

## Textuality of English Composition Writing by Form Two E.S.L. Students

Christine Atieno Peter\* Nancy Wangui Mbaka Mary Karuri  
Chuka University, P.O Box 109-60400, Chuka, Kenya

\*E-mail of the corresponding author: [carugendo@yahoo.com](mailto:carugendo@yahoo.com)

### Abstract

The performance of English at KCSE level has been improving over the years. There was need to find out if this improved trend was reflected in the composition writing of students in Kiini Secondary School in Maara District in Kenya. This paper looks at the adherence to the standards of textuality in composition writing by form two students in Kiini Secondary School. It also investigates students' written texts to establish the extent to which they conformed to the standards of textuality. It further examined the structure of students' written texts to find out whether they applied the standards of textuality as they wrote their compositions. This paper establishes the effects which the standards of textuality had on the performance of the students in composition writing. The findings of this paper contribute to scholarly material in text linguistics which is within the field of Discourse Analysis.

**Keywords:** Textuality, E.S.L., Cohesion (Cs.), Coherence (Cc.), Informativity (Info.), Acceptability (Acc.), Situationality (Sit.), Intentionality (Int.), Inertextuality (Inter.)

### 1. Introduction

English is the most widely spoken language world over (Bennett, 1974). The language is largely used in Europe, the North American Continent, Australia, Central Asia, including the Indian Sub-Continent, and in many countries of Africa. This language has the third largest number of speakers in the world; after Mandarin-Chinese and Spanish. About four hundred million people speak it as a first language and nearly the same number use it as a second language. Kenya like many other countries in the world uses English as the official language. This expansive use of the English language was a motivation in writing this text.

In secondary school education in Kenya, English is a compulsory subject. It has been given this prominence because it influences many areas of life. It is important to produce individuals who are competent in their performance in the written discourse. The English language that is taught in secondary schools is used to facilitate communication in school and in life after school (MOEST, 2005). As a result of this prominent use of the language, there is need to have set standards to be used especially as a tool for judging written discourse. Such standards should be adhered to. The absence of this adherence impacts negatively on the performance of students in composition writing. Consequently this leads to production of school leavers and, by extension, executives who cannot communicate effectively (Day and McMahan, 1980).

Over the years it has been noted that Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination (KCSE) candidates have various omissions in their compositions. One such gap is the lack of proper order and set standards that should guide the candidates in any written text. Such a shortcoming is a motivation to any examiner, to wish to carry out a research on the standards of textuality as advanced by De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981). Besides, many teachers of English have always wondered whether the students' performance could be tied to standards of textuality. Such thoughts have been shared and the wish has been that there be carried out a study on the standards of textuality. Arguably, these standards are key to effective communication. Indeed, a text with all the standards of textuality is said to have proper communication and therefore the message given in the text does not leave any one confused or dissatisfied with the information therein. On the other hand, all the aspects are key to communication and if any aspect is missing, there is usually a communication breakdown (De Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981). This study set out to examine whether the students adhere to these standards.

There was need to find out if this improved trend was reflected in the composition writing of students in Kiini Secondary School in Meru, Kenya. The structure of the written text is an aspect of the language, which cannot be downplayed when it comes to learners' competence in written skills. It is important to acquire writing skills. But essay writing has traditionally been regarded as the most difficult academic skill (Nyarige, 2002). Ventola (1994) suggests that there is little that is known on how second language learners compose. It is by observing their essays that we learn what nature of problems they have while composing. Some of the areas of weakness the teachers have pointed out include; poor tense usage, disorganization of texts and poor paragraph links by the students. The identified weaknesses have some impact on the overall performance of the students in composition writing. Nevertheless no study has been conducted to investigate whether students adhere to forms of textuality in composition writing in Kiini Secondary School in Meru, Kenya. This study intended to investigate the textuality of the students compositions, in regard to the seven standards of textuality; coherence, cohesion, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and inter-textuality. The study was guided by the

following objectives

- i) To explore the level of form two students' performance in written English compositions.
- ii) To compare performance in composition writing by students exposed to the standards of textuality to those that were not exposed to the same standards.
- iii) To investigate the extent to which the standards of textuality were used by students in their compositions.

## 2. Literature Review

Composition is as a short piece of non-fictional writing done as a school or college exercise. This definition is not clear. The term "short" is relative. A 300-word essay may be short for one person whereas it could be very long for another person. For the purpose of this research, the standard size of a composition was about 400 words, which for form two students, was long and not short. Longman Dictionary defines a composition as "an old fashioned short piece of writing about a particular subject that is done, especially at school." This definition is, arguably, even more limiting than the one found in the Advanced Learners Dictionary. In addition to mentioning the contentious terminology, "short", the Longman Dictionary also defines a composition as an old fashioned piece of writing. It is not clear whether the "old fashioned" refers to the art of composition writing, which has been there for ages, or the content, which in this case should be found in the stories that begin with, "Long, long ago..." At school, functional and creative writing is taught. A student may therefore find it confusing if they were to be guided by the dictionary definitions referred to, above.

In composition writing, words must be organized well to give the intended meaning. Holden (1964) says that writing a composition is putting together a number of words in order to convey a meaning, while Kenya Institute of Education (K.I.E.) (2006) defines composition writing as an advanced language skill that requires the learner to communicate ideas effectively. The Kenya National Examinations Council (1992) looks at a composition as a continuous piece of writing developed in a logical sequence. Accordingly, the Council has designed the composition section of English exam to test the candidates' ability to express ideas and opinions (K.N.E.C., 2007). This research looked at a composition as organized text writing aimed at communicating an idea or ideas in a systematic way.

Writing is an art. It involves various skills which a learner has to master if they are to produce quality writing. Good writing begins with a captivating title (Mifflin, 1990). Such a title catches the interest of the reader and makes them yearn for more. It becomes a motivating force for the reader to want to find out what happens next. The writer ought to have chosen their topic carefully. Mifflin (1990) further says that before the actual writing begins, the writer should explore their topic. Drafting the work begins, then the writing itself follows and, later, thorough proofreading before the writing is submitted for assessment. Good writing is natural and organized. It is a process that has an introduction, a body and then a conclusion (Day & McMahan, 1980; Glatthorn et al, 1971; McDougal, 1989). Many writers draw inspiration from all aspects of human culture. The writers interpret the past and the present, anticipate the future, and portray life as it was, as it is and, as it shall be (Awoniyi, 1982). Good writers are broad-minded. It is therefore important that when a student writes, they should make themselves clear. For a text to communicate clearly, it should have the seven standards of textuality (De Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981). The student should give people reason to help them see that what they (student) are saying is reasonable (Day & McMahan, 1980).

Good writing skill is one of these requirements. It is important that students are able to handle all types of writing. The skills of writing are complex and they can be grouped into three main areas: grammatical skills, stylistic skills and judgment skills (Heaton, 1975). The process of writing involves a sequence of time and action, which should be easy to follow. But Nyarige (2002) suggests that the problems that students experience in writing are related to unfamiliarity with the language organization, use of punctuation, paragraph structure, cohesive devices, vocabulary and form. She further argues that teachers of English contribute to these difficulties by focusing on vocabulary and grammar at the expense of other aspects of composition writing such as organization and use of cohesive devices, yet the latter are very crucial in writing. On the other hand the difference in writing is also brought about by the complex mental operations involved and unless the student uses the mental processes appropriately there is likelihood that his or her written work will not be satisfactory.

To write well one needs to start from somewhere. The ability to compose help development of children's thoughts and expressiveness, Kroll (1990). While the learner is writing, there is need to think of their reader and give them enough information to see, hear, feel, and smell or understand what they (learners) have to say (Bright, 1965). Some aspects of textuality: suitability, acceptability, intentionality handle these senses. Learners should make their writing interesting. They should address the length of their sentences, and look at the structure of paragraphs. The learners should make their writing credible. Credibility is also an aspect of the standards of textuality: the major focus of this research.

Young children hear things being said in various situations at home. Gradually, children begin to associate the language with the situation and then they reach the stage of trying to use it in speech and finally in writing.

Consequently, if the learners are exposed to the standards of textuality early, they improve in their communication skills. On the other hand, there are challenges to written English. For instance, many children spend a lot of time mastering the spoken language before they do any reading or writing. In the process, they may pick a number of wrong habits. Given that people tend to write the way they speak, there is a possibility that many of the wrong speech habits lead to errors in written work. But if the undesirable habits are addressed early, and the students exposed to the standards of textuality in their composition writing, it can be expected, justifiably, that the students would write better compositions as time goes by (Nyamasyo, 1994).

To be competent in a language, one does not just speak. A person needs to write in the language. Because of diversity in many aspects of language, there is need to use a standard form of analyzing students' performance in written text, Whiteley (1974). But there are people who believe that in form one and two, 'free' composition should be encouraged because 'controlled' work does not get the children anywhere (Cahill et al, 1969).

There are still others who feel that strict control for a period of time should be used to start with (Azabdaftari, 1981). Still, others say that the most appropriate thing would be to draw a line between the two extremes (Rivers, 1964). The pupils should be given adequate practice in writing. In the study, the pre-test, a narrative writing, was termed as 'free' composition. Students had freedom to stretch their imagination. The posttest was a story based on a proverb. It had an aspect of 'free' composition because it was an imaginative composition. Besides, it was also controlled because it was, limitedly, based on a particular proverb.

Writing demands the production of grammatically correct sentences, creativity and originality. It provides the writer with an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to organize language materials using their own words and ideas to communicate (Heaton, 1975). Students in the study were expected to display their originality and use of their imagination to express their ideas. The ability to write well is essential for success in any academic discipline. Composition writing skills train the learner to think critically, creatively and to respond to situations in an organized manner. The learner was further expected to practice in many exercises in English composition writing to develop their ability to write. Holden (1964) says that one's present ability, conscious study and constant practices, using the methods and guidance, should improve performance in composition writing. It was expected that the findings of the proposed study would show that those students that were exposed to the standards of textuality, and were engaged in constant practice of composition would necessarily perform better than the students who were not exposed to the same standards.

What is written must be done well because it is permanent. Ragan (1966) believes that the written word is important in influencing the social behaviour of people, improving human relations in living and working together. Therefore, there is need to produce school leavers who go out into the world with the basics of communication, where writing takes priority. If anything, there is demand for people with the ability to write plainly, clearly and correctly. Therefore composition writing which aims at training and testing people for practical purposes (Holden, 1964) should be given the attention it deserves. The research also aimed to find out whether the students in the study knew the different formats of written compositions. It is argued that students should be encouraged to write freely about experiences in daily living (Ragan, 1966). Creative writing emphasized along with the formal procedures for developing language skills includes certain aspects of textuality, which were used to judge the two compositions of the students in this study. Thiga (1997) observes that the field of writing has developed tremendously and writing is no longer restricted to the study of syntax. Other factors have been investigated with regard to writing and the findings have made the field of writing development especially in language two learning become advanced (Marthew, 1983). Peters (1986) as quoted in Nyarige (2002) investigated the correlation between the success of students' writing as judged by a teacher and the balance among ideational, interpersonal and textual macro functions in it. Students who receive low grades make dominant use of either interpersonal or textual verbal strategies in the first task while in the second; few students seem to make salient use of textual devices. In the third task, more students make significant use of textual strategies than in the second assignment. Significant use of textual features at all levels appears but do not correlate with better writing.

English is a language whose uses students and others have to learn for effective communication. Masterly of thinking skills is a prerequisite to good writing. In writing there is creative and critical thinking. Creativity involves the ability to rearrange ideas in new and different ways. Critical thinking involves examining new ideas and deciding on whether they have merit. In critical thinking there are tasks involved. These include: judgment, evolution, analysis, classification and synthesis of ideas. Another aspect of writing that is rarely taken into account is the variety of registers (Cahill et al, 1969). Due to the many aspects of written language that count in a good piece of writing, there is need for a set standard along which writing could be evaluated. A writer must know the rubrics and conventions of all writing.

Peter (1994:1) observes, "The techniques of the art of writing are many and diverse". He argues that the urge and need to write is in itself inevitable. Of late, writing has become part and parcel of human existence. This is a major aspect of communication. Students are all the time involved in different types of writing of texts. For this reason, writing is an indispensable means of communications (Ong'ondo, 2001). He further says that most

exams are answered in writing and, most times, in English. Indeed, in Kenya, all exams are written in English except exams that test proficiency in other languages such as Kiswahili or French. This also includes assignments and term papers. Writing skills go further than the school. There is need to have school leavers who are armed with the ability to write aptly and suitably. There is great need to adhere to the standards of textuality in all writing. The standards encompass most of what is needed to write a text well. Several research endeavours in the past hold a similar view; Witte and Faigley (1981), in an examination of the relationship between patterns of cohesiveness and quality of writing, report a significant relationship between the two indices. Crowhurst (1987), Okwara (1989), Fitzgerald and Spiegel (1986) conclude that children need to be taught to write and learn in their first language. Thiga (1997) argues that a child's ability to compose in English may therefore adversely affect his or her performance in other subjects in the curriculum.

Crowhurst (1987) and Yde and Spoelder (1985) found a developmental trend in the cohesive patterning of third and sixth grade children. On the other hand Onditi (1994) argues that learners do better in oral than in written tasks and also better in reception than in production tasks. However, it is the contention of this study that the written text is by far more important than the oral as far as communication is concerned. Nevertheless this study was interested in the application of the standards of textuality by the form two students on whatever magnitude.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

The study was quantitative and it is informed by Beaugrande and Dressler's Theory of Text Linguistics. It proposes that a text should be viewed as a system; a set of elements functioning together. The argument goes further,

Whereas a language is a virtual system of available options not yet in use, a text is an actual system in which options have been taken from their repertories and utilized in a particular structure (De Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981: 315).

For a text to be viewed as complete, it should have the seven standards of textuality. These include: cohesion, coherence, informativity, intertextuality, situationality, acceptability and intentionality. Further proponents of this theory, concur that a text lacks if it misses any of the standards. The students' texts (compositions) were marked against the use of the seven standards of textuality. Thus De Beaugrande and Dressler set the seven standards of textuality which are relational in character. The standards as earlier mentioned are: cohesion, coherence, informativity, intertextuality, situationality, acceptability and intentionality.

### **4. Conceptual Framework**

This framework shows the relationship between the independent, the extraneous and the dependent variables. A variable is defined as the characteristic that a researcher would like to handle, observe or manipulate in the research (Leedy 1980, cited in Kasomo, 2007). The independent variable in the study was that whose effect is established in the study. In the study it was the seven standards of textuality. The dependent variables are those that the researcher measures in order to establish the change of effect created on them. It experiences the effect of the independent variable creates on it. Here it was the compositions written by the form two students. The extraneous variables are those whose effects are not needed in the study. These were the other factors that affected the compositions written by the form two students. The variables are conceptualized in the following frame.

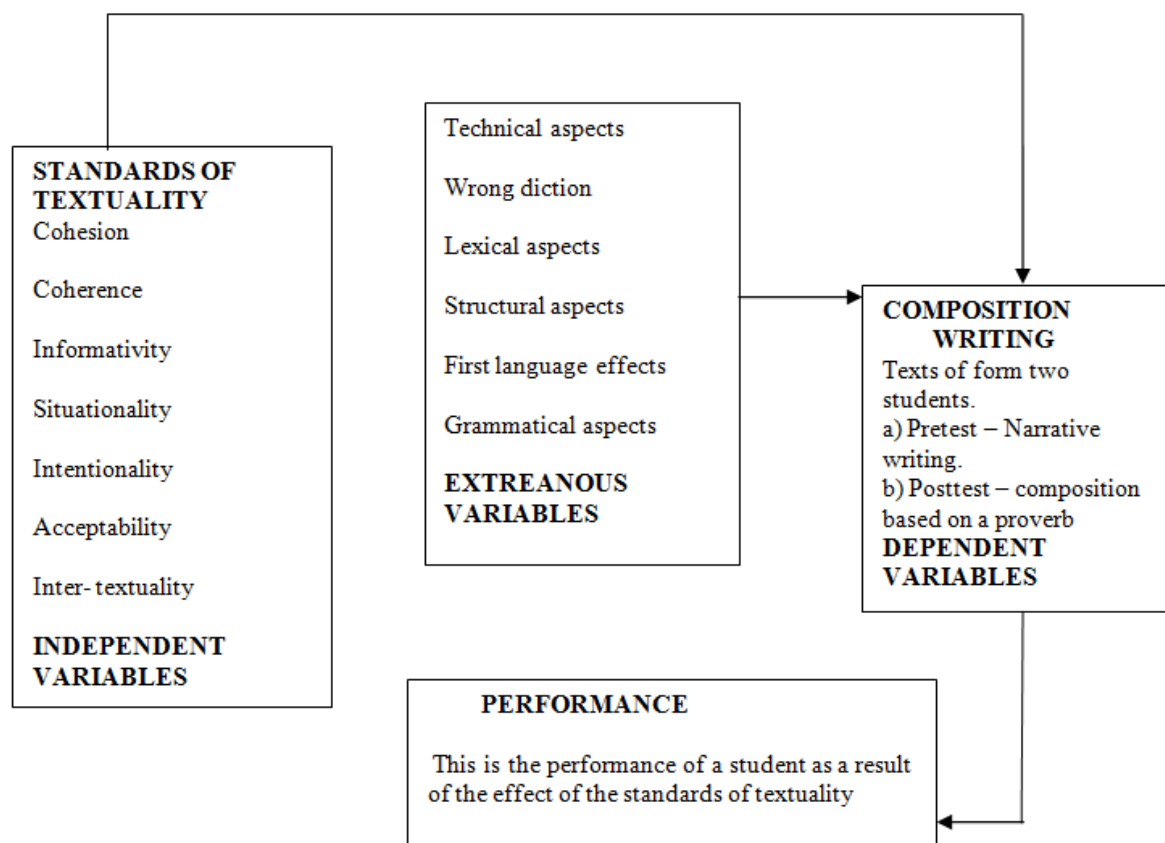


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework on the Relationship Between the Standards of Textuality and Students Compositions.

This framework identifies the standards of textuality as independent variable which impacts on the performance of students of form two in their written English compositions. The standards of textuality included cohesion, coherence, informativity, situationality, acceptability, intentionality and intertextuality. These affect the written compositions of students. Composition writing was identified to be the dependent variable. This is the variable that was measured in order to establish the change of the effect of the standards of textuality.

The standards affect the compositions so that the results are studied. Technical and lexical aspects were identified as extraneous variables in the model. These include legibility of the handwriting, brevity and overgeneralization of rules. Other extraneous factors were wrong diction, first language (direct translation), interference and grammatical aspects such as use of double subjects, mixing of gender and confusion of homophones.

## 5. Population

The target population for the proposed study was form two students from Kiini in Maara District in Kenya. This area has a cosmopolitan population. The students are from different backgrounds. The social and economic environment of the students is varied. Maara District has all the different categories of schools; single sex only boarding schools, mixed boarding and day schools. Kiini was a mixed day and boarding Secondary School.

## 6. Method of Data Collection

The data collected had information on the results of the students – their general performance from test one. After exposure to aspects of textuality, test two results were recorded. The K.N.E.C. marking scheme was used to ensure uniformity. The aspects of textuality were also used to judge the students' written work. There was use of quantitative data to look at the results of the students in the two tests. Analysis of each test was then done. The preference for the research design was experimental design; the pretest – posttest control group design was used. Two groups of subjects were used. One group was the control group where no treatment was given and the other was the experimental group, which receives treatment. The steps involved include: Random assignment of subjects to control and experimental groups, the administration of pretest to both groups, administration of treatment to experimental group but not to control group and the administration of posttest to both groups. In

setting up the study, the experimental and the control were exposed to similar conditions. First, the pretest exam was administered to both the control and the experimental groups. The exam was timed. It was also supervised. Papers were collected, and marked. Another examiner was approached to assist in cross marking 10% of the scripts. Marks were recorded. A discussion regarding the seven standards of textuality was held with the teachers of English. It was agreed that the teachers teach the students in the experimental class the standards of textuality. Once that was done, the second exam was administered to both groups again. The same marking procedure, as that for the first exam, was followed. The K.N.E.C. marking scheme was followed. In addition, the marking scheme was modified to include the standards of textuality. This modification was to incorporate the seven standards of textuality where marks were awarded in the following way.

- |                      |            |        |
|----------------------|------------|--------|
| 1) Cohesion          | (Cs) –     | 1 mark |
| 2) Coherence         | (Cc) –     | 1 mark |
| 3) Informativity     | (Info.) –  | 1 mark |
| 4) Acceptability     | (Acc.) –   | 1 mark |
| 5) Situationality    | (Sit.) –   | 1 mark |
| 6) Intentionality    | (Int.) –   | 1 mark |
| 7) Inter- textuality | (Inter.) – | 1 mark |

### 7. Data Analysis

The collected data was analysed using the descriptive and inferential statistics. The raw data was collected, and was tabulated to indicate the marks a student got on each of the standards of textuality and the general linguistic mark. This was added to give a total mark out of 20 for the pretest in the experimental class. The procedure was repeated for the posttest. After this, it was necessary to establish that the research was reliable by subjecting the students' results to the Pearson's Product formula for test – retest to compute the correlation coefficient. A correlation coefficient of about 0.8 is high enough to judge the instrument as reliable for the study, (Orodho, 2004). An instrument of 0.7 and above can be used to provide the needed information. The marks for both tests were then tabulated to calculate the correlation coefficient using the following formula;

$$r = \frac{\sum(x - \bar{x})(y - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum(x - \bar{x})^2 \sum(y - \bar{y})^2}}$$

Where;

- x Represents the results of the Pretest
- y Represents the results of the Posttest
- $\Sigma$  Summation or total marks
- $\bar{x}$  Mean of x (Pretest)
- $\bar{y}$  Mean of y (posttest)

According to the findings, the correlation in this school was 0.77 and 0.88 in the experimental and control classes respectively.

### 8. Using the Standards of Textuality

The marks attained in the different aspects of textuality and the general linguistic marks have been tabulated below.

Table 1 Experimental Class Pretest Results

Standards of Textuality	%
Cs	95
Cc	74
Sit	45
Info	33
Int	33
Inter	16
Acc	14

The table above shows that in the experimental class, the most popularly used aspect was cohesion at 95%, followed by coherence; 74%, then situationality at 45%. Informativity and intentionality came next at 33%. Inter- textuality was used by 16%. The least used aspect was acceptability at 14%. The second test was the posttest, the most popularly used aspect was cohesion at 88%, followed by coherence;

79%, then inter- textuality with 67%. Acceptability at 45% was next, then situationality at 29%. Informativity had 26% and intentionality got 24%. The average for this class in the posttest was 8.67 this was a positive index of 1.12. Apparently the exposure to the standards bore fruit, as was captured in the table below.

Table 2 Experimental Class Posttest Results

Standards of Textuality	%
Cs	88
Cc	79
Inter	67
Acc	45
Sit	29
Info	26
Int	24

Cohesion was still the most popularly used aspect and intentionality was the least used. There was improvement of the number of students who used coherence from 74 in the pretest to 79 percent in the posttest. After this, the marks were subjected to correlation coefficient to test the correlation between the two tests.

In the control class, the following data was captured and tabulated:

Table 3 Control Class Pretest Results

Standards of Textuality	%
Cs	55
Acc	50
Cc	48
Info	38
Int	38
Sit	38
Inter	30

Here the most popularly used aspect was cohesion at 55%, followed by acceptability at 50% and coherence at 48%. Informativity, intentionality and situationality followed at 38%.

The least used aspect was inter- textuality with 30%. The average for this class in the pretest was 7.22.

The results of the posttest in the control class was as follows:

Table 4 Control Class Posttest Results

Standards of Textuality	%
Cs	68
Cc	63
Acc	63
Sit	48
Info	48
Inter	43
Int	38

The second test was the posttest where the most popularly used aspect was cohesion at 68%, followed by coherence and acceptability at 63%, then situationality and informativity 48%. Inter- textuality came next with 43%. And finally, there was intentionality at 38%. The average for this class in the posttest was 8.25. This was a positive index of +1.03.

Correlation coefficient was used to compare the results of the two tests in the classes. Correlation was used as a statistical technique and it showed strongly how the variables were related. It was possible to show how the variables, the pretest and posttest results of the written compositions and the use of the aspects of textuality were related. Correlation coefficient showed the effect of exposure to the standards of textuality on the written compositions. The performance of the experimental class was affected by the exposure. From the data collected, the correlation between pretest and posttest was looked at. The correlation coefficient for the experimental class, which had 42 pupils, was calculated thus:

$$x = \frac{\sum x}{n} = \frac{317}{42} = 7.55$$

$$y = \frac{\sum y}{n} = \frac{364}{42} = 8.7$$

$$r = \frac{\sum (x - \bar{x})(y - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum (x - \bar{x})^2 \sum (y - \bar{y})^2}}$$

$$\sqrt{xy} = \frac{53.667}{42 \sqrt{60.405} \times \sqrt{81.333}}$$

$$= \frac{53.75}{42 \times \sqrt{1.44} \times \sqrt{1.44}}$$

$$= \frac{53.75}{42 \times 1.2 \times 1.39}$$

$$= \frac{53.75}{70.06} = 0.77$$

The correlation for the experimental class was 0.77, which is a positive index. There was a positive change in the students' performance between the pretest exam and the posttest. This indicated that the students had put the acquired knowledge on standards of textuality into practice. The scoring was divided into the different aspects of textuality that were investigated and, there was, a linguistic mark.

In the control class, the raw scores were then tabulated to determine the correlation coefficient. The average Correlation Coefficient of the control class, which had 40 students, was calculated thus:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x}{n} = \frac{389}{40} = 9.725$$

$$\bar{y} = \frac{\sum y}{n} = \frac{330}{40} = 8.25$$

$$r = \frac{\sum (x - \bar{x})(y - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum (x - \bar{x})^2 \sum (y - \bar{y})^2}}$$

$$= \frac{98.96}{40 \times \sqrt{2.68} \times \sqrt{2.89}}$$

$$= \frac{98.96}{40 \times 1.64 \times 1.7}$$

$$\frac{40 \sqrt{107} \times \sqrt{115.7}}{40 \times 40}$$

$$\frac{98.96}{111.52} = 0.88$$

In this class, the correlation coefficient was 0.88. This showed a slightly positive change between the two tests. Indeed, though the control class was not exposed to the standards of textuality, they had a better margin of positive change in the marks than the experimental class, which was exposed to the said standards.

## 9. Summary of the Results

The following is a summary of the above results. First the performance of students as a percentage regarding the various aspects of textuality is shown. The same results are then presented in form of bar graphs.



**Table 5**  
**The Use of the Standards of Textuality in Pretest**

Experimental Class			Control Class		
		%			%
Cs	40/42	95	Cs	22/40	55
Cc	31/42	74	Cc	19/40	48
Info	14/42	33	Info	15/40	38
Acc	6/42	14	Acc	20/40	50
Int	13/42	31	Int	15/40	38
Sit	19/42	45	Sit	15/40	38
Inter	7/42	17	Inter	12/40	30

In the experimental class, cohesion was used by 95%, followed by coherence with 74%. The least used aspect was acceptability at 14%. The rest were used as follows: informativity 33%, intentionality 31%, intertextuality 17% and situationality at 45%. While in the control class, the aspect that was used most was cohesion with 55%, then acceptability at 50%. The rest were: coherence 48%; informativity, intentionality and situationality, 38% and intertextuality, 30%. This has been summarized in the following figures 2 and 3. Figure 2 is the experimental class pretest result and figure 3 is the control class pretest results.

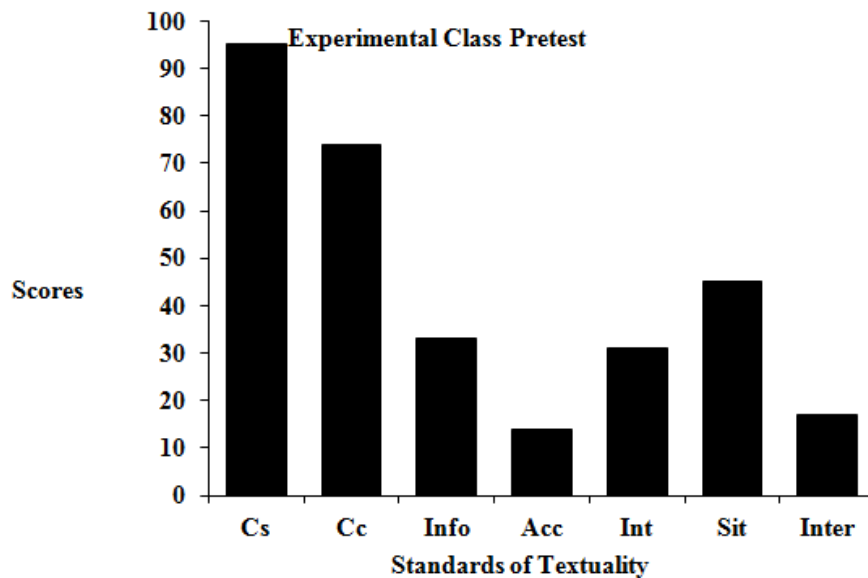


Figure 1. Experimental Class Pretest.

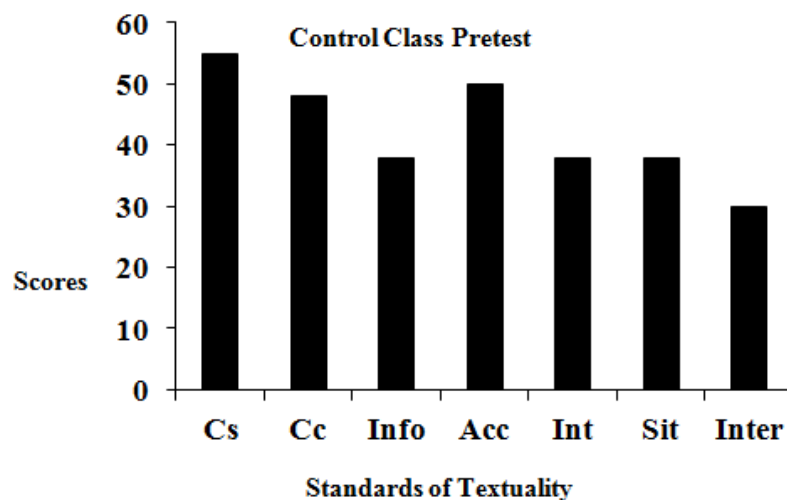


Figure 2. Control Class Pretest

In the pretest, the most popularly used aspect of textuality was cohesion. 95% of the students in the experimental class and 55% of the students in the control class respectively, applied cohesion in their compositions. This can be contrasted with acceptability, the least used aspect of textuality in the experimental class with only 14% of the students using it. On the other hand, in the control class, the least used aspect of textuality was intertextuality. It was used by 30% of the students.

Below is a summary of how the aspects were used by the students in both tests.

**Table 6**  
**The Usage of the Aspects of Textuality**

Pretest %	Posttest %
Cs = 76	Cs = 78
Cc = 61	Cc = 71
Info = 35	Info = 37
Acc = 33	Acc = 54
Int = 34	Int = 30
Sit = 41	Sit = 38
Inter = 23	Inter = 55

The performance in the pretest in the two classes followed this order; cohesion, coherence, situationality, informativity, intentionality, acceptability and then intertextuality. In the posttest, the students in both classes had cohesion as the most popularly used aspect at 76% in the experimental and 78% in the control class, followed by coherence. The next figures 4 and 5 show the proportionate usage of the various aspects of textuality in both the pretest and the posttest groups respectively.

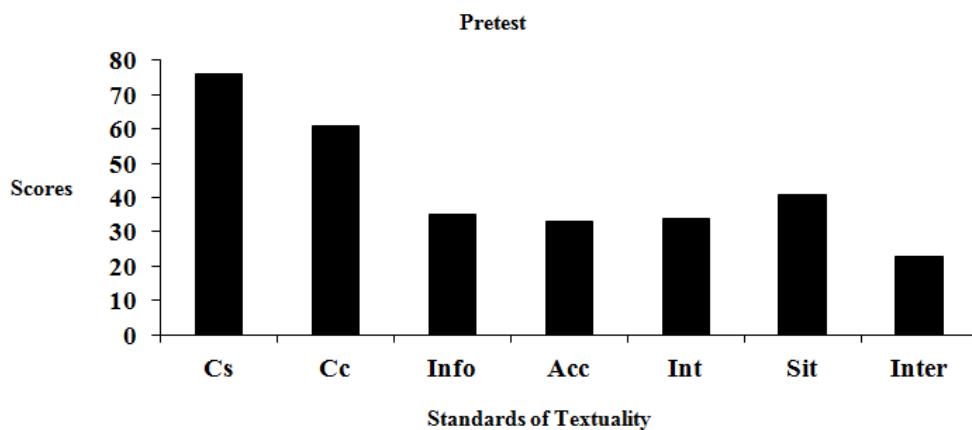


Figure 3. Pretest

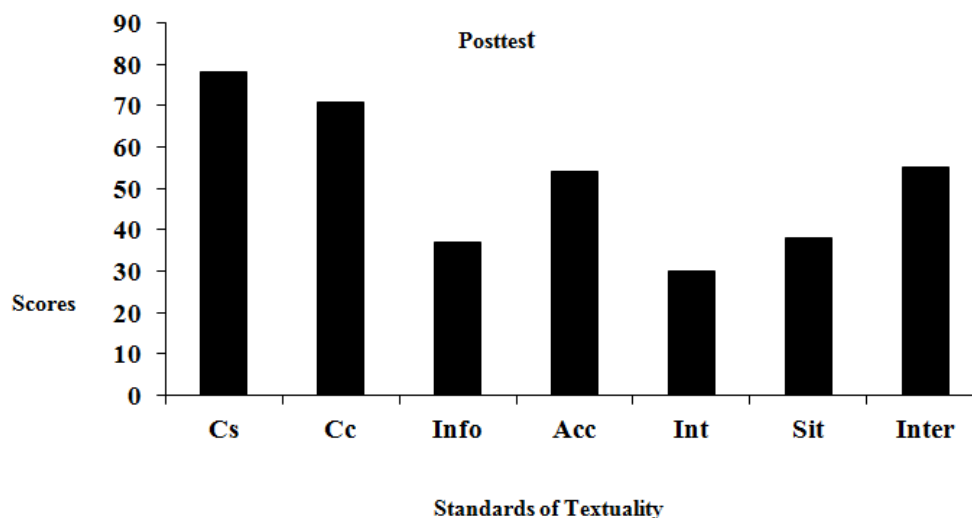


Figure 4. Posttest

As indicated in the figures above, the most highly used aspect of textuality was cohesion. In pretest, 76% of the students used it. It was followed by the use of coherence, at 61%. The least used aspect was intertextuality at 23%. In the posttest, cohesion was also the most popularly used standard of textuality having been used by 78% of the total number of students in the pilot school. This usage was higher than it was in the pretest by an index of 2%. The next aspect was coherence at 71%, which was higher in the posttest than in the pretest by an index of 10%. The least used aspect in the posttest was intentionality at 30%. But in the pretest, the least used aspect was intertextuality. It was used by only 23% of the students. There was a varied pattern of performance by both classes.

### **9.1 Cohesion**

Cohesion was the most popularly used aspect. As discussed earlier, cohesion is a network of relations, which organises and creates a text. This network is of surface relations, which link words and expressions to other words and expressions in a text. Cohesion looks at among other things: recurrence, parallelism, paraphrase and synonyms. Evidence of the usage of cohesion by the students includes the following examples extracted from the students' compositions. A student wrote; 'There was a rich man called Gitonga; a very wealthy person.' The words 'rich' and 'wealthy' are synonyms. The words used mean the same thing. Synonyms fall under cohesion. In the above example, the student showed lexical cohesion.

In another composition, a student wrote, '...people lived to help each other...' Help was replaced with 'assistance' in a later statement which read; 'John was good hearted and helped his people whenever they went to him for assistance.' Under cohesion, there is conjunction. Students used this aptly in their writing. One wrote, 'She was poor *and* old.' Another student had; '...the boy was punished *and* suspended...because of bad habits.'

### **9.2 Coherence**

Coherence was the next most preferred aspect of textuality by the students. Some students used 'Long time ago...' and 'Once upon a time...' These are aspects of global and classical patterns, which fall under coherence. Other examples include; 'He married and they lived a life of joy with his wife because the neighbours were united with him...' ; 'People in the village started complaining because of his behaviour'. The use of 'because' in the last sentence gives the link to the reason for the complaints.

### **9.3 Intertextuality**

This refers to the relationship between a given text and other relevant texts encountered in prior experience. It touches on factors, which make the utilization of one text dependant on knowledge of previous information encountered in another text. A text will depend on the next text. Intertextuality was evident in the students writing. For example, a student wrote; 'Finally, the results were out and Leah and I had passed so well.' This was a good link between the paragraphs. This implies that there was an earlier exam that had been done. The fact that they had passed gave hope of a bright future. A number of students were able not only to link what they were writing to the other parts of their texts but also to other texts and experiences outside the given text.

### **9.4 Acceptability**

Acceptability, deals with the attitude of the reader. The reader must find what the writer puts down acceptable. This aspect was evident in the students writing. For example, a student wrote... 'Although the old man was not rich, he had a lot of respect...The villagers were very depressed due to the destruction of Kirimi's store.' This is a relevant feeling of normal human beings. People are pained when one of their own is touched. This relevance is an item in acceptability. Another issue that falls under acceptability is the fulfillment of desirability goal. This was achieved by a student who wrote '...became famous for their good deeds.' Good deeds are culturally and socially acceptable, these lead to the person becoming famous. Another illustration of acceptability was found in a text which had, 'Pendwa would give the needy food and water. Visiting the sick and doing voluntary work in his village.' Such concern of assisting the needy, visiting the sick and doing voluntary work are desirable in any community. They are examples of generosity which is also socially and culturally acceptable.

### **9.5 Informativity**

Informativity refers to a text that contains some new information. Informativity should be seen as a gradable phenomenon. A text is informative if it transfers new information or information that was unknown before. It addresses the fact that there should be news. Some students showed links between the known and the unknown information. For example, one student wrote about the burning of a store and the assistance from the villagers. Here there was new information in that after the store was burnt, the villagers tried to assist in putting off the fire, they could have chosen to walk away; not to turn up at all or even just stand and stare. The fact that they took a step and assisted is news.

### **9.6 Intentionality**

Intentionality is the writer's attitude, which changes according to the users purposes. This is also the intention of the students as they write. Intentionality considers information for a specific topic, participant's intentions and the achievement of purpose or goal. In the compositions, some students wrote about campaigns and how a good name was better than riches. Here the four maxims (quantity, quality, relation and manner) of communication

were followed; the goals were achieved. A student wrote, 'One day an idea came into his mind that he has to travel even far away from his province to get food for his goat or to walk with it to a place with grass.' The intention of the writer was evident here; that people need to look beyond their boundaries to seek solutions to their problems.

### 9.7 Situationality

This is an aspect of textuality that refers to factors, which make a text relevant to a situation. It is the ease with which people decide the issue, due to the influence of the situation where the discourse is presented. A text is relevant to a particular social or pragmatic context. In the students' compositions, this was evident. For example when a student wrote... 'He participated in everything in the community for example, digging, decorating and helping others.' This student was describing an aspiring candidate and what he did to earn a good name. The factors in the text are relevant as they are common during political campaigns.

## 10. Findings

This research found out that:

- i) The students' texts were influenced by the standards of textuality.
- ii) There were other factors that affected performance of a student in composition writing. These were: Spelling, brevity and legibility, overgeneralization, wordiness, repetitiveness, joining words, separating words, use of double subjects, confusion of homophones and mixing gender.
- iii) Most students used cohesion as an aspect of textuality effectively.
- iv) There was some positive change in the marks in composition writing after the students in the experimental class were exposed to the standards of textuality. The control class also recorded some positive index between the pretest and posttest in some instances.

## 11. Conclusion

The students had varied results. There were students in the control class that exhibited improved performance even though they were not exposed to the standards. On the other hand, some students in the experimental class who were exposed to the standards registered a drop in the second exam, contrary to expectations. There were those students in the experimental class who recorded no improvement. Nevertheless, all the classes depicted some knowledge and application of the standards of textuality to varying levels. As indicated in the presentations, observations and remarks made in the foregoing pages of this report, the study gave a clear outlook of the students' performance regarding the seven standards of textuality that this research was interested in. The students' performance was varied. At some point, it appeared as if the experimental class would perform better in the posttest, as indicated in figure 1 and 2.

## 12. Recommendations

This study recommends that;

1. Further investigation on the usage of the standards of textuality by the other classes besides the form two is carried out. It is expected that form three or four will have been more exposed to writing than the junior classes and therefore they may depict a different trend and preference for the aspects textuality.
2. An in-depth study on the usage of each of the aspects of textuality is carried out. This would find out what was in the aspects that would make a student prefer one aspect for the other. The study would also find out the weight each of the aspects had in communication.
3. A study on the other aspects of language: technical aspects which include handwriting, neatness of the text; first language interference and dynamism of the language that influence composition writing be carried out.
4. A qualitative study is carried out so that the students may give their views regarding composition writing.

## References

- Awoniyi, T.A. (1982). *The teaching of African languages*. London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd.
- Azabdaftari, B. (1981). *A Qualitative versus a quantitative approach to the teaching composition*. England: Oxford University Press.
- Bennett, M. (1974). *Points overheard*. London: Macmillan Education Limited.
- Bright, J. A. (1965). *Patterns and skills in English*. Nairobi: Green and Company Ltd.
- Cahill, W. Hemphill, R. & Radford, W. (1969). *Teaching writing English – A methods handbook*. Nairobi: Jomo Kenyatta Foundation.
- Crowhurst, M. (1987). Cohesion in argument and narration at third grade levels. *Research in the teaching of English*. 21 (2).
- Day, S. & McMahan, E. (1980). *The writer's rhetoric and handbook*. USA: McGraw-Hill, Inc.
- De Beaugrande, R. & Dressler, W. (1981). *Introduction to text linguistics*. UK: Longman Group UK limited.
- Fitzgerald, J. & Spielgal, D. (1981). *Textual cohesion and coherence in children's writing of research in the teaching of English 20* (3).

- Glatthorn, A., Heiman, E., & Kredler, C. (1971). *The dynamics of language*. Washington, D.C: Heath and Company.
- Heaton, B. (1975). *Writing English language tests*. London: Longman Group Ltd.
- Holden, C. L. (1964). *A comprehensive course in English composition*. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd.
- K.I.E. (2006). Ministry of Education Science and Technology. *Secondary education syllabus*. Nairobi: K.I.E. Curriculum Development and Research Center.
- K.N.E.C. (1992). The Year 1991 *Examination report*. Nairobi.
- K.N.E.C. (2007). The Year 2006 *Examination report*. Nairobi.
- Kroll, B. (1990) (Ed.). *Second language writing*. Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge.
- Marthew, M. (1983) (Ed.). *The psychology of written language: Development and educational perspective*. John Wiley and Sons Ltd.
- McDougal, L. (1989). *English*. Illinois: Littell McDougal Company.
- Mifflin, H. (1990). *English*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Ministry of Education Science and Technology, (2005). *A guide to English teaching in Kenyan secondary schools*. Nairobi.
- Nyamasyo, E. A. (1994). An analysis of the spelling errors in the written English of Kenyan pre- university students. In *Language culture and curriculum*. Vol 7. 1994. Great Britain: Linguistics institute of Ireland.
- Nyarige, P.K. (2002). *Thematic organization and the use of reference cohesion in written compositions of secondary school students*. Unpublished M.A. thesis. Nairobi: Kenyatta University.
- Ong'ondo, C.O. (2001). *K.C.S.E. Writing skills*. Nairobi: World Press Publishers 'Kenya Chapter'.
- Okwara, M.O. (1989). *A study of factors related to achievement in written English composition among secondary school students*. Unpublished M.A. thesis. Nairobi: Kenyatta University.
- Onditi, T. L. S. (1994). *The acquisition of English Wh- questions by Dholuo language speakers*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. London: University of Reading.
- Peter, C. B. (1994). *A guide to academic writing*. Eldoret, Kenya: Zapf Chancery.
- Ragan, W. B. (1966). *Modern elementary curriculum*. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston Inc.
- Rivers, W. (1964). *The psychologist and the foreign language teacher*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Thiga, E. N. (1997). *Cohesion and compactness in compositions written by Kenyan urban primary school children*. Unpublished M.A. thesis. Nairobi: Kenyatta University.
- Ventola, E. (1994). *The structure of social interaction: a systems approach to the semiotics of service counters*. London: Frances Pinter.
- Whiteley, W.H. (ed). (1974). *Language in Kenya*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Yde & Spoelders (1985). Cohesion: an exploratory study with beginning writers. *Applied Psycholinguistics* 6.

The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open-Access hosting service and academic event management. The aim of the firm is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the firm can be found on the homepage:  
<http://www.iiste.org>

## CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

There are more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals hosted under the hosting platform.

**Prospective authors of journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:** <http://www.iiste.org/journals/> All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Paper version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

## MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: <http://www.iiste.org/book/>

Recent conferences: <http://www.iiste.org/conference/>

## IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

