literature.

RQ1: **From a formative perspective, what are teachers' written feedback practices to 2nd Language English learners?**

The feedback analysis enabled the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of feedback provided in relation to the conditions and principles for good feedback outlined by Brown & Glover, (2006). The majority of the feedback given by the teachers were aligned to category 2 of Brown and Glover (2006) framework. Feedback was skills focused and designed to clarify expected disciplinary standards. This category of feedback provided greater consideration to students' grammar, spelling and issues of presentation. Feedback was pointed to the incorrect use of grammar, spelling and presentation without an explanation of why the correction should be made. Without an explanation when providing skills based feedback, students cannot use to feedback into their future work (Brown & Glover, 2006). Overall teachers placed more focus on

non-disciplinary issues, such as spelling and grammar, and focused less on disciplinary issues, such as the student's facilitation of critical analysis of the work. The feedback therefore does not help students progress in their learning by stimulating student engagement with disciplinary problems (Yang & Carless, 2013). What was also evident in the feedback under category 2 was feedback in the form of rectifying learners' mistakes. The teacher' corrected learners grammar and tense without providing cues to the learners. Such corrective feedback deprives the learner the opportunity to correct his own errors. Carnell (2002) states that feedback is not a simple process of correction. Rather as Vygotsky correctly stated the teacher should scaffold the feedback. Scaffolded feedback supports the learner to overcome challenges faced during a task. This scaffold feedback make learners able to surpass their ZPD; constructing their knowledge "by asking and being asked questions" (Hargreaves et al., 2000, p.31).

Teachers provided a lesser amount of content specific feedback (Category 1). Most written comments were at the level of simply acknowledging an issue and did not involve an explanation of why this improvement should be made. Feedback of error/ misconception, omission of relevant material and irrelevant material included were not followed by cues to assist learners in correcting the issue and were feedback did not subsequently provide an explanation of why this correction should be made. This type of feedback does not enable learners to make the links between the feedback and their own assignment, so they may reduce the gap between their current and desired performance (Brown & Glover, 2006). Hence the depth of explanation provided in the written feedback does not enable students to better interpret, process and act upon their feedback; conditions which Brown and Glover (2006) note in their framework as central to the development of dialogic feedback. This type of feedback raises some concerns as the absence of explanation means that the learner may be unaware of exactly the nature of the error, inaccuracy or in the case of positive indication comments, specifically what has to be repeated in future tasks. This is in line with the report of Carless (2006) where learners commonly report that feedback does not give sufficient information on the improvements that are needed. What was noticeable from the scripts from all teachers was that comments mainly on low and average scripts had more feedback than high performing learners. There were more annotations on lower and average marked scripts , reason being there was a greater gap between attainment and target , and therefore more errors to rectify than on the high-performing scripts. However too many comments on a low-performing/weak, average script may overwhelm a learner. Boud and Carless (2018) maintain that

rather than giving feedback on every mistake the comments may target a few key improvement areas for learners to focus on. For Boud and Carless (2018) also taking the chance to add stretching comments to the high-performing/stronger scripts may embolden learners to go above and beyond the requirements of the task set and to stretch their learning further. So in essence the amount of feedback given by teachers should encourage deep learning.

The feedback from all three teachers also was minimal in terms of encouraging students to engage with their feedback and improving their later work and learning (Category 3). The students received from all teachers a small amount of feedback intended to encourage *further learning*. The feedback did not aim to facilitate reflection and self-regulation (Nicol, 2009, Yang& Carless , 2013). Amua-Sekyi (2016) posits that information it is regarded as feedback only when it is used to amend the gap in learner's knowledge. This echoes clearly with the Vygotsky's (1978) argument that the feedback process operates within the Zone or Proximal Development. Feedback functions to take learners from a point of misunderstanding to understanding through a knowledgeable other. This in turns closes the gap between the student's current status and desired performance.

A small amount of motivational feedback, intended to inspire positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem was also evident in the written feedback (Category 4). Written feedback provided praise for the students' achievement. Commonly, such praise comments were simply in the form of 'well done' or 'neat work'. Whilst positive feedback is encouraged as it incites positive motivational beliefs and increase self-esteem (Yang & Carless, 2013), it should be accompanied feedback as to why the work is good or excellent and how similar writing can yield positive results in the future . Supporting Yang & Carless (2013), Boud & Molloy, (2013) argues putting a tick or praise comment can motivate learners however it does indicate what exactly is being praised about the task and what competencies to repeat in future tasks. Clarke (1998) states that crosses and ticks are not useful eliciting learning gains neither is telling a learner and answer is right or wrong; both have no effect on achievement. The motivational comments given by the teachers in this study was predominantly unexplained and did outline what specifically was correct about the student's assignment and why the issue commented upon should be included in a future assignments. This according to Nicol and McFarlane-Dick (2006), does not enables students to become cue-conscious as strong connections are not built between students feedback and their previous work. Brookhart, (2008) stresses that what is important is the student understanding what

the comments, whether positive or negative, is trying to communicate. In agreement, Vygotsky (1978) asserts that assessment involves both teachers and learners in reciprocal interaction to advance learning within a community of practice. This reciprocal activity is characterized by teachers and students collaborating in response to evidence about learning (positive or negative), minute-by-minute, day-by-day through the provision of scaffolding feedback to improve self-monitoring, and self-regulation.

Encouragingly, there was no feedback was that was demotivational (Category 5).Teachers did not provide personal judgement of a student's performance. Carless (2006) has cautioned, "If feedback is demotivational it can be threatening to a student's self-perception" (p221). Although mistakes need to be pointed out to give constructive feedback and elicit improvement in subsequent tasks, teachers need to be delicate, sensitive and ensure the overall experience of receiving feedback is still motivating for students.

RQ2: What are the teacher' perceptions of the usability of written feedback to second language learners?

5.3.1. Timeliness of feedback

The findings from the interview revealed that delayed assessment feedback can hinder the effectiveness and usefulness of assessment feedback. The findings in this study support previous studies (Peacock, Murray & Scott, 2010; van der Kleij, 2020) which documented substantial evidence that learners do not use written feedback because they receive it too late – when they are no longer mindful of the content knowledge, performance or concept in question. The English CAPS document for grades 4-6 English First additional language (FAL) state that learners should "receive timely assessment feedback – that is feedback received when learners are still mindful of the content knowledge, assessed topics and learning goals" (Department of Education [DoE], 2011, p.8]. Yet teachers talk revealed that learners received delayed feedback, which was reported to hinder the usefulness of formative feedback. Hence despite policy intention, teachers struggled to integrate timeous formative assessment as a part of their pedagogy to improve students learning. Teachers in this study reported that they gave written formative feedback substantially late after students submitting a written formative assessment task, thus students did not use it to inform their learning of English. The received feedback was too late for learners to act on it. O'Donovan, Rust and Price (2016) assert that for learner to respond and act on feedback, teachers should create

opportunities that encourage learner to effective engage with feedback. This can be achieved providing on-going and timely feedback. When feedback is received too late, it cannot serve as a scaffold for comprehension, according to Vygotsky (1978).This is due to the fact that delayed feedback prevents both teachers and students from taking corrective action as soon as possible in cases of flaws in understanding – this inhibits learning from feedback. As a result, teachers should make an effort to deliver timely written formative feedback in order to improve the effectiveness and usefulness of feedback while also encouraging constructive learning.

The issue of congested classrooms was spoken of as a concern to giving feedback that was timeous. Even though the Department of Education (DoE) has implemented policies like the Post Provisioning Norms (PPN) to lessen the challenge of overcrowded classrooms in South Africa, the truth is that large class sizes still a concerning issue – particularly in public schools. Unfortunately in the typical class setting, due to class size , feedback on course work and assessments is often difficult and sometimes simply not possible (Moreno, 2004).

5.3.2. Amount of feedback

Teacher also spoke of how the amount of assessment feedback given to learners influences the usability of the feedback. Teachers maintained that giving too much or too little feedback influences the usability of the feedback. Similarly, Carless (2006) points out that information contained in feedback should just be enough allow the learner to move forward. Too little or too much detail can be equality ineffective. Brookhart (2008) cited in Al-Ghamdi (2017) suggested delaying – within a reasonable limit - written feedback to enable a good grasp of a written task. Teachers indicated that they usually gave brief comments on learners work. Learners in turn do not use the feedback. This is attributed to the feedback not being explanatory because the information students received about their work was minimal, and they did not comprehend why or how they made it. This links with DeLuca (2014) argument that for learners to use feedback it must be explanatory and “it has to be sufficiently detailed” (p.49). Hattie and Timperley (2007), through informal investigations with their own class, bears evidence that brief remarks do not stimulate an improvement in students work. They argue to expect improvement in performance through brief comments is "a fundamental miscalculation" (Hattie and Timperley (2007, p.8).

At times feedback was also lengthy hence overwhelming learners. Quinton & Smallbone (2010) affirms that if feedback is too complicated or too much, most the message will be diluted and

students will ignore it therefore rendering it useless. To serve a corrective function, formative feedback ought to (a) confirm whether the learner's answer is accurate or inaccurate and (b) give information to the student about the appropriate response (either directive or facilitative). There is a need for descriptive feedback to make learners understand better what they 'did and did not do' and what more or less they are required to do to prosper. Instead of teachers providing lengthy feedback, rather identify a specific important area in the essay the learner needs to revisit and provide feedback on what they need to work on. In their study, Sardareh & Saad, (2012) ascertained that 80% of their students differed with the statement 'Feedback comments are not useful'. Rather many of these students stressed that they "wanted tutors to have the right amount of assessment feedback which adequately highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of their work" (Sardareh & Saad, 2012, p.58). Sardareh & Saad, (2012) as a result concluded that their data suggests that the majority of students "value feedback comments which focus on skills relating to a deep approach to learning" (p.61).

5.3.3.Specificity of formative feedback

All of the teacher's feedback focused on knowledge or errors of as opposed to and suggestions for improvement. Teachers in this study reported that gave written comments that helped learners see their mistakes which impacted on the usability of the assessment feedback. Brookhart (2008) cautioned that if there is continued feedback on students' errors with no suggestions for improvement, the feedback is not constructive. Effective feedback outlines specific guidance on how to improve performance and enables the student to think about the learning involved in the assignment and not just the act finishing the assignment (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Learners find explicit feedback most useful, integrating recommendations for improvement and examples of what was done appropriately or erroneously. In this study specific sections and/or areas of learner's work that were incorrect and was not supported by constructive feedback to provide a pathway to improvement for the learners to enhance their work. For this reason, teachers in this study reported that learners did not use feedback information, as they were unsure about what they had to do to improve the quality of their work. Joceline et al (2019) argued that children need to be shown what they might have accomplished and where to go to afterward; in other words "they need to be shown how to 'close the gap' between current and desired performance" (p.12). This concept is described as 'specifying the way forward' (Joceline et al, 2019, p.13). Merely pointing to student's incorrect

responses or incorrect use of grammar hinders learners' engagement with feedback. According to Vygotsky (1978) feedback should specify learners' learning progress in order for learners to not only actively monitor but also control their success in the learning process. According to the findings of this study, learners were unable to use written feedback to actively control their success in the learning process because the feedback they received on their learning tasks did not specify the good and weak sections of their work, as well as how to improve. Teachers should make an effort to improve the specificity of the feedback information they provide to learners in order for students to keep track their learning improvements and improve their academic performance (Sardareh & Saad, 2012).

5.3.4. English Proficiency of L2 learners.

Teachers who participated in this study reported L2 English learners had limited exposure to the language hence a poor grasp of the formative assessment feedback given. . The teachers spoke of how learners who might have acquired incorrect prior knowledge of English or in some cases very limited knowledge found it difficult to engage with the formative assessment feedback. If learners cannot read feedback comments then they will be unable to use it to improve their learning. For L2 learners this might make it more difficult to know how to move from their potential developmental level to their actual developmental level as explained in Vygotsky's ZPD. "Learning a language presents additional challenges. Language demands a great deal of self-expression…" (Fernadez-Toro & Furnborough, 2018, p 550). From the participants' comments it is evident that L2 learners have difficulty reading and writing. It is therefore imperative for written feedback to be scaffolded and mediated for L2 learners to understand and use it as intended by the knowledgeable other. Scaffolding is mostly beneficial to students with low prior knowledge (Grabmann & Wilde, 2018). This is the case with L2 learners. Delayed feedback , overcrowded classes and lack of parental involvement also places L2 at a disadvantage. As a result they come to school with little or insufficient prior knowledge as pointed out by the participants. Teachers are encouraged to scaffolded feedback to keeps students motivated, facilitate collaborative learning and reduce cognitive overload in learners. Taggart and Laughlin (2017) also suggested trying a staggered approach, such as giving students feedback on the page and then conferring with them later (e.g., after four days) to have them discuss their plans and clarify confusions. Finally, it is essential to ensure that the feedback given addresses the salient aspects of a desired goal.

5.3.5. Parental Involvement.

Teachers expressed that opportunities to engage in assessment feedback was limited to the classroom as parents appeared to be preoccupied to help their children make sense of the feedback resulting in poor or incorrect understanding of the English language. For Vygotsky (1978) language development occurs through interacting other members of society and in institutional settings like schooling (Lantolf, Thorne & Poehner, 2015). The home setting is integral in helping or facilitating young children's acquisition of literacy and language because it exposes them to numerous writing and reading activities (Chu & Wu, 2010). As a result, children's development of the communicative skills is dependent on the various home literacy enviroments. (Chu & Wu, 2010). Hence, parents would need to aid their children's performance as they engage with the assessment feedback. Yet the teachers in this study argued that parents do not encourage learners to act on the assessment feedback given at school. Instead, learners are supported in ignoring the assessment feedback and speaking of the mother tongue. Teachers further argued that learners do not act on the assessment feedback due to disinterest of parents to support future learning of the English second language. Sociocultural theory acknowledges the vibrant nature of the interaction among learners, teachers and tasks thus views learning as developing through interaction with others. (Turuk, 2008). Thus it recognizes the role of various environment, influences and experiences and the role they play on children's literacy practices at school (Vygotsky, 1978) consequently, educational performance relating to learning both a First Language (FL) and a Second Language (SL). Hence, the literacy practices the English first additional language learners bring to school, from their families, will influence the usability of the assessment feedback.

5.3.6. Dialogic Feedback.

What emerged from teachers' perceptions of the usability of written feedback to L2 learners was the issue of dialogic feedback. Teachers who took part in this study reported that students were passive recipients of the formative assessment feedback. Learners assumed that assessment feedback is done to them and not with them. Hence there was minimal dialogue of the feedback when received by learners. The use of the written formative feedback was not utilized because learners did not understand how to use it due to lack of dialogue of feedback information. The socio-constructivist perspective of assessment feedback posits that teacher comments should be dialogic to help students to develop their abilities to monitor, evaluate and self-regulate their

learning (Ajjawi & Boud, 2015). Vygotsky (1978) argues that, to be useful, feedback must involve a rich communicative exchange between the student and the teacher, which triggers inner dialogue in the student's mind concerning disciplinary concepts (Nicol, 2010). This perspective holds that without establishing a rich form of dialogue within the assignment feedback, it is hard to imagine how students would be able to produce meaning from a feedback interaction with their teacher and use this feedback consciously to improve their future work.

Dialogic scholars (Carless, 2011; Price, Handley, & Millar, 2011; Yang & Carless, 2013) argue these issues stem from the formal and monologic nature of the written feedback method prominently used in school as evident in this study. Firstly, there is a common belief that when teachers provide written comments to learners these messages are effortlessly deciphered and transformed into action (Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006). Yet, as indicated by the teachers in this study the written feedback is unvaryingly complex and easily misinterpreted by students. Nicol (2010) argues that the expressions of dissatisfaction with written feedback in schools are the direct result of employing monologic modes of teacher-student communication. Only when the dialogic nature of this communication is reinstated, will feedback become more effective (Nicol, 2010). Carless (2011) further maintains that adjusting feedback elements, such as timing and detail alone, is likely to be insufficient. What is required is a reconceptualization of the feedback process in education, by viewing feedback more as on-going dialogue then finalised information transmission through the development of dialogic feedback cycles (Carless, 2011).

5.4. Limitations of the study

I have identified four limitations of this study:

- The data for this study was collected at only one time-point (only in term 2). Teacher's feedback practices and perceptions could change over time. This study is unable to capture such developments.
- Of further note, this study only focused upon the provision of written formative feedback of teachers in English First additional language in three public schools. As noted by key authors in the literature (Yang & Carless, 2013), the school subject / academic discipline profoundly influences the feedback process and practices the teacher and learner may experience. It impacts the intellectual content of the feedback, how learners and teachers

relate to one another, and the practices and institutional policies that are in place (Yang & Carless, 2013). As such, a similar study that explored feedback practices and perceptions of teachers from different academic disciplines and across other public schools South African may have had a different outcome.

- This study explored feedback practices and perceptions of grade 4 English teachers in South Africa from 3 different public schools. Therefore, results cannot be generalized as different schools with different teacher may have different formative feedback practices.
- This study is short of learner's viewpoint. At times, making suppositions based on a single sample can be risky because their interpretations can be partial.

5.5. Recommendations

From the findings and analysis of this study and the literature reviewed on teachers' perceptions and practices of formative assessment feedback, I believe that the following recommendations are pertinent.

- Second Language teachers should be given access to various courses, seminars workshops that train them specifically on providing feedback to L2 learners. Such sessions will empower FAL teachers to attain innovative pedagogical knowledge in relation to written feedback and enable them to reflect on the effectiveness of their practice.
- Teachers should continuously seek to improve their feedback literacy. Therefore they should be engage in professional learning. This means keeping abreast with the latest developments from research papers and seminars. Furthermore they can consult with colleagues from within or outside their school about effective feedback practices for L2 learners. These interactions may improve their feedback expertise assist them to overcome some of the challenges they encounter when giving formative feedback.
- Teachers should be trained with techniques that empower them to provide assessment feedback that supports learners' productive learning in light of contextual challenges.
- Learners should be trained with techniques that empower them to develop self-regulatory capacities so that they can use feedback to improve their own learning.

- Schools and teachers should be given the essential and appropriate resources to enhance teaching and learning and successfully implement assessment feedback technique through professional development programs.

5.6. **Recommendations for future research**

The following are recommendations for any future study:

- A future study could be conducted at multiple time-points to capture changes of teacher's feedback practices and perceptions of written formative assessment feedback over time.
- A future study can be strengthened by including teachers from four or more schools or by comparing public and private schools teacher's feedback practices and perceptions.
- An investigation of teachers' feedback practices and perceptions using other methodologies.

5.7. Conclusion

This chapter has presented the summary of findings and recommendations regarding grade 4 teacher's formative feedback practices and perceptions in South Africa. The limitations of the study have been outlined and suggestions were given on the aspects that need more inquiry.

The findings of this study showed that the teachers primarily provide feedback on the development of students writing skills such as English usage, presentation, grammar and writing structure. Feedback was pointed to the incorrect use of grammar, spelling and presentation without an explanation of why the correction should be made. The teacher corrected learner's grammar and tense without providing cues to the learners. Such corrective feedback deprives the learner of the opportunity to correct his own errors. The feedback from all three teachers also was also minimal in terms of encouraging students to engage with their feedback and improving their later work and learning. A small amount of motivational feedback, intended to inspire positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem was also evident in the written feedback. Encouragingly, there was no feedback that was demotivational .Teachers did not provide personal judgement of a student's performance. The findings from the semi structured interviews revealed that learners have had negative experiences of receiving written formative feedback in grade 4 First additional language,

specifically- timing of feedback, amount of feedback, specificity of feedback, English proficiency of learners , parental involvement and dialogic feedback influenced the usability of assessment feedback.

Form the findings; it is evident that there is an urgent need to train teachers and learners on assessment and feedback literacies. From teachers feedback and talks misconceptions about assessment exists. Assessment literacy needs to be promoted at schools so that both teachers and learners can be aware of what is being assessed and the purpose of different assessment and feedback techniques. Making teachers and learners assessment literate can greatly improve the usability of feedback and quality of teaching and learning in schools. Further assessment policy that requires teachers to practice assessments to enhance learning must be an adjunct to sufficient resources and support for L2 teachers. In turn, this will support teachers in the successful implementation of formative assessment feedback.

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Appendix 1

INFORMATION SHEET:LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Sifiso Mkhwanazi in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I am doing research on: The feedback practices and perceptions of English teachers to second language learners.

My research involves interviewing one of your teachers for 45-60 minutes about their feedback practices and perceptions as an English teacher to 2nd language learners in grade 4. I will also request to review formal assessment tasks and exercise books; to analyze how the teacher gives feedback to learners. The primary aim of this research is to investigate how feedback practices and perceptions of English teachers influence learning for 2nd language learners.

The reason why I have chosen your school is because it is within the geographical location (In and around Johannesburg CBD) on which this study is intended to be carried out.

I am inviting your school to participate in this research study.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

The names of the research participants and identity of the school will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

All research data will be destroyed between 3-5 years after completion of the project.

Please let me know if you require any further information. I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely.

Mr. Sifiso Mkhwanazi

Smkhwanazi@rocketmail.com (079 4558105)

Supervisor: Name and Surname: Dr. Preya Pillay

Email: Preya.pillay@wits.ac.za (011 717 3301)

Appendix 2

INFORMATION SHEET: LETTER TO TEACHER

Dear _____

My name is Sifiso Mkhwanazi in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I am doing research titled: ***Exploring the feedback practices and perceptions of grade 4 English teachers to second language learners.***

My research involves interviewing you for 45-60 minutes about your feedback practices and perceptions as an English teacher to 2nd language learners in the Intersen phase. In case face to face interviews are not possible we can engage in technology-mediated communication such as Whatsapp voice-calling or Microsoft teams.I will also request to review your formal assessment tasks; to analyze how you give feedback to learners. The primary aim of this research is to investigate how feedback practices and perceptions of grade 4 English teachers influence learning for 2nd language learners.

The reason why I have chosen your school is because it is within the geographical location (In and around Johannesburg CBD) on which this study is intended to be carried out.

I am inviting you to participate in this research.

Your name and identity of the school will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

All research data will be destroyed between 3-5 years after completion of the project.

You will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. You can withdraw your permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. You will not be paid for this study.

Please let me know if you require any further information. I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Please let me know if you require any further information.

Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely.

Mr Sifiso Mkhwanazi

Smkhwanazi@rocketmail.com

079 455 8105

Supervisor: Name and Surname: Dr. Preya Pillay

Email: Preya.pillay@wits.ac.za Contact details: 011 717 3301

Appendix 3

LETTER OF CONSENT: PRINICPAL

I_____the school principal at _____grant **Mr Sifiso Mkhwanazi** permission to conduct research titled: *Exploring feedback practices and perceptions of grade 4 English teachers to second language learners.*

Informed consent

I,_____give my consent for the following:

Permission to review/collect documents/artifacts	Cross one	
• I agree that the researcher is allowed to analyze formal assessment tasks and exercise books.	YES	NO
Permission to audiotaped		
• I agree that the researcher can audiotape the interview with one of my teachers for 45-60 minutes.	YES	NO
• I know that the audiotapes will be used for this project only	YES	NO
Permission to interview		
• I allow the researcher to interview one of my teachers about their feedback perceptions and practices for 45-60 minutes.	YES	NO
• I know that I can stop this permission at any time and the teacher does not have to answer all the questions asked	YES	NO

I also understand that

- The name of the school, participating teacher and principal will remain anonymous.
- In the final report, the researcher will use anonymous quotes.
- All the data collected during this study will be confidentially kept and destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of this project

Signature_____ Date:_____

Appendix 4

TEACHER'S CONSENT FORM.

Please fill in and return the reply slip below indicating your willingness to be a participant in my voluntary research project called: Exploring feedback practices and perceptions of grade 4 English teachers to second language learners.

I,_____give my consent for the following:

Permission to review/collect documents/artifacts	Cross one	
• I agree that Assessment Tasks can be used for this study only	YES	NO
Permission to be audiotaped		
• I agree to be audiotaped during the interview for 45-60 minutes	YES	NO
• I know that the audiotapes will be used for this project only	YES	NO
Permission to be interviewed		
• I am willing to be interviewed for 45-60 minutes.	YES	NO
• I know that I can stop this permsssssssission at any time and don't have to		
answer all the questions asked	YES	NO
• I understand that if face to face interviews are not possible, I might have to use my own data to connect with the researcher.	YES	NO

Informed Consent

I understand that:

- My name and information will be kept confidential and safe and that my name and the name of the school will not be revealed.
- I do not have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I can ask not to be audiotaped, photographed and/or videotaped.
- All the data collected during this study will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of my project.

Sign_____ Date_____

Appendix 5

PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET: LEARNER

April 2021.

Dear Learner.

My name is Sifiso Mkhwanazi; a Masters student at the Witwatersrand School of Education. As part of my Master's Degree, I have to conduct a research project in which I explore English teachers' feedback practices and perception to second language learners. The aim of this of this research is to find out English teachers' understanding of feedback and how this understanding translated into the way the give feedback to second language learners in grade 4. By conducting this research I am hoping to contribute to the academic literature on feedback practices in South African primary schools.

This research involves analyzing the feedback provided by teachers on your English formative assessment tasks therefore I am requesting permission to use and make copies of your formative assessments. Copies of your assessments will be kept in a locked area to which only I will have access. Moreover I will use anonymous quotes in my final research report therefore your real name will not be mentioned. Any identifying information including the name of your school will be removed from the copies.

The assessments will be returned to your teacher as soon as possible. You will not be interview about any assessments that I will analyze. In fact, you will not meet nor be asked to communicate with me except through this letter and the consent form which will be given to you by your English teacher. I will also ask your parents for permission to use your formative assessments.

Please be informed that you will not receive any benefits form allowing me to use your assessments and there will not be any penalties if you choose to not participate or withdraw from this research. You may withdraw your permission at any given time and you will not be punished or disadvantaged for doing so.

If you have any queries of concerns about regarding the ethical procedures of this research, please feel free to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical): Telephone 011 7171 1408 or email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za or matsie.mabeta@wits.ac.za.

Sincerely.

Researcher: Mr Sifiso Mkhwanazi

Contact no: 081 577 8223/079 455 8105.

Email : 462250@students.wits.ac.za

Supervisor: Dr Preya Pillay.

Contact no: 011 717 3301

Email: Preya.Pillay@wits.ac.za.

Appendix 6

CONSENT FORM: LEARNER.

Title of Research Project: *Exploring feedback practices and perceptions of grade 4 English teachers to second language learners*.

Name of Researcher: Mr Sifiso Mkhwanazi.

I_____ agree to participate in this research project by allowing the researcher to use my formative assessment tasks. The researcher has clearly explained the research aim and I understand what my participation involves.

Please put an X on the relevant options below.

Permission to review/collect documents/artifacts	Cross one	
• I agree that the researcher is allowed to analyze the feedback in my formal assessment tasks	YES	NO
• I agree that the researcher can make copies of my formal assessment tasks.	YES	NO
Anonymity and Confidentiality.		
• I understand that pseudonyms will be used to protect my identity.	YES	NO
• I know that the researcher will use anonymous quotes in his final report	YES	NO
• I understand that information obtain by the researcher will be stored in a locked area and in a password protected computer.	YES	NO
• I know that I may withdraw from this research at any time.	YES	NO
	YES	NO

Appendix 7

LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION: PARENT/GUARDIAN/CAREGIVER.

Dear Parent/Guardian/Caregiver.

My name is Sifiso Mkhwanazi; a Masters student at the Witwatersrand School of Education. As part of my Master's Degree, I have to conduct a research project in which I explore English teachers' feedback practices and perception to second language learners. The aim of this of this research is to find out English teachers' understanding of feedback and how this understanding translated into the way the give feedback to second language learners in grade 4. By conducting this research I am hoping to contribute to the academic literature on feedback practices in South African primary schools.

This research involves analyzing the feedback provided by teachers on your child's formative assessment tasks therefore I am requesting permission to use and make copies of the child's formative assessments. Copies of your child's assessments will be kept in a locked area to which only I will have access. Moreover I will use anonymous quotes in my final research report therefore the real name of the child will not be mentioned. Any identifying information including the name of your school will be removed from the copies.

The assessments will be returned to the child's teacher as soon as possible. Your child will not be interview about any assessments that I will analyze. In fact, I will not meet nor ask to communicate/interview your child except through the information sheet and the consent form which will be given to the child by their English teacher.

Please be informed that you, the child or their teacher will not receive any benefits form allowing me to use the formative assessments and there will not be any penalties if you choose to not participate or withdraw from this research. You may withdraw your permission at any given time and you will not be punished or disadvantaged for doing so.

If you have any queries of concerns about regarding the ethical procedures of this research, please feel free to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical): Telephone 011 7171 1408 or email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za or matsie.mabeta@wits.ac.za.

Sincerely.

Researcher: Mr Sifiso Mkhwanazi

Contact no: 081 577 8223/079 455 8105.

Email : 462250@students.wits.ac.za

Supervisor: Dr Preya Pillay.

Contact no: 011 717 3301

Email: Preya.Pillay@wits.ac.za.

Appendix 8

CONSENT FORM: PARENT/GUARDIAN/CAREGIVER

Title of Research Project: *Exploring feedback practices and perceptions of grade 4 English teachers to second language learners*.

Name of Researcher: Mr Sifiso Mkhwanazi.

I_____the parent/guardian/caregiver of _____in grade_____ agree that my child can participate in this research project by allowing the researcher to use his/her formative assessment tasks. The researcher has clearly explained the research aim and I understand what my child's participation involves.

Please put an X on the relevant options below.

Permission to review/collect documents/artifacts	Cross one	
• I agree that the researcher is allowed to analyze the feedback in my child's formal assessment tasks	YES	NO
• I agree that the researcher can make copies of my child's formal assessment tasks.	YES	NO
Anonymity and Confidentiality.		
• I understand that pseudonyms will be used to protect my child's identity and that of the school.	YES	NO
• I know that the researcher will use anonymous quotes in his final report	YES	NO
• I understand that information obtain by the researcher will be stored in a locked area and in a password protected computer.	YES	NO
• I know that I or my child may withdraw from this research at any time.	YES	NO

Siganture:_____ Date:_____

Appendix 9

LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION: SGB CHAIRPERSONS.

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Sifiso Mkhwanazi; a Masters student at the Witwatersrand School of Education. As part of my Master's Degree, I have to conduct a research project in which I explore English teachers' feedback practices and perception to second language learners. The aim of this of this research is to find out English teachers' understanding of feedback and how this understanding translates into the way the give feedback to second language learners in grade 4. By conducting this research I am hoping to contribute to the academic literature on feedback practices in South African primary schools.

I am requesting permission to conduct research in the school. My research is about the English teachers perceptions and feedback practices to second language learners. I have chosen your school because it is within the geographical (Johannesburg CBD) in which this research will be conducted. Therefore learners from your school are easily accessible to me as a researcher.

As part of my research, I have to analyze learners' assessment tasks. These tasks can potentially provide in-depth information as to how teacher engage with second language learners in providing feedback. This study is informed by the paucity of research on feedback practices in primary school especially for second language learners. Research has been done mostly on university students and lecturer's experience of the feedback process as a result limited research has been done in primary schools. Consequently greater insight is required on how the perception of English teachers affect their feedback practices towards second language learners in primary school. Moreover this research will help me advance my knowledge and understanding of assessment feedback practices in primary schools.

I will request 6 learners' assessment tasks which I will get from the English teacher. Considering that these are minors I will also ask for informed consent form their parents and subject teacher to analyze written feedback on the learner's formative assessments. Learners who will be part of this study will be given information sheet letters and asked to sign consent form. Most importantly the research will be conducted afterschool so as to not disrupt teaching and learning.

All the data collected from the school will be kept under lock and key in a safe place to which only I will have access. Moreover my analysis of the written feedback of the formative assessments will be anonymous as I will be using pseudonyms (false names) and anonymous quotes in my final report to protect the identity of the school, teachers and learners. There are no foreseeable risks or disadvantages in participating in this research.

If I am granted permission, may I kindly get a permission letter in writing with the schools letter head, signed, dated and specifically referring to myself by name and the title of my research study.

Sincerely.

Researcher: Mr Sifiso Mkhwanazi

Contact no: 081 577 8223/079 455 8105.

Email : 462250@students.wits.ac.za

Supervisor: Dr Preya Pillay.

Contact no: 011 717 3301

Email: Preya.Pillay@wits.ac.za.

Appendix 10

CONSENT FORM: SGB CHAIRPERSON

I _____the School Governing Body Chairperson at_____confirm that permission has been granted to Mr Sifiso Mkhwanazi to conduct research titled: *Exploring feedback practices and perceptions of grade 4 English teachers to second language learners*.

Informed Consent

Permission to review/collect documents/artifacts	Cross one	
• I agree that the researcher is allowed to sample learner's assessment scripts.	YES	NO
• I understand that the researcher intends conduct his research by analyzing written feedback on learners' formative assessments.	YES	NO
• I agree that the researcher can make copies of my child's formal assessment scripts.	YES	NO
• I understand that the research will not attract any costs for the school.	YES	NO
Anonymity and Confidentiality.		
• I understand that pseudonyms will be used and the names of the participants will remain anonymous.	YES	NO
• The researcher has made it clear that all data collected for this research will be kept confidentially throughout and after the research.	YES	NO
• The researcher has informed me that data collected will be stored in a password protected computer and in a locked area.	YES	NO
• I know that the researcher will use anonymous quotes in his final report	YES	NO
• I understand that all identifying features on data collected will be removed in the researchers final report.ss	YES	NO
• I know that the teachers, learners and the school may withdraw from this research at any time.	YES	NO

Appendix 11

GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	**16 March 2021**
Validity of Research Approval:	**08 February 2021– 30 September 2021** **2021/58**
Name of Researcher:	**Mkhwanazi SP**
Address of Researcher:	**183 Cavendish House ,unit 1104**
	Raheema Moosa Street
	Johannesburg
Telephone Number:	**079 455 8105**
Email address:	**smkhwanazi@rocketmail.com**
Research Topic:	**Exploring feedback practices and perceptions of English teachers to second language learners**
Type of qualification	**Master's in Education**
Number and type of schools:	**2 Primary Schools**
District/s/HO	**Johannesburg East**

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

17/03/2021

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1. *Letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 355 0488
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

2. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.*
3. ***Because of COVID 19 pandemic researchers can ONLY collect data online, telephonically or may make arrangements for Zoom with the school Principal. Requests for such arrangements should be submitted to the GDE Education Research and Knowledge Management directorate. The approval letter will then indicate the type of arrangements that have been made with the school.***
4. ***The Researchers are advised to make arrangements with the schools via Fax, email or telephonically with the Principal.***
5. *A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
6. *A letter / document that outline the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.*
7. *The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.*
8. *Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.*
9. *Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.*
10. *Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.*
11. *It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.*
12. *The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.*
13. *The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.*
14. *On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.*
15. *The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.*
16. *Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.*

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

.....

Mr Gumani Mukatuni
Acting CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 17/03/2021

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 355 0488
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

WITS SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Appendix 12

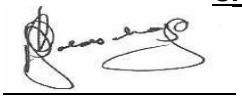
UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION ETHICS COMMITTEE

CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: 2021ECE012M**
PROJECT TITLE	Exploring feedback practices and perceptions of English teachers to second language learners
INVESTIGATOR	**SIFISO MKHWANAZI**
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR	WITS SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
DATE CONSIDERED	17 May 2021
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
EXPIRY DATE	Date of submission of the project report
ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE	25 May 2021

CHAIRPERSON



(Dr Paul Goldschagg)

cc: Supervisor: Dr Preya Pillay

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** emailed to the Ethics Office: Matsie.Mabeta@wits.ac.za .

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

_____

Signature **Date**

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix 13

Research Project Timeline

	TASK	DESCRIPTION	DAYS	START	END	Comments
	Research Proposal	Submit Research proposal	1 Days	15/02/2021	15/02/2021	
	Ethic Clearance	Submission of application for ethics clearance	2 Days	/03/2021	04//2021	
1	Collect Data	Develop data collection instrument.	2 Days	/11/2020	/11/2020	
		Carry out data collection	4 Weeks	20/09/2021	08/10/2021	
		Transcribing Data collected	2 Weeks	11/10/2021	14/10/2021	
1	Analysis of Data	Coding of data	4 Weeks	16/11/2021	10/12/2021	
3	Write up	Findings	2 Weeks	10/01/2022	25/01/2022	
		Review & Editing	2 Weeks	07/02/2022	18/02/2022	
		Print final report	1 Day	14/03/2022	14/03/2022	
4	Oral Presentation	Oral presentation of research report	1 Day	/03/2022	/03/2022	
5	Submit Research Project	Submission of research project report for examination.	1 Day	15/03/2022	15/03/2022	

PARTICIPANTS RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.

Teacher A-Cindy.

1. What qualifications do you have?
   I have a Bachelor's Degree in Education, that's the only qualification I have.
2. For how many years have you been teaching English in grade 4?
   Four years, this is my fourth year teaching grade 4.
3. What is your understanding of feedback?
   Okay ehh, I know… when we give feedback it's supposed to help the child improve their work. When we are speaking about a concept for example, if the child had a few incorrect answers you don't just put a cross but you need to use other methods where you are going to help the child to improve their understanding of whatever concept you are teaching them, so feedback is supposed to help them understand.
4. What is the purpose of giving feedback?
   I do try and show the child that this is how it is supposed to be done. When it comes to my work I don't really get time to do a lot of corrections with the children which I know would be the ideal way of helping the learner to understand the work. So when the answer is wrong I would then write the answer for them with the hope that they will go back and look at it. But chances are they don't do that so if I'm not going to do corrections for a specific type of work, I write the answers for them.
5. When do you give written feedback?
   For almost every activity but if I'm being honest the activities that I know or concepts that I know I'm going to assess the children on… I give a lot of feedback on that, but if its something that I know won't be covered in the test I don't give a lot of feedback or if I see that the learners understand what I taught then I don't give a lot of feedback.
6. What prompts you to give written feedback?
   It's mostly when there are spelling errors. AT the moment I don't focus much on grammar correction. I would at some point tell the child that "Okay this was a nice story, I wish you did this or you did not give me enough details or this is not what I expected from you" but I do a lot of spelling.
   Is it fair to conclude that mostly you focus on spelling when giving written feedback?/
   Yes ad I don't think that would really be feedback. I don't know if im making an excuse or not. If I had more time or less children I think I would give better feedback. Right now it is a lot of rushing through while I'm marking so that I can actually see that the kids are doing their work. But the feedback is not as detailed as I know it is supposed to be.
   What do you mean how it's supposed to be? In an ideal situation how would you give feedback?
   I would cover spelling, grammar errors and I would also like to give comments on every activity that the learners have done, also comments on things they can improve on. In creative writing for example I could ask them to give me more information about a character but now I just write "Nice story"

7. Is the feedback detailed or short?
   I don't really get time to give a lot of feedback to the learner although it is the ideal way of helping the learner to understand the work. So when the answer is wrong I would then write the answer for them with the hope that they will go back and look at it. My feedback is very brief on the task. For example I write "There is no topic sentence in this paragraph" My learners do not use the feedback because I see the same mistake over and over
8. What do you expect learners to do with your written feedback?
   Okay if the work is incomplete for example, I expect them to complete it. If I tell them that I need more details…sometimes I write "Please redo this activity" and they never do it. I never go back and check but I'll just shout at them and say "You know I wrote this and you didn't do it" but I know that they are not going to do the activity but my expectation is that they will do whatever I tell them.
9. What do they actually do with it?
   Generally they are just receiving feedback but they do not really do anything with it. They are just getting feedback from me with no conversation about the feedback. There is no time for this process. A few learners do tell me they don't know what to do with the written feedback
10. Do you allow learners to give each other written feedback? If yes under what circumstances? If no why not?
    No, I have tried it once. I would like to do it but because of COVID-19 and them not being allowed to swap books, that's the only reason. Before COVID-19, I have and they also got excited however it gets chaotic as well. When they swap books. Sometimes I feel like it doesn't really help because a child that is not doing well is going to swap with a child that is also not doing well or there will be one excellent learners who checks four books which is a lot for them.
11. What challenges do you encounter when giving written feedback?
    Not enough time to give as much detailed feedback as I would want to. Not enough time to go back and see that they actually follow what I asked them to do and also there are too many learners in the classes and too much admin work to do.
    In terms of the learners, what is challenging about giving second language speakers of English?
    It is not even their second language, some of them it's their third or fourth language speakers. There is no difference, if I make the child do the activity three times. They are still going to make the same mistakes because of the way they speak the language. Even when they speak they will repeat the same mistakes. They just don't grasp it even when it's written they just don't write it correctly. They write it the way they are used to saying it, no matter how many time you tell them this is how it is written or this is how it is supposed to be said.
    So what do you think causes that?
    I think it's support structures at home. Children who have less support struggle more. So if you don't get enough time to practice the language you suffer. When I ask whether the

child speaks English at home, they say no. If their parent are not speaking to them in English it makes it more difficult for them to grasp the concepts.

So how do you intervene in that situation?

I focus on the ones that really struggle…with that learners I just tell her "This is how you are supposed to say it" and then eventually she will get it.

12. Are parents assisting in any way?

I think its support structures at home. Children who have less support struggle more. So if they don't get enough time to practice the English language they suffer when we give written feedback. Parents need to encourage learners also to start reading, writing and speaking in English at home. If they encourage constant use of home language, then our efforts in school is pointless

13. What factor hinder your ability or willingness to give learners written feedback?

My feedback is often delayed … If I had more time or less learners I think I would give better feedback while students are still mindful of the topic. There are too many learners in the classes and too much admin work to do. By the time my feedback reaches the student they forget how the feedback is useful. Some they don't even bother about the feedback…also, I realize that with a lot of the children we have now, their reading is already bad so even when it comes to grade 4 content… I can't go deep into that content. I have not been taught how to teach phonics and blending words/sounds but that's what I have to do. First year I didn't do it because I didn't know how I was going to deal with the situation. This year, teaching phonics and blends has hindered my ability to give feedback…getting deeper into the content. Our kids, their reading ages are normally six or seven in grade 4 and they are nine years old. If they can't read properly, they are not going to write well. So that has been the biggest factor for me and our classes are overcrowded so I try and focus on the kids that are really struggling and try to support them so they can attempt to do the work on their own. The negative effect is that my other children are going to suffer because they are not getting as much attention as they should be getting.

While attending to the learners who are struggling, how do you deal with those learners who finish fast?

I have a small library there in my class, they are supposed to get a book and read then I either make them write a summary about a character or they will work on their DBE workbooks. I know we are supposed to give them extra worksheets and all of that but it's too much. I would like to do it, I would like to have extra work for them and stuff. Sometimes in their textbooks they have enrichment activities so I just tell them to do it.

14. When giving written feedback, what do you focus on the most?

My feedback focused mainly on the incorrect response and spelling mistakes. I would expect my learners to fix the incorrect responses for the next essay but usually they do not. For example I would write "what's the meaning of this sentence? in their essay. I am not sure if they understand the comments and my expectations

15. Do you have a way of checking if learners are using your written feedback?
    Actually no I don't, even if I do make a comment to say I wanted more details or please redo this activity. I won't go back unless I want to mark that work again and chances are when I mark the book again the child is not there.
16. What assessment tools do you use to mark creative writing?
    We use rubrics and checklists.
17. Do you discuss the criteria for good achievement with your learners before they do creative writing?
    Yes when I give them the assessments I also give them the rubric and I tell them this is what I will be looking for. This is what I will be marking.
    Do you discuss the rubric with them of is it a matter of you telling them what you will assess?
    I tell them this is what I want but obviously you will get children who will say "Mam can I do this" and that's when the question will come and I will have to discussion with them but at the start it's just me telling them.
18. How often do you discuss your written feedback with individual learners?
    (laughs) on a scale of 1-10, where 1 is a negative, I would say 3.
19. Do you use symbols or codes when giving written feedback?
    No I write in full. It has never crossed my mind but when I circle a word, it is supposed to tell the learner to start that word with a capital letter. On top of circling the word I also write the capital letter for them. At the end of a sentence I will also put a circle if they did not put a full stop or a question mark. The circle is meant to attract attention.
20. After giving written feedback do you give learners a chance to redo or resubmit their work?
    With my formal assessments I do. Sometimes I won't even write a comment. I will just put it aside and talk to them about it so they can redo the work. Only when it comes to things that have to do with marks. But when it comes to informal work I don't do that. One time I asked them to check each other's formal work, that was an epic fail because they are also bad at spelling and then when the child rewrites they still do the wrong thing.
21. What role do your learners play in the feedback process?
    Generally they are just receiving it but they do not really do anything with it. There are some learners who use it but I will see with the way they do their work that maybe I need to reteach but generally they are just getting feedback from me. If I communicate with them about my written feedback maybe they will use it.
22. What do you think you can improve about your written feedback practices?
    After this interview a lot shame…give more details and communicating to them about what a they can do to improve their work.

Teacher B-Lindo

1. What qualifications do you have?
   I have an undergraduate degree in Education and an Honours Degree in Inclusive Education.

2. For how many years have you been teaching English in grade 4?
   Four years.
3. What is your understanding of feedback?
   Feedback is like a response that you give to someone based on what they have done. It is giving a response to the learners in terms of the work that they have produced.
4. What is the purpose of giving feedback?
   To help the learners see what they did well in and where they need to improve and to have them make the necessary correction and improvements.
5. When do you give written feedback?
   I think when the work is very impressive I will make a comment. When the learner is really struggling I will also make a comment. If it is something or a concept that is going to be assessed I will also give feedback and why? For the purposes of having learners see what they did well and where they need to improve.
   So you are saying you give written feedback when the learner has done extremely well, what kinds of comments do you give such a learner?
   Like "Well Done", "This is very good", "This was a lot of fun to read" or "You are very creative".
   So to those who are struggling what kind of comments do you give?
   Like "Please come and see me" and they come and I go through it with them again, like "You see here I asked you to do this but you didn't". Sometimes if they copy from somewhere else I just write "This is not your own work, please redo and use your own ideas" so things like that.
6. Is the feedback detailed or short?
   The amount of feedback I give depends on the context. When the work is very impressive I will make a comment. When the learner is really struggling I will also make a comment for the purposes of having learners see what they did well and what they are lacking in. I spend long hours giving very lengthy comments and I think learners get scared and maybe that's the reason they do not use it
7. What prompts you to give written feedback?
   If a learner is not doing what I have asked them to do or when there are errors in their work.
8. What do you expect learners to do with your written feedback?

   To make the necessary changes and then if you get feedback that says "This is very good", "Keep it up", "You know that you are doing well, you need to keep up with that" and for those I write "Come and see me" I tell them that they didn't do what was required then I expect them to go and improve on what they didn't do well. If I say "Please redo" I expect them to redo it. So depending on what the feedback says, I expect them to act on that feedback.
9. What do they actually do with it?
   Most of learners are just recipients of the feedback. When I give them formative feedback on their task they don't engage with it .When I ask if they require clarity on any comment

they don't respond. I think this is because they do not understand some of the words I use to comment on their work

10. Do you allow learners to give each other written feedback? If yes under what circumstances? If no why not?

    I do, when they are editing their first drafts and it always needs to be edited, checking for mistakes, spelling errors, grammatical errors so in that sense they do give each other feedback. But they do not write comments. They just fix whatever needs to be fxed. If a sentence does not make sense reconstruct the sentence.

    Who reconstructs it?

    The learners, so normally they go to that person. Like if I'm checking Iviwe's book I will go to Iviwe and say "Iviwe what were you trying to say here? Then Iviwe will tell me then I will rewrite that sentence in pencil for Iviwe.

11. What challenges do you encounter when giving written feedback?

    Our classes are overcrowded and our children suffer because they are not getting the feedback on time to improve their writing. After a few weeks when I do return their assessment task and provide feedback on grammar and choosing the suitable words, they have forgotten the task. The feedback becomes useless. They repeat the same mistakes. If I'm making any corrections to their writing that takes forever because half of it is wrong, spelt incorrectly, sentences that do not make sense. My comments indicate to learners mainly of their mistakes. But it is frustrating to note that they usually do not take that feedback. Instead they see my comments as fault picking. They don't see the value of the feedback

12. Are parents assisting in any way?

    Some leaners make the same errors over and over. It is disappointing. I try to call the parents but they don't come. The learner themselves do not care. Involving parents in assessment feedback can provide teachers with useful information to assist with each child's learning but the parents don't care. They do not support us as teachers in helping their children

13. What factor hinder your ability or willingness to give learners written feedback?

    Our classes are overcrowded and our children suffer because they are not getting the feedback on time to improve their writing. After a few weeks when I do return their assessment task and provide feedback on grammar and choosing the suitable words, they have forgotten the task. The feedback becomes useless. The repeat the same mistakesTime, in summary I can say time constraints more than anything else and also focusing more on the weaker learners so the strong learners will only get a "Good" or "Well Done" but the weaker ones I give them detailed feedback. Sometimes I feel like it is not necessary to give the strong learners detailed feedback so I focus more on the weaker ones.

    Why do you feel that way?

Because I mean if I say to you “Well done”, “This is beautiful”, “Keep it up” what more do you want to hear from me. So they are on the right track so if they continue like that they will be fine.

So with the weaker ones you said you give detailed feedback?

Yes

So how do they respond to that detailed feedback?

I don’t know, their English skills has not been developed well so they are still understanding our feedback which is written in English. They are not reading and writing regularly so when we give them feedback in English they struggle. At home they switch to their mother tongue and this adds to their lack of understanding

So do you discuss the detailed feedback with the learners all the time?

With the weaker ones, yes.

14. When giving written feedback, what do you focus on the most?

If I’m making any corrections to their writing that takes forever because half of it is wrong, spelt incorrectly, sentences that do not make sense. My comments indicate to learners mainly of their mistakes. But it is frustrating to note that they usually do not take that feedback. Instead they see my comments as fault picking. They don’t see the value of the feedback

15. Do you have a way of checking if learners are using your written feedback?

I only see when I have to control their books again if they have used it or not. Only a few learners, the smart ones, will come and asked about a comment you have written or what is it that they can change. But most of them don’t use it because they repeat the same mistakes in the next activity.

16. What tools do you use to mark creative writing?

Rubrics

Do you discuss it with the learners?

I do yes.

Can you elaborate on that?

I discuss it with them. I prepare the task that they have to do and tell them that “Okay we are doing poetry and remember poetry needs this and that, so when im marking this is what I’m looking for” then I go through it with them and I tell them If you do this you are going to lose marks. So just explaining every criteria that’s on the rubric.

Who makes the rubric?

I do.

Do learners have a say in what is in the rubric?

No.

Why not?

I don’t know I have never thought of bringing them into that process because when I normally set the assessments I do it at home during the holidays. When schools open I have to submit. I never thought of asking them about what they think needs to be assessed in terms of the rubric.

17. Do you discuss the criteria for good achievement with your learners before they do creative writing?

    Yes so that they can do their best and know what to aim towards because if you don't know what you are aiming towards then you are working from a blind place so whatever you give me I should be willing to accept but if you know these are the standards of achieving good marks then at least you've got a clear picture in your head of what you are working towards. I think it also helps me in giving feedback to the learners such that if I wrote "Are your sentences relevant to the topic?" and I don't give the child 10 out of 10, because there are some learners who come and ask what they can do better next time or what is it that they didn't do correctly. So I refer them back to the rubric. In that sense they realize the importance of a rubric and they know that next time im definitely going to be marking according to the rubric.

18. How often do you discuss your written feedback with individual learners?

    With the weak ones, always. With the stronger ones I hardly discuss it with them. I just write "Very Good" or "Keep it up" and stuff like that. What I also try to do is to give general feedback to the whole class and explain what most of them have done correctly and what they s struggled to do. We then go through it together as a class.

    While helping the weaker one, how do you keep the rest of the class engaged?

    I think they have gotten used to the idea that mam always needs to help these ones and we are able to do it on our own so we are fine. I also have had a lot of instances where some of them have offered to help. If they can see that I'm busy with one learner then they offer to go and help others who are struggling.

    Do you allow them to help?

    I do.

    How often?

    All the time if someone comes to me and say can I help? Im like good shot go for it.

    Do you monitor the way they provide feedback to the other learners or you trust that they will execute it as well as you do?

    It depends on how well I know the learner. At the beginning of the year, it its my first time teaching them then I need to observe how they interact with others. If I can see that a learner is overpowering then I say no because I have seen how they they interact with others. If I see that the learner works well with others then I just allow them to go and help without monitoring them. Those who are not helping either read or write in their DBE book.

19. Do you use symbols or codes when giving written feedback?

    Yes sometimes I do.

    What symbols do you use?

    Normally "sp" if it is a written piece. If I correct spelling once then the next time I will just write "sp" then they will know that it is the same word that mam corrected up there. I also use circles sometimes for punctuation marks as well and when a sentence is not structured properly then I will just underline that sentence and then write the correct format of the sentence.. Sometimes I cancel but most of the time I just underline. It also depends if I'm marking the first draft. If I'm the one that is editing for them then that is

where I use symbols and I make corrections. If it's peer editing then their peers will correct it then I will give more details in the final piece.
Do all the learners understand what the symbols mean?
Most of them understand.

20. After giving written feedback do you give learners a chance to redo or resubmit their work?
    Yes especially if I wrote that they must redo their work. With formal assessment most of the learners who end up failing are the ones who struggle with reading and writing so we end up assessing them orally. We ask them the questions and we write the answers and they go and write the answers on their scripts. With learners who are average, if they end up failing then I give back the work and ask them to redo and write your answers properly.
21. What role do your learners play in the feedback process?
    Most of them are just recipients. It is only the high achieving learners who will ask what a certain comment means, what they can do better but its one or two learners. Most of the time they are just recipients.
22. What do you think you can improve about your written feedback practices?
    I think writing more clearly because sometimes they can't read what I have written. When I'm marking I'm writing fast so sometimes they can't read what I have written so maybe writing more clearly so that they can read and understand it on their own and don't have to come ask me about what I have written. I also think maybe speaking to them individually about the feedback that I have given them because I think even with the learners who are doing very well, there's always something that they can work or or always improve…that's the part about giving feedback I think I have to work on.

Teacher C-Nolwazi

1. What qualifications do you have?
   I hold a Bachelor of Education Degree, majoring in English and Life Orientation.
2. For how many years have you been teaching English in grade 4?
   6 years.
3. What is your understanding of feedback?
   Firstly if you give learners an assessment, they will write it then I will mark and summarize some of the things they did not get right. It's like doing corrections. If I have to reteach I will reteach and explain those things that they did not understand.
4. What is the purpose of giving feedback?
   Eish it's too hard especially with grade 4's. I can give them an assessment for creative writing, to write 3 paragraphs about a friend, most of them will struggle and in that case I cannot do one-on-one teaching. I just stand in front of them and redo the work on the board. Explain what they are supposed to write in the introduction, body and conclusion.
   So it's more of group feedback?
   Yes
   Do you then focus on individual learners after?

Actually no, we don't have enough time. I can try it but it is not enough. I will spend time or the whole period explaining to a few learners so I wont finish. Sometimes its better to explain to all of them. If we still have a few who do not understand then I try to explain to them.

Do you write on their books when giving feedback?

Sometimes, I write "Incomplete work", "Your work is neat", "Very Good" or "You need to pull up your socks".

What do you do when you find errors in their work? How do you communicate that to the learners?

If I'm marking the books and they are not here and I see something good or wrong, I just write down the name of the learner in my diary and the error they have made then I when I'm with them I will call those learners and explain what they have done wrong.

So you don't write anything on the task or assessment or in the learner's book?

If it's a wrong sentence I will try and correct it by rewriting it for them. I also correct the spelling but it does not help them because they won't understand. Some of them don't even check what I have corrected. You need to do corrections with them for every activity. If its spelling I will check which word has been spelt incorrectly the most then I will ask them to spell it as a class.

5. When do you give written feedback?

   Every time when I'm marking their books.

6. What prompts you to give written feedback?

   When I see that they didn't do what was expected of them or I see errors.

7. Is the feedback detailed or short?

   My formative assessment feedback is not as detailed as I know it is supposed to be. This is due to curriculum constraints. In creative writing for example I just write "Nice story". I don't waste time writing long feedback as learners just want one comment: "You passed"

8. What do you expect learners to do with your written feedback?

   I don't want them to repeat the same mistakes so correcting or rewriting their sentences is my way of telling them that they must not do it again. If it's a word they couldn't write, now that I have shown them how to write it they need to start spelling it correctly. Sometimes I tell them that if they want to spell a word correctly they must first pronounce it in their home language (IsiZulu) then they will not forget how to spell it in English. To some learners this strategy helps.

9. What do they actually do with it?

   Learners do not want to use the written feedback if it is negative. They assume that feedback should be positive only. Okay if the work is incomplete for example, I expect them to complete it. If I know they need more details on their task …sometimes I write "Please see me", they never do. If we have more hours in a school day I could have sat with each learner and discussed their progress against the rubric.

10. Do you allow learners to give each other written feedback? If yes under what circumstances? If no why not?

No, each learner marks their own work. If there is something wrong then I will deal with it.

So there has never been as situation where they look at each other's work?

Sometime last term in tried it but it wasn't working well. There's a lot of quarrelling when we do that.

11. What challenges do you encounter when giving written feedback?

They don't do anything about it unless you call them and explain your comments. If I call them and explain some do try to change but not all of them.

So are you saying your written feedback is only when you have a dialogue with them?

Yes, sometimes I write the comments for the HOD because they check if we mark the learners' books but the learners do not do anything with comments.

Do they use the written feedback?

A few but if you give them compliments a lot of them get happy but if you write fix this, they don't respond.

So you are saying most of them do not use your written feedback?

Yes, especially in writing.

Why do you think they don't act on the feedback that needs them to correct something?

Eish for this year, these kids are young too young. They didn't do grade 3 properly. Some of them do not understand even if you ask them to read simple sentences. They cant. Sometimes it's because when I'm marking I write fast and they can't read the comments. Besides that some of them do not car. I don't know where it comes from but they do not care. I have one learner who I have given up on. I tried to call the parents but they don't come. The learner himself does not care. You can chase him out or do whatever, he doesn't care at all.

So that affects your ability to give them feedback?

Yes, someone like that its hard to work with. They don't do work and don't finish their homework. In class he's just a furniture, does not participate in learning.

12. Are parents assisting in any way?

The parents of our learners do not support their English proficiency. When we give assessment feedback we expect the parent to read the learners assessment and assist the learner to improve the English proficiency. Reading, in particular, improves greatly when parents and children read together at home. Reading aloud with a child contributes significantly to the child's reading abilities. But parents don't attend our meeting to understand the feedback we give. Hence learners themselves don't bother to take our feedback seriously

13. What factor hinder your ability or willingness to give learners written feedback?

Giving formative feedback takes long because of the number of learners that I teach. When the learners receive their feedback for example on the content of their essay, they consider the feedback ineffective. I usually do not receive any queries or follow up when the feedback is received. In creative writing you will find that for some learners the spelling is correct, the work is neat but the story does not make sense.

So how do you give feedback in that case?

I don't think there is a different way to do it besides calling a learner. You have to compliment them first you can't just point out the wrongs. Explain what they did not do correctly. If they are given three topics to choose from you will find that the first paragraphs is about their favourite pet, second paragraphs is about their friend, and the third about their mother. So I explain to them that the whole essay has to be about their favourite dog if that's the topic they have chosen. They get confused because I give them three topics and they write about all of them. I then have to explain again that they must redo the work and choose one topic. Some of them will do it and some will not.

So that feedback is verbal you don't write in their books

No I write that "Your essay doesn't make sense, it is not according to our instructions". I just write, call the learner and explain.

Am I correct in thinking that sometimes the learners misunderstand the instructions?

Yes but I don't know how because we explain the same thing over and over again every day. Right now they are supposed to write a recipe. I chose two recipes for them: How to make a fruit salad & How to make pizza. We agreed on that but in their rough draft, they wrote about fruit salad then pizza in the final draft. Some wrote about how to make popcorns and other wrote about something else.

14. When giving written feedback, what do you focus on the most?

    There are too many learners that need individual attention but I can't help all of them every day. I just focus on a few that really need help in their writing. For example: your work does not make sense and add all the issues in their task. I think students may need more than "your essay doesn't make sense" and adding corrections in the work. Maybe than the argument can improve

15. What tools do you use to mark creative writing?

    Rubrics, sometimes checklist but the checklist is for them to check if they have included this and that.

    Do you explain what is in the rubric to the learners?

    Yes, I explain to them. Let's say this week I am going to give them an assessment. We will talk about it and even do it as a class activity in their books. We did the same for the recipe, the first draft was done in their exercise books, then we use a rubric to mark it and I explain all the things they have to do,

16. Do you discuss the criteria for good achievement with your learners before they do creative writing?

    Yes I do it with their formal assessments only.

17. How often do you discuss your written feedback with individual learners?

    Sometimes, only if there is time to do so because they are too many learners that need individual attention but I can't help all of them every day.

18. Do you use symbols or codes when giving written feedback?

    No I don't but I use "sp" for spelling errors.

    Do the learners know what sp mean or stand for?

    I think they do, I tell them that if you see sp it means there is a spelling error.

19. After giving written feedback do you give learners a chance to redo or resubmit their work?

    Yes I do, mostly when it's a formal assessment.

20. What role do your learners play in the feedback process?

    They help.

    How?

    You'll find that I explain to all of them but some do not understand me but understand another learner better. Sometimes I give them a chalk to go write on the board. During class activities I allow the smart ones to help those who are slow but I have stopped doing that because the smart once will end up writing the work for the ones who are struggling or telling them answers and that's not what I want. Now I have a booklet where I get crosswords, worksheet for the smart ones to do if they finish early.

    So you are saying that the learners cannot give each other proper feedback?

    Maybe in a class of 30 there are only two learners who can give feedback to others.

21. What do you think you can improve about your written feedback practices?

    I think methods. We have different methods of teachings. Sometimes I feel like if I try to change the way I explain or teach them. Maybe put it in pictures. I think method is key or if I don't understand a concept properly, I can ask another teacher to come and teach it so I can see how they explain to the learners.

    Is there anything else you'd like to add about the learners you are teaching?