

Sad stories

A preliminary study of NAPLAN practice texts analysing students' second language linguistic resources and the effects of these on their written narratives

Denise Angelo

Language Perspectives

Far North Queensland Indigenous Schooling Support Unit

Indigenous Education and Training Futures

Department of Education and Training, Queensland

denise.angelo@dete.qld.gov.au

Abstract. This paper analyses practice texts produced by Indigenous students who are first language (L1) speakers of the local variety of Torres Strait Creole, and second language (L2) learners of Standard Australian English (SAE). Writing such texts served as preparation for the writing component of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). These students had been exposed to classroom instruction on the schematic discourse organisation of the pre-announced test genre, a narrative, and had been given repeated practice of writing this genre under NAPLAN-like conditions. Analysis of their texts reveals that they attempt to implement this classroom instruction, but their levels of L2 proficiency impact greatly on the texts they generate. Their writing displays a wide range of non-target language features, which suggest that teaching approaches would need to include explicit instruction of SAE. This preliminary study raises issues for further investigation around the narrowed or even hidden curriculum for L2 learners of SAE in a high stakes testing environment.

Keywords. NAPLAN, ESL, Indigenous, writing, assessment

ANU Research Repository – <http://hdl.handle.net/1885/9313>

Proceedings of the 42nd Australian Linguistic Society Conference – 2011

M Ponsonnet, L Dao & M Bowler (eds)

1. Introduction¹

1.1 Overview

This paper presents the findings from a preliminary study of a class-set of practice narratives produced by Indigenous second language (L2) learners of Standard Australian English (SAE) in a remote school setting. Students wrote these texts under conditions similar to those imposed during National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests, as part of ongoing in-class practice sessions preparing students for the writing component in the actual test. Students had been taught the schematic discourse organisation of the narrative genre, the text-type all students were to attempt in the NAPLAN writing task. Classroom instruction was not informed by a curriculum which explicitly includes English as a Foreign Language or as a Second Language (EFL/ESL) methodology.

The analysis that follows shows that students are displaying many and overt non-target language features in their writing. Students' practice narratives reveal that they have internalised aspects of their exposure to the schematic discourse organisation of narratives from their classroom learning, but that their written language production is limited—to varying degrees—by their L2 proficiency. These students' written narratives could not reasonably be expected to improve easily or greatly through repeated practice of the test genre, but they would benefit from targeted language teaching.

1.2 Background to NAPLAN and Indigenous EFL/ESL learners

NAPLAN is the annual national standardised testing regime in which year 3, 5, 7 and 9 school students across all Australian states and territories, in all regions (urban, rural and remote) and from all education sectors (state, catholic and independent) have participated since 2008. Student performance is assessed in separate reading, writing and numeracy papers in English. Students can be exempted from sitting NAPLAN tests, and for EFL/ESL learners this exemption

¹ This paper is based on a section of a presentation co-delivered with my colleague Renae O'Hanlon, at the 2011 ALS Conference. The section drew on a protocol for analysing syntactic features of sentential complexity developed by the author, a resource also utilised in an unpublished 2009 research report co-authored with my then colleague, Nina Carter, and produced for the Far North Queensland Indigenous Schooling Support Unit. The author would also like to thank Dr David P. Wilkins for his comments on earlier drafts of this paper. Any errors, omissions or other failings are, of course, exclusively attributable to the author.

is couched in terms of length of residence in Australia: “Students with a language background other than English who **arrived from overseas less than a year before the tests** should have the opportunity to be treated as exempt from testing” (Queensland Studies Authority, 2010a:10; bolded text in original). Indigenous EFL/ESL learners are thus excluded from such an exemption and participate in NAPLAN tests regardless of their level of L2 proficiency in SAE.

The only opportunity for registering that an Indigenous student *might* be an L2 learner of SAE is via the Language Background Other Than English (LBOTE) category on the NAPLAN test booklet cover. LBOTE is, at best, only an indirect indication of the possibility that a student may be an L2 learner of SAE, as the category is defined for NAPLAN purposes as “if the student or father/guardian1 or mother/guardian2 speaks a language other than English at home” (Masters *et al.* 2008:24). Students who are fluent bilinguals, proficient SAE speakers and even L1 speakers could be categorised as LBOTE. This renders disaggregating reliable NAPLAN data about Indigenous EFL/ESL learners problematic.

Indigenous students’ NAPLAN performances have caused considerable media comment and government attention, as well as extensive reactions on the part of education authorities. For instance, Simpson, Caffery & McConvell (2009) provide extensive documentation about the contribution of the first NAPLAN result report to the stance taken *against* bilingual education in the Northern Territory (2009:26-34). McIntosh, O’Hanlon & Angelo (2012) describe how broad educational discourses such as *literacy* have largely obscured the role of *language* in education documentation. They note how no outputs of the National Indigenous Reform Agenda (or Closing the Gap) for halving the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students’ literacy and numeracy scores on NAPLAN refer to English language proficiencies or ESL learning needs (2012:454). It is argued that this *language invisibility* is doubly disadvantageous for Indigenous ESL learners who have a contact language variety as their L1, as their LBOTE may go unrecognised and their ESL status and L2 learning needs may be hidden. The need for more accurate language data (i.e. LBOTE and ESL proficiency) is emphasised, so that Indigenous students’ performance data can be better understood. (2012:462)

To date, however, little academic research has been published specifically on Indigenous EFL/ESL learners from remote contexts and their performance in

NAPLAN, with the exception of Wigglesworth, Simpson & Loakes (2011). These authors evaluate the reading comprehension and language conventions components of NAPLAN practice test papers for their impact on Aboriginal students in remote communities who speak Kriol/Aboriginal English as their L1 and are learning SAE in EFL contexts. Their close analysis of practice test papers provides evidence of cultural bias in NAPLAN reading comprehension passages, as well as some unwarranted conflation of literacy knowledge (e.g. spelling patterns) with L1-like language competence (e.g. inflectional morphemes) in NAPLAN language conventions sections. A number of recommendations are made, including the need for a curriculum “for teaching Indigenous students using EFL/ESL methods” (2011:341).

In this paper, the focus is on student-generated responses (in practice contexts) to the writing component of NAPLAN. Student texts are examined for what they reveal both about students’ uptake of classroom instruction on the narrative genre as well as about the effect of students’ L2 proficiency on their narrative writing. As such, it provides preliminary evidence supporting the need for targeted language teaching, such as a curriculum with EFL/ESL methodology. It also gives initial findings demonstrating how better L2 proficiency data would be useful for identifying teaching approaches suited to students with different levels of L2 proficiency. This paper also introduces speakers of another contact language variety, Torres Strait Creole, into the foregoing discussions of Indigenous EFL/ESL students and NAPLAN performance data.

2. Data

The study is based on a sample of 13 practice texts which were collected by a classroom teacher for the purpose of seeking assistance to improve student performance in the writing component of the upcoming NAPLAN test. The teacher considered them as typical examples of students’ attempts at narratives at that time. The sample was produced by all the students present in a composite year 4-5 class under NAPLAN-like conditions. Students were allotted 5 minutes for planning, 30 minutes for writing and a further 5 minutes for editing (QSA 2010b). The teacher had been following common advice to give students repeated

opportunities to practise writing narratives to improve student performance in NAPLAN.

The students all share a common language background. They are all first language speakers of the local variety of Torres Strait Creole, also known as Broken (Shnukal 1988) and Yumplatok (Ober 1999), different dialects of which have been described for the Torres Strait and northern Cape York area (e.g. Crowley & Rigsby 1979; Sandefur 1990; Turner 1997).

Students are all L2 learners of (Standard Australian) English (SAE) which is used as the language of instruction in the classroom. Students' texts display varying degrees of written proficiency in this language, but this observation cannot be correlated to school-based L2 proficiency data, as this was not being assessed or regularly monitored. The language learning context of these students would be best categorised as English as a Foreign Language (EFL): they live in a remote location where they would generally not use SAE outside of the classroom. They would probably not use SAE much in class either, given that they all speak their common L1 fully fluently, whilst their English proficiency levels appear to vary widely, with most none too advanced.

3. Method

Students' texts were typed and thoroughly de-identified, by removing not only the writers' own names, but also any character names and place references. Texts were assigned an identification code, consisting of the prefix B (boy) or G (girl) to indicate gender of student where known and then a numeral. One text was unnamed and was assigned an X.

In the typing process, student errors and their own edits (such as crossing out) were retained. Original letters or words that had been erased, crossed out or overwritten were included, as long as this information could be resuscitated. A series of typing conventions was used to annotate the typed texts to maintain features of the students' writing, indicating for instance illegible, ambiguous, overwritten or erased items.

The typed texts were first subjected to a close reading process, and initial observations were recorded on features that seemed of general interest. The texts

were also assessed in terms of whether they could score above zero on none, just some, or on a reasonable number of the NAPLAN assessable criteria for narrative writing. This information was correlated with text length.

The typed texts were organised according to their length (i.e. word count). The planning section was not included in this word count. In all but one case, it was easy to distinguish students' planning from their main text as they employed the component structuring elements of narratives (i.e. introduction, problem, solution, conclusion) to structure their plans. In addition, many plans were also separated spatially from the main text, often by a line.

Next, an in-depth analysis of non-target features was conducted on one text (X) for the purposes of description and categorisation. Once descriptions of each non-target feature had been undertaken, these were organised into the macro-category of either "language" or "literacy", and then further distributed amongst subtypes. In the case of features in the language macro-category, they were also grouped according to whether they operated at the word level, clause internally or across clauses. All texts were then analysed according to these categories.

Finally, an analysis of syntactic features associated with sentential complexity was conducted on the two longest texts (G3 and X), using a protocol adapted and developed from Craig & Washington (2006) by the author in Angelo & Carter (2009). The texts were coded and scored for instances of the syntactic features on the protocol, which created a profile of syntactic features for the two texts so these could be compared and correlated with other L2 features examined.

4. Initial observations of texts

4.1 Planning

All the students except for one completed a recognisable "plan" for their writing (see Table 1 below for a summary of features), thereby demonstrating at the very least their recognition of this stage in a NAPLAN writing test. Their plans were usually placed separately from the main text, sometimes divided off via a line. 4 students indicated that it was a 5 minute plan via a heading, "Plan 5 minutes" or

“5 min Plan:”, again identifying planning as a separate element of the writing assessment with its own time allocation of a specific duration.

Of the 12 students who wrote plans, all but one labelled the components of their plan with the words: “introduction”, “problem”, “solution”, “conclusion”, or with abbreviations such as “Introd”, “Prob” etc., or the initials I, P, S, C. None of this “labelling” was exactly the same across the cohort. It included various spellings: “concussion” and “Conclution”, and different punctuation choices between the label and the following writing: C), c, C, C | etc. The variation across the cohort indicates that students were not copying from one source, such as a plan written on the whiteboard by the teacher. Rather, they had been taught to use the schematic structure of a narrative during their planning time (under NAPLAN-like conditions) and they were reproducing this instruction to the best of their abilities.

Student ID	G3	X	G2	B6	B1	B7	B5	G1	B4	B3	B9	B8	B2
Written plan	yes	-	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Note of time	Plan 5 minutes	-	5 Min Plan:				5 Min Plan	5 min Plan					
Labels used in planning	Introduction: -Problem: Solution: conclusion:	-	Intro: Problem: Solution: Conclution:	I P S C	I P S C	i a s c	Intro- Prom Solution conclusion	Intro - Pro - solution - conclusion.-	I P S C)	-	I P S C	Introd P S	I P
Links to main text	2 out of 4 points	-	3 out of 4 points	yes	no	yes	just 1 name (of many)	yes	no (or 1 of 4?)	no	yes	no text at all	no text at all

Table 1. Summary of features in students’ plans.

As shown in Table 1 above, about half the practice texts which contained both a plan and a main text had few or no links between these two text elements. They displayed little or no connection in terms of content, or in terms of the generally accepted relationship between a plan (i.e. a brief summary) and the text (i.e. an elaborated version of the plan). So characters and settings, plot devices and conclusions mentioned by students at the planning stage were often not reflected in their main texts. Instead, a couple of the main texts functioned as a

continuation of (some of) the story elements outlined in the plan, a couple diverged in a number of the details and a couple bore little or no resemblance. In those cases where their plans did operate as a summary or overview, students were displaying, at the very least, an understanding of the relationship of a plan to its main text. Those students whose plans did not reflect this relationship between plan and text were, at the very least, demonstrating an understanding that a separate text was required at this juncture in the NAPLAN test practice.

4.2 Main text

As can be seen in Table 2 below, no text was assigned a title, although two texts had a kind of heading. One, G3, referred to the theme and included this word in the heading: “Theme: Adventure”, whilst the other, G2, referred to the task and a period of time: “25 min write story:”. (The allotted time is actually 30 minutes.) The author was surprised by the absence of titles on these texts, as they are—in the author’s experience as a classroom teacher and ESL advisor—a feature of classroom narrative texts (“stories”) which students commonly replicate even in early stages of literacy learning or at beginning ESL levels.

2 of the 13 practice texts did not contain a recognisable main text. One student had only written a plan; the other student’s plan morphed into the main text. Most texts only consisted of several sentences. In 5 pieces of writing the word count of the planning exceeded the main body of text, as if the students had expended all their effort on the planning, or as if the contained nature of the planning scaffolded it to become more “do-able” than the prospect of writing the main text. Thus, over half the practice texts raise the question of whether students did understand that the purpose of a plan was a short overview to organise their thoughts for writings the ensuing main text, or whether they were more generally unable to fill up a main text structure.

Most of the main texts have no paragraphs and are composed of a block of text (see Table 2). Only 2 students organised their texts into paragraphs: B5 with 2 paragraphs (comprising a single introductory sentence, written separately from the remaining text), G3 with 4. The layout of the main texts did not correspond to the planning, even in terms of visible organisation: The planned “introduction” item did not become an opening paragraph; the planned “conclusion” did not form the closing paragraph. The schematic structure that had been taught to students and

had been reproduced by most students in their planning does not appear to have greatly assisted students to organise their main writing efforts.

Student ID	G3	X	G2	B6	B1	B7	B5	G1	B4	B3	B9	B8	B2
Title or Heading	Theme: Adventure		25 min write story										
Plan word count	37	-	22	21	29	41	30	25	52	31	24	39	60
Text word count	353	147	80	78	75	60	58	53	42	28	18	-	-
Para-graphs	4	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	-	-
Problem	caught trespassing in jungle	ship wreck	(in plan) very cold house	lost with bad guy	?	lost man?	(in plan) problem at school	bored & sick	sniper	-	bug can't fly	(in plan) giant snowball	?
Solution &/or ending	set free	mend boat	(in plan) get wood & make fire	ran to a house	?	caught & cooked fish for lady	(in plan) went for ride	went over mountains	safe place	-	butterfly teaches it	(in plan) city struck	(in plan) speared & died
Topic	jungle adventure	Capt. Cook	cold house	lost boy & dog	the day	lost man	fishing & home	adventure	sniper	play	bug	disaster	Capt. Cook
Oversize formulae	THE END! I Tired now!		That's The END OF The StORY Bye-Bye				The End 4 Ever and 4 Life Bye-Bye X	The End That all Fokes Good Bye					

Table 2. Summary of features in students' main texts.

Mostly students' use of the schematic labels "introduction", "problem", "solution" and "conclusion" in their planning failed to be worked into their main text layout. In addition, students' main texts often do not represent the kind of content associated with these generic narrative stages (apart from G3). For example, at the start of their texts, characters and setting are not really introduced. The notion of a "problem"—where it is discernible—is understood mostly in the everyday sense of "problem", not as the narrative element which drives the plot. For example, G2's stated problem "He lived in the Coldest house", is followed by the planned solution "with putting sticks to make some fire". A cold house is admittedly a problem of significant proportions for a child used to a tropical climate, but this is a concrete problem, not typical of the kind of complication required by schematic structure to motivate a narrative. Similarly, B5 states overtly "We had problem at school with NAME2 and NAME3", for which the solution was: "we ride with the car and bus". Students' texts demonstrate that they had learned the metalanguage for schematic structure and also applied these to the

best of their abilities, but most do not have the conceptual understandings underpinning them.

The themes of students' texts covered a broad range of topics. 4 students wrote about an adventure set in environs markedly dissimilar from their own, with a couple of these focussing on lost people. 3 students wrote about everyday life (what I did on Friday, playing with friends, going home after a trip out to the reef). 2 students wrote texts with a character called Captain Cook and an event adapted from the life of the historical figure: a shipwreck in one, his murder in the other. 2 seemed to be related to disaster-movies (or perhaps video-games): a snowball hitting a city and a sniper attack. Finally, in categories of their own, there was a text about a bug going for a walk (perhaps cartoon- or movie-inspired), and another text about living in a very cold house.

In the context of Indigenous education in Australia, schemas (representations of experience) and genres (communicative purposes) associated with the cultural and social inheritance of Aboriginal students in southern Western Australia have been identified (e.g. Sharifian, Rouchecouste & Malcolm 2004; Malcolm 2001). No similar studies of Torres Strait Islander students' spoken and/or written texts have been undertaken. Whilst it is not inconceivable that the texts analysed here are influenced by students' socio-cultural background in some way, there is little evidence in this preliminary study of their following any particular culturally specific "frames", including that of topic selection. Indeed, it could be argued that most of the students from this class appear to have drawn for their writing topics on contemporary material beyond what might be termed their socio-cultural "inheritance", from sources in their lived and shared experiences of modern culture, including popular culture or "classroom culture". Thus, Captain Cook was a recently studied topic in the classroom, and elements of the historical figure's life such as adventure, ship-wreck and murder on the high seas were appropriated by the 2 different students in very different manners. Many topic elements included in the other "stories" also seem to be precisely *not* representative of typical (ie. community-based) culture and life. Of the 3 texts that do refer to everyday life, 2 do so in a way that is not culturally specific (see B1 and B3 below). A single text is to some extent regional (i.e. coastal) as it refers to reef-fishing and local (i.e. place-based) in that it includes a local term. In summary, then, it seems reasonable to assume that students' classroom learning experiences

of narratives for the purposes of NAPLAN practice tests could perhaps have driven out home culture schemas and genres, as these are not clearly evident in this sample.

In this study, the practice narratives are analysed from the point of view of revealing how students' less than fluent L2 is reflected in their attempts at the taught target genre. Just as their low L2 proficiency is a dominant factor in their written expression of their practice NAPLAN narratives, this "L2 language factor" would just as surely permeate any underlying, socio-cultural narrative "frames" attempted through written SAE. This is a significant point of difference from the Western Australian work cited above which is based exclusively on L1 texts—mostly oral—of L1 speakers of Aboriginal English, "an ethnolect of English" (Sharifian *et al.*, 2004:204). In contrast, the current study examines written L2 output, in the form of a taught school genre in SAE, produced by L1 speakers of Torres Strait Creole. The lens of early L2 proficiency is thus clearly pertinent here.

Returning to the relationship between students' L2 proficiency and their practice NAPLAN texts, some of the topics of these students' texts are reminiscent of the simple, formulaic texts about aspects of everyday life (friends, home, recreational activities etc.) produced in classroom contexts by many ESL students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, with lower levels of English proficiency. Hence, written L2 output of early ESL learners characteristically contains "personally significant events and people" (Education Queensland, 2008:7 and see similar descriptions in other ESL scales such as McKay *et al.* 1994, 2007; National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum 2009; Ministry of Education, Ontario 2012). To the extent that such texts draw on students' everyday lives, such topics may be said to reflect students' socio-cultural backgrounds, but they are arguably equally as much an expression of students' language and literacy limits in their L2.

4.3 Oversize formulae

4 students added oversize formulae below the main text of their story (see Table 2 above). These are somewhat reminiscent in style of popular graffiti, and some include "love-hearts" and "kisses". Some also have references to popular culture. For example, G2 wrote in very large print, the following expressions, one under

the other: “The End”, “That all Fokes” and “Good Bye”. B5 filled the remainder of his page with “The End”, “4 Ever and 4 Life”, “Bye-Bye-Bye X” (X indicating a kiss). The use of these formulae in this writing context is interesting on several fronts. 3 of the 4 uses of oversize formulae appear on relatively short texts, so the brevity of these students’ narratives is probably therefore not due solely to a lack of time. Their use with the shorter texts could also function to fill blank space, especially if students had thought there was an ideal size for the text, such as a page’s worth.

These oversize formulae also reflect students’ experience of written texts or narratives in “popular culture”. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in remote contexts, writing in the fashion of the classroom is not at all common outside school. However, one kind of writing generated by children or teenagers in the community takes the form of formulaic graffiti. Phrases such as “4 Ever and 4 Life” recall community graffiti that include selected family members, friends or true-loves, as do the “love-hearts” and “kisses”. “The End” could double as a reference to students’ own marking of the finish of a narrative (perhaps derived from local cultural or peer usage) and to endings of narratives in the media: “Thats all Fokes” is clearly derived from the closing remarks of Porky Pig and Bugs Bunny in their cartoon shows.

5. Analyses and discussion

5.1 Word count and NAPLAN features

There is a large variation in length across these practice NAPLAN texts. The longest text, G3, consists of 353 words or about 1.5 pages of handwriting. All the other texts are relatively short. The next longest text, by X, is less than half the length of G3’s and makes up just 0.5 page of handwriting. The shortest main text, B9, has just 18 words. The texts with 0 word count (B8, B2) have plans of some length, but as students indicate through various devices that these are plans, they are excluded as main texts, following NAPLAN protocols: during the NAPLAN writing test, students do their planning on a separate sheet of paper and are not allowed to write in their test booklets, so their planning cannot contribute to the

main narrative text. Students are allowed up to 3 pages in a lined, A4 test booklet for their narrative writing (QSA 2010b:14).

Student ID	G3	X	G2	B6	B1	B7	B5	G1	B4	B3	B9	B8	B2
planning word count	37	0	22	21	29	41	30	25	52	31	24	39	60
main text word count	353	147	80	78	75	60	58	53	42	28	18	0	0
NAPLAN narrative elements	reasonable number	some								none			

Table 3. Word counts of plans and main texts and estimate NAPLAN narrative elements with a score.

The shorter texts give the distinct impression that their young writers have limited English language resources to bring to the task (see, for example, the full text of B3 with a total of 28 words, and B1 with 75 words below). This observation is based on the many L2 learner features evident in these texts, such as limited and repeated vocabulary, difficulties structuring simple sentences, numerous non-target features and a pronounced lack of fluency: B3 wrote at an average rate of about 1 word a minute. In some texts, there is a sense that students “peter out” after producing their plan, as suggested by how B8 and B2 produced extended plans but no main text. As the main texts become longer, the comparative length of the planning tends to decrease. With the exception of G3, however, all the texts lack fluency and convey a sense that students struggled to write them.

With regard to the quantity of text produced, there is little evidence that students’ writing has benefited either from prior practice or from teaching strategies applied. Most texts produced by this cohort are not long. The NAPLAN test provides 3 sheets of A3 paper, but apart from G3 (over 1 page), and X (half a page), all students produced under half a page of writing, most well under. Classroom teaching of the narrative genre instructed students in how to order specific kinds of information in order to produce a narrative structure, as in the “introduction”, “problem”, “solution” and “conclusion” referred to in students’ plans (§4.1 above). Such instruction has apparently not supported most students in this cohort to produce any considerable amount of writing, presumably because it is a strategy aimed at shaping pre-existing language resources. Similarly, practice

writing would hopefully provide students with opportunities to learn how best to apply their pre-existing language and literacy resources to writing a narrative within a given time limit. Practice, as a teaching strategy, does not add to students' L2 resources, although it would aim to increase the efficiency of students' accessing their existing language resources under the pressure of a test situation.

As shown in Table 3 above, students' main texts fall into 3 groupings according to their length: (relatively) long (353 words), medium (42 to 147 words) and short (0 to 28 words). Other characteristics of students' writing are associated with these groupings, such as their ability to narrate (in English) and their likelihood to score on NAPLAN assessment criteria, reproduced below in Table 4. An example of a long (G3), medium (B1) and short (B3) text is reproduced below, with the following typing and transcription conventions:

- Generic terms 'NAME1' and 'PLACE1' replace names of people and places respectively. Mentions of the same person or place use the same number. Additional people and places are assigned different and higher numbers.
- Superscript indicates letters or words which were overwritten by the student.
- Struck-through items 'xxxx' were crossed out by the student (but still visible).
- A bracketed question mark '(?)' attached to a preceding word indicates the transcriber's uncertainty about that item.
- A question mark standing alone '?' indicates uncertainty so great that a form could not be even tentatively assigned.
- Material inside square brackets '[xx]' was inserted in smaller writing by the student, perhaps as an afterthought or as part of the later editing process.
- Asterisk '*' indicates a fresh line started but spacing does not indicate a new paragraph.
- Bolded text indicates dramatically oversized writing by the student.

The longest text (G3) is grouped separately from all the others (appears below, p.42). Not only is G3's text much longer, it differs significantly in terms of its structure and its "expressiveness". It attempts the taught schematic structure, is organised into 4 distinct paragraphs, and contains elaborated ideas. Unlike the other student-generated texts in this data set, G3's text does not require the

transcriber to formulate an interpretation. There is sufficient target-like linguistic material rendered through reasonably accurate literacy for English speaking readers to comprehend—for the most part—this student’s intended meaning (transcript on following page).

Unlike the other students, G3 wrote a jaunty commentary about accomplishing her test strategy, followed by a remark about her consequent tiredness. Such playful self-congratulation smacks of a student who experiences a degree of success with test practice narratives, or written tasks more generally. This self-talk was not counted in the word count.

The texts of medium length all consist of a single block of text, apart from B5 with a single, separate introductory sentence. The ideas in these texts are sequenced, but not elaborated upon. Their plots are recounted simply, as a series of events. Occasional use of expanded noun groups is evident, although not in all the texts in this grouping. The example text from B1 here falls in the middle of the medium length texts.

Student text B1	Transcriber interpretation
<p>Friday I go to school big lench I it. my samig and lent lench I it samig. and I play with NAME1 I play and. play and play for a lota and I went. house dinner for dinner ^aBert I have my. Berth and chaj and I it. ⁱⁿand in the monig I went to play with. NAME1 I went to my Mam and. Wier went to p^{nc}ence with smol. PLACE1 and wier went to homes.</p>	<p>Friday I go to school. Big lunch I eat My sandwich and little(?) lunch I eat sandwich And I play with NAME1, I play and play and play for a lot and I went house for dinner but (?) I have my bath and change and I eat. And in the morning I went to play with NAME1. I went to my Mum and We went to (?) with small PLACE and we went to homes.</p>

Student text G3

Theme: Adventure

One [one] day two beautiful girls were borned, one was NAME1 and the other was NAME2. There father was a explorer and had a Record for climbing the biggest mountain. ~~at~~ As NAME1 and NAME2 grew up they were ~~als~~ always interested in there fathers work and how he had moved from places to places.

* One day NAME2 said to NAME1 ~~each other~~ “why don’t we go on an Adventure to... uh uh a jungle, were there are all kinds of animals lives?” NAME2 looked worried she ~~su~~ argreed with NAME1 and they smiled happy~~lier~~ than ever.

So on a Sunny day they took there camping gear and set off leavi leaving there home behind. While NAME2 walked to a bus to hire, NAME1 looked at the jungle way beyond the Roads ahead thinking what might happen. As the journey began they looked out the window and stop the car. NAME2 got out and said “This is the place let go”. They started walking ~~in~~ deep into the jungle. [After] they go caught in the middle of some quick sand and started screaming. As the looked around the saw some people walking toward them..... they knock NAME2 and NAME1 and hanged them by there hands and waited for them to get up!

After a hour the two girls got up and looked around they saw there camping things in a corner and there was a man, he introduce himself and the girls said “hey you guys we don’t know whats going on here”: they said “you two are trespassing through our land and we don’t like it.” NAME1 said okay we will leave and the people let go of the girls and took there stuff and ~~went back~~ Ran back to there car and headed back to ~~there~~ home.

When they got Back home they looked Relief they got out of that mess. They walk Back home put there things back to the Room and went to a shop for something to eat and talk about what happened.

THE END!

I did my plan

I finished my story

And I just conquered my editing.

I Tired now!

The shortest main texts (B9, B3) both contain just 2-3 (putative) sentences. The sentence count is based entirely on syntactic criteria for B9, as the student did not indicate sentence boundaries with standard punctuation marking. Both texts contain too little written material to allow for the expression of elaborated or sequenced ideas. B3 is provided as a sample of these short texts here.

Student text B3	Transcriber interpretation
my and NAME1 is playing at my house with my dog. And NAME1 want to house.thmrdaymaning my and NAME1 SURNAME1 want to play with the dog	me and NAME1 is playing at my house with my dog. And NAME1 went to house. thursday(?) morning me and NAME1 SURNAME1 went to play with the dog

The length of these texts is associated with the ability to score on assessable NAPLAN criteria (Table 4). This is an unsurprising observation, given that the texts consisting of very little material have correspondingly little or no opportunity of representing the narrative elements on which the criteria are based.

Assessable Criteria	Range of score points
Audience	0-6
Text structure	0-4
Ideas	0-5
Character and setting	0-4
Vocabulary	0-5
Cohesion	0-4
Paragraphing	0-2
Sentence Structure	0-6
Punctuation	0-5
Spelling	0-6

Table 4. NAPLAN assessable criteria for narrative writing with available score points source NAPLAN (QSA 2010a:4).

In a similar vein, the texts of medium length contain enough written matter to stand some chance of gaining recognition for scoring on some of the assessable criteria. The longest text, however, includes material beyond the simple recounting of events which characterises the medium length texts: some character development, connected events and extended ideas—not just the bare events—so there is a much greater likelihood of the text scoring on a reasonable number of the narrative criteria. For example, the student attempted to motivate her characters' adventure by introducing information about their explorer father and their longstanding interest in the places he had lived (G3, §1). With this “extra” material, G3's text could score points in various assessable criteria, such as audience engagement, text structure, ideas, character and setting, vocabulary and cohesion.

Although a correlation between the length of these narratives, their impact and their ability to meet assessable NAPLAN criteria might appear “commonsense”, it is at best a superficial analysis. The length of these texts, their ability to engage and communicate and their possible test scores are obviously symptomatic of an underlying cause: these students lack proficiency in SAE. They are L2 learners of SAE in an EFL context, who are still in the process of learning SAE. The following analyses of non-target language features and of syntactic features indicative of sentential complexity provide evidence of their L2 learner status.

5.2 Non-target language features

An initial description captured each of the non-target features, or “errors”, and described them. It was found that these features belonged to two macro-categories: “literacy” and “language”. Non-target features were categorised as “literacy” if they would normally be addressed through general classroom literacy lessons, such as spelling, punctuation and (optional) stylistic choices. Other features, consisting of various obligatory morpho-syntactic and lexico-semantic elements, were categorised as “language”. Non-target language features are indicative of the L2 learning status of these students, as they would not be expected of L1—or highly proficient—speakers of SAE. Language “errors” could be addressed through explicit (e.g. EFL/ESL-informed) “language teaching”, but would not be in the scope of generalist “literacy teaching”.

After thoroughly categorising all non-target features, the non-target language features were tallied for all texts. Rates of occurrence were calculated as a percentage of the total word count. The results in Table 5 below clearly show that students are producing non-target language features typical of L2 learners, at rates of between 7% to 37%.

non-target language features		G3	X	G2	B6	B1	B7	B5	G1	B4	B3	B9
clause internal	word level											
	Verb inflection	8	12	0	4	2	3	2	0	0	0	2
	Noun inflection	1	7	1	0	1	0	2	1	1	0	0
	Meaning of word	0	9	0	2	2	1	2	0	2	0	0
	above word level											
	Verb group	2	5	4	0	0	2	0	1	3	1	0
	Noun group	5	9	2	2	2	3	0	0	0	0	0
across clause	Adverbials	3	3	0	1	5	1	5	0	1	0	0
	Meaning of clause	2	2	2	2	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
	Pronouns/cohesion	1	3	1	0	0	1	4	1	2	3	0
	Clause connection	2	5	2	1	1	3	1	0	1	0	0
Total features/words		24/353	55/147	12/80	12/78	13/75	15/60	16/58	4/53	11/42	4/28	3/18
Rate:		7%	37%	15%	15%	17%	25%	28%	8%	26%	14%	17%

Table 5. Non-target language features across all main texts produced.

Further comparison of these non-target language features and/or rates was not pursued with all texts for a number of reasons: a) Some of the shorter and clearly less fluent texts consist of relatively correct, but formulaic language, skewing the analysis; b) some of the texts have passages of (severely) disrupted meaning which are very difficult to analyse in this manner, due to uncertainty around word meanings, phrases, clause boundaries etc.; c) some non-target language features cause more significant problems for readers than others, but this analysis was not able to represent this factor.

With these caveats in mind, the 2 longest texts (G3, X) are examined here (Table 6 below), to highlight some of their obvious L2 features as well as to compare and contrast linguistic differences between the writing of each student (other than word count). These texts have been selected because they contain by far the most

language and in that sense are the most successful. They also might be reasonably expected to exhibit the most uptake from their classroom learning and be useful for illustrative purposes.

G3 has fewer non-target language features overall, and displays a lower rate of 7%; X writes with more non-target language features, and a rate of 37%, many times higher. The production of non-target language shows that both students encountered linguistic difficulties as they wrote their narratives in their L2.

Macro category	Non-target features	G3 Tally	X Tally
Language	word level		
	Verb inflections	8	12
	Noun inflections	1	7
	Meaning (single lexical item)	-	9
	clause internal		
	Verb group formation	2	5
	Noun group formation	5	9
	Adverbials (i.e. time, manner, purpose)	3	3
	Meaning (of clause)	2	2
	across clauses		
	Pronouns (& lexical cohesion)	1	3
Clause connection (i.e. logic & sequence)	2	5	
	Total language features/Total words	24/355: 7%	55/147: 37%
Literacy	"Style" (optional)	6	6
	Spelling (including "correct" homonyms)	16	20
	Punctuation	25	12
	Total literacy features/Total words	47/355: 13%	38/147: 26%

Table 6. Breakdown and tally of non-target language and literacy features for G3 & X.

In these two texts, language proficiency—as evidenced so far through analysis of word count and non-target language—contributes more to comprehensibility and communicative success than do basic literacy skills: G3 makes double the literacy “errors” to language “errors”, yet that text is by far the most successful and is able to score on a reasonable number of NAPLAN assessable criteria due to greater language proficiency. X makes fewer literacy to language “errors” (although double the rate of G3’s literacy “errors”), but to no particular benefit in the text. Basic literacy interventions around spelling and punctuation would not greatly improve these narratives in terms of quality or quantity. In terms of NAPLAN also, spelling (maximum of 6 score points) and punctuation (maximum of 5) total just 11 out of the available 47 points.

Within each of the macro-categories of “language” and “literacy”, non-target language features have been grouped into subtypes. The language subtypes are arranged according to whether they relate to word level features or to other clause-internal structures, or whether they pertain to cross-clause phenomena. For both students, their non-target language features are predominately clause-internal in nature (including at word level): G3, 88%; X, 85%. Non-target features within a clause include, for instance, zero-marking of past tense, lack of plural inflections, compound tense formation, composition of quantifying expressions, use of prepositions, word order etc. These are typical approximations by L2 learners of target language features. L1—or other highly proficient—speakers of SAE do not make morpho-syntactic errors of this nature, because they produce the morpho-syntax of SAE “automatically”.

G3 and X have a different non-target language profile. 51% of the non-target language features produced by X are at the word level compared to 37% by G3. From a language teaching perspective, English word level inflectional morphology is ranked developmentally easier than syntactically more complex formations within and across clauses. This kind of material is highly amenable to explicit instruction, in the experience of the author. In the case of G3, all except one of the errors at word level are verb inflections, so G3, despite being a more advanced L2 learner, would benefit from this teaching too.

A final consideration is that analyses of non-target language features do not value what students have attempted. This is particularly problematic when L2 learners are attempting a task which demands language beyond their level of proficiency. If they attempt to express their own ideas in independently constructed language, they will be likely to make more errors on account of employing language that they do not yet control.

5.3 Syntactic features to identify greater sentential complexity

A profile of sentential complexity in student texts augments the previous analyses, by capturing patterns of the language attempted by students. The tool employed here is a protocol developed by the author and utilised in a report by Angelo & Carter (2009) on spoken and written language of high school aged students, in which they compared outputs across a range of English proficiencies, from beginner L2 learner through to native L1 speaker. It was adapted and developed

from the complex syntax features used by Craig & Washington (2006:138-141) in their study of oral language structures used by school-aged speakers of African American Vernacular English.

Appendix 1 lists all 20 syntactic features from the protocol used for coding texts in this analysis, along with definitions for scoring purposes and examples. A comparison of this protocol with the “original” Craig & Washington categories shows that a number of features have been added:

- features 1-6: unchanged from “original”;
- features 7-8, 9-11, 12-13: “original” category split into 2 or 3, to assist with accurate scoring and coding;
- features 14-15: major categories of analysis used elsewhere in the “original” study;
- feature 16-20: additional categories to differentiate between students’ language output.

Features added to the “original” were required to capture extra linguistic features characteristic of written language, or to distinguish between outputs characteristic of different students. Broadly speaking, “preposed sentence elements” (feature 16) and “elaborated noun phrases” (feature 17) proved useful for describing more salient aspects of students’ written expression. Again, generally, it was noted that additional syntactic elements in the verb phrase were utilised more frequently by many SAE-speaking students. Those selected for coding were “modality in the verb phrase” (feature 18), “adverbial elements” (feature 19) and “aspect in the verb phrase” (feature 20). The adaptation and development of Craig & Washington’s protocol employed in the analysis here has been utilised in a number of L2 classroom research and application contexts (e.g. Holzberger 2011).

In the present study, the texts of G3 and X were coded for any of these syntactic features of sentential complexity to reveal a profile of their language use (Table 7 below). For ease of display, this table does not include features that were not actually observed in G3’s and X’s texts.

From the data presented in Table 7, it can be seen that G3 displays more syntactic features associated with complexity in sentences, as measured both by the range of types in evidence as well as total number and frequency of features throughout the text. Complex language is required for expressing complex ideas, and G3 is

demonstrably using some complex language features. Although L2 learner features are still obvious in G3’s writing, as shown by her non-target language features (Table 6), it is her use of some complex language that supports her self-expression in her narrative.

It is also the use of more complex language which enables G3 to score (more) points on (more of) the NAPLAN assessable writing criteria (Table 4). Engaging an audience, expressing ideas, depicting characters and settings, utilising vocabulary effectively, shaping a cohesive narrative and structuring correct and apt sentences all require—or greatly benefit from—writers controlling the syntactic features for expressing them.

Features of sentential complexity	Student ID	
	G3	X
Features found		
Simple infinitive (same subject)	1	1
Infinitive (different subject)	1	-
Unmarked infinitive	1	-
Noun phrase complement	5	-
Participles as adjectives	11	-
Preposed sentence elements	7	3
Ellipsis	8	5
Modal verb	2	-
Wh-clause	3	-
Relative clause	-	3
Passive	?	-
Subordinate clause (other)	6	-
Adverb (in verb group)	1	-
Aspect (in verb group)	3	-
Participial phrases	6	1
Total	55	13
Rate: Total features/Total words	55/355: 15%	13/147: 9%

Table 7. Syntactic features of sentential complexity found.

X, on the other hand, displays a lesser degree of language complexity, in relation to range, number and rate of syntactic features found. The syntactic profile presented in X’s text is associated with its ability to meet fewer NAPLAN assessment criteria. Less syntactic complexity is emblematic of the student’s level of L2 proficiency. At a text level, this student’s developing L2 reveals itself not just through lower word counts, less elaboration and more non-target language, but also as fewer syntactic features indicative of sentential complexity.

X produces the second longest, and, arguably, the second best text. Yet clearly X requires considerably “more” target language to produce a more successful

narrative. Teaching and/or practice at the level of schematic text structure will not fulfil the language learning needs of X or the rest of the student cohort. Instruction which does not include explicit teaching of the target language, SAE, effectively withholds the vital ingredient: These texts are not written in students' L1, Torres Strait Creole, but in their L2, SAE. If students are only taught how to organise their existing SAE proficiencies (no matter how low) into a narrative structure for NAPLAN purposes, the target curriculum is hidden from them by a barrier of untaught but requisite (SAE) language.

G3 alone has both used and “filled up” the taught schematic structures. The syntactic profile of G3's text strongly suggests that this student has already acquired sufficient language both to be able to understand and to implement the concepts associated with the overtly taught generic stages (i.e. introduction, problem, solution and conclusion), at least to some extent. From this point of view it could be argued that this student alone has benefited from instruction focussing on schematic structures: this curriculum is accessed (partially) by G3 due to sufficient L2 proficiency, but hidden from X (and the other students apart from G3) due to their lower levels of L2 proficiency. Teaching schematic structures of a narrative has further possible negative ramifications for student performance, in as much as it occupies school time that could be spent targeting the required language teaching. Even G3, the student with the most successful narrative, would show improvements from explicit language teaching, as evidenced by the range of her non-target language features

6. Areas for further investigation

The students in this study display a range of L2 proficiencies. The analysis and discussion in this paper suggest that one student is in a better position to take up and apply classroom instruction centring around schematic discourse organisation to a much greater extent than the others. This suggests useful lines of investigation that could map students' L2 development onto their outcomes arising from different pedagogies. A measure of students' respective L2 levels, for example on an ESL proficiency scale, would assist with clarifying who would benefit most from which pedagogy.

In this class, students have been taught to write a narrative largely through its schematic discourse structure. In the author's experience, this is a common approach to teaching "genres" for a complex variety of reasons, including teaching resources and teacher training. If this is in fact a widespread practice, this would be a concern if it were not accompanied by language teaching for students with L2 learning needs. The nature and extent of classroom actualisation of genre pedagogy is important to ascertain, as it might be excluding many EFL/ESL students from the curriculum and preventing them from reaching their academic potential.

A further issue is the high stakes testing context surrounding the production of these practice texts. NAPLAN itself is just a point-in-time snapshot of student performance in numeracy and literacy (via written English), which could provide some useful diagnostic information. However, there are extreme pressures surrounding the use of NAPLAN data which create an ethos of high stakes, so that the performance of systems, schools, teachers and students is judged by this single data source. The perceived importance of NAPLAN results seems, from this author's perspective, to drive curriculum and pedagogy responses, as in the case of practising for the NAPLAN writing assessment in this study. It would be important to understand the extent to which NAPLAN preparation is undertaken in schools and whether the curriculum is consequently being narrowed. If so, then how and by how much?

Further study is required to understand how schools are addressing EFL/ESL learners' needs whilst also responding to the current high stakes performance ethos for all students. Apart from exempt L2 learners of SAE who arrived from overseas in the last 12 months, all other EFL/ESL learners sit NAPLAN tests. In a high stakes testing context, other sources of information relevant to teaching students can be undervalued or silenced. As the dominant source of student performance data, NAPLAN purportedly reports on students' levels of achievement in macro-skills such as reading and writing. However, this testing is undertaken in English, and therefore logically has to interact with students' proficiency in this language. It would be a matter of interest to determine to what extent the discourse of high stakes is acknowledging L2 learners and their levels of L2 proficiency, or how their "literacy" performance in these standardised tests is positioned.

There is an apparent absence of guidance for teachers of Indigenous students in EFL contexts. By very definition, students learning English as a Foreign Language only have access to the target language in the classroom, so curriculum, resources and training would be vital for optimal L2 learning. It is therefore important to investigate what manner of guidance is available for classroom teachers working in EFL contexts and whether teachers feel supported in implementing such approaches.

Finally, these suggestions are dependent on the accurate identification of Indigenous EFL/ESL learners and the ability to assess their levels of L2 proficiency. It appears that the LBOTE category might bear only a weak relationship to students' actual EFL/ESL status. Furthermore, Indigenous students with complex language backgrounds arising from language contact and shift might not even be acknowledged as speakers of LBOTE. It would be of interest, then, to learn to what extent student performance data from NAPLAN, state education department sources or local school level records could be disaggregated for EFL/ESL status and level of L2 proficiency in SAE.

7. Conclusion

The practice texts examined in this preliminary study provide evidence that students are learning and applying the schematic structures about narratives which have been taught and practised, but only to the extent allowed by their various levels of L2 language proficiency. For most of these students their L2 proficiency in SAE is not high, so their application of their classroom instruction about narrative structure was as minimal as using labels for planning in some instances. The underlying cause of students' lack of success in these narratives is due to their available L2 linguistic resources. The analyses of student texts provides evidence about the limits of their L2 proficiency in SAE in terms of length of text, general expressiveness, non-target language features and greater sentential complexity.

This study provides evidence that the classroom curriculum (narrative writing) was hidden from students on account of what was not taught. All students display many overt L2 learner features which would not be readily addressed through teaching and practising the structure of a targeted output, the test genre. Indeed, it

could be deleterious in terms of unproductive classroom time and students' sense of self-confidence, through on-going lack of success. All texts analysed in this study, even the most successful narrative, show a need for language-focused teaching. These preliminary findings point to several lines of enquiry with significant ramifications for teaching and assessing Indigenous EFL/ESL learners effectively.

References

- Angelo D & N Carter 2009 'An investigation into the interface between language and literacy at Bundamba State Secondary College'. Unpublished manuscript.
<http://www.learningplace.com.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=51300> (accessed 12th May 2012)
- Australian Education Union 2010 'Submission 231 to the Senate Education Employment and Workplace Relations Committee into the Administration and Reporting of NAPLAN Testing June 2010'.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=eet_ctte/naplan/submissions.htm (accessed 12th May 2012)
- Australian Primary Principals Association 2010 'Submission 228 to the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee Inquiry into the administration and reporting of NAPLAN testing'.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=eet_ctte/naplan/submissions.htm (accessed 12th May, 2012)
- Christie F 2010 'The "Grammar Wars" in Australia' in T. Locke (ed) *Beyond the Grammar Wars: A resource for teachers and students on developing language knowledge in the English/literacy classroom* Oxon: Routledge. Pp. 55-72.
- COAG Reform Council 2011 'National Indigenous Reform Agreement: Supplement on literacy and numeracy achievement 2010' COAG Reform Council Sydney.
http://www.coagreformcouncil.gov.au/reports/docs/nira_09-10/nira_09-10_supplement.doc (accessed 12th May 2012)
- Council of Australian Governments 2008 'National Partnership Agreement on Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities'.
<http://www.smarterschools.gov.au/nationalpartnerships/Documents/SSNatPartnerAgreement.pdf> (accessed 12th May 2012)
- Craig H & J Washington 2006 *Malik Goes to School: Examining the language skills of African-American students from preschool – 5th grade* New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Crowley T & B Rigsby 1979 'Cape York Creole' in T Shopen (ed) *Languages and their Status* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. Pp. 153-207.
- Education Queensland 2008 'Bandscales for English as a Second Language (ESL) Learners' Brisbane: Education Queensland.
<http://www.learningplace.com.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=51396> (accessed 15th May, 2012)

- Holzberger N 2011 'Before and after: The assessment of spoken and written language samples to inform teaching' *Practically Primary* 6(1):24-28.
- Malcolm I 2001 'Learning genres, learning about genres and learning through genres: educating Indigenous learners' Paper presented to international Conference on genres and discourses in education, work and cultural life: Encounters of academic disciplines on theories and practices Oslo College, 13th May, 2001.
http://www.cdu.edu.au/walking_talking_texts/documents/LearningTogether4OslopaperGenresandIndigenouslearners.doc (accessed 12th May, 2012)
- Masters G *et al.* 2008 'Reporting and comparing school performances' Paper prepared for the MCEETYA Expert Working Group to provide advice on national schools data collection and reporting for school evaluation, accountability and resource allocation Canberra: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.
http://www.mceecdy.edu.au/verve/_resources/ACER_Report_on_Reporting_and_comparing_school_performances.pdf (accessed 12th May 2012)
- McIntosh S, R O'Hanlon & D Angelo 2012 'The (In)visibility of "language" within Australian educational documentation: Differentiating language from literacy and exploring particular ramifications for a group of "hidden" ESL/D learners' in C Gitsaki & R Baldauf (eds) *Future Directions in Applied Linguistics: Local and global perspectives* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Pp. 448-468.
- McKay P, C Hudson, M Newton & J Guse 2007 'The Middle Years ESL Bandscales Version 2' in P McKay (ed) *Assessing, monitoring and understanding English as a second language in schools: The NLLIA ESL Bandscales Version 2* Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology & Independent Schools Queensland.
- McKay P, C Hudson & M Sapuppo 1994 'ESL Bandscales' in *NLLIA, NLLIA ESL Development: Language and Literacy in Schools* Vol 1 Canberra: National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia. Pp. B1-D52.
- Ministry of Education, 'Ontario 2012 English as a Second Language—ESL Observable Language Behaviour Criteria Writing (Grades 4-6)'.
<http://www.edugains.ca/newsite/ell2/step/observablelanguagebehaviour.html> (accessed 30th May, 2012)
- National Assessment Program 2011 'National Reports, NAPLAN' Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.
http://www.nap.edu.au/Test_Results/National_reports/index.html (accessed 12th May 2012)
- National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy 2008 'Writing: Narrative marking guide' Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.
http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/accountability/files/links/2010_NarrativeMarkingGuide.pdf (accessed 15th May 2012)
- National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum 2009 'EAL Formative Assessment Descriptors: Key Stage 2'.
<http://www.naldic.org.uk/Resources/NALDIC/Teaching%20and%20Learning/NALDICdescriptorsKS2final.pdf> (accessed 30th May 2012)
- Ober D 1999 'Yumplatok' in T Balzer *et al.* (eds) *Pidgin Phrasebook* Hawthorn, Victoria: Lonely Planet. Pp. 140-147.
- Queensland Studies Authority 2010a 'Test Preparation Handbook' 2010 National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy.

- http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/downloads/early_middle/naplan_yr5_test_admin_hb.pdf (accessed 12th May 2012)
- Queensland Studies Authority 2010b 'Year 5 Test Administration Handbook' 2010 National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy.
http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/downloads/early_middle/naplan_yr5_test_admin_guide_10.pdf (accessed 12th May, 2012)
- Sandefur J 1990 'Kriol and Torres Strait Creole: Where do they meet?' *The Occasional Bulletin* 4:1-13.
- Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee 2010 'Administration and reporting of NAPLAN testing' Commonwealth of Australia.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Committees?url=eet_ctte/naplan/report/report.pdf (accessed 15th May, 2012)
- Sharifian F, J Rochecoste & I Malcolm 2004 "But it was all a bit confusing...": Comprehending Aboriginal English texts' *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 17(3):203-228.
- Shnukal A 1988 *Broken: An Introduction to the Creole Language of Torres Strait* Canberra: Pacific Linguistics C-107.
- Simpson J, J Caffery & P McConvell 2009 'Gaps in Australia's indigenous language policy' AIATSIS Research Discussion Paper No. 24.
<http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/ntru/documents/DP242009Simpson.pdf> (accessed 12th May, 2012)
- Turner C 1997 'The Injinoos Home Language Program: A positive community response to marginalisation and institutional racism' *Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* 25(1):1-9.
- Wigglesworth G, J Simpson & D Loakes 2011 'NAPLAN language assessments for Indigenous children in remote communities: issues and problems' *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics* 34(3): 320-343.
www.nla.gov.au/openpublish/index.php/ara/article/view/2280/2741 (accessed 12th May 2012)

Appendix 1. Syntactic features of sentential complexity

1. Simple infinitive with same subject

Infinitive with same subject as main verb, e.g. *the teacher sometimes stops to ask questions.*

2. Noun phrase complement

Full, finite clause instead of a possible noun phrase (usually object); relativiser *that* can be omitted, e.g. *I think (that) science is an important subject.*

3. Wh-infinitive

Main clause linked by wh-pronoun to following infinitive, e.g. *they know where to skate.*

4. Simple non-infinitive wh-clause

Wh-word is followed by a subject plus verb, not infinitive, e.g. *that's the counter where you borrow books.*

5. Relative clause

Noun phrase or pronoun modified by another full clause; relative pronoun may be omitted, e.g. *I like the work (that) we're doing this term.*

6. Unmarked infinitive

Infinitives dependent on main verbs subcategorising for unmarked infinitives (let, make, watch, help...), e.g. *they watched us do the test.*

7. Infinitive with a different subject

Infinitive with a subject different to the main verb, e.g. *she told us to finish our assignment.*

8. Impersonal infinitives

Infinitives in impersonal or passive structures, e.g. *it is important to study history.*

9. Participles as adjectives

Adjectives formed from present or past verb participles in noun-groups or after copula verb be, e.g. *an interesting story* or *the story is interesting; a broken projector* or *the projector is broken.*

10. Participial phrases

Non-finite verbal phrases headed by -ing or -ed/-en participles e.g. *we're in the middle of writing our assignments.*

11. Gerunds

Present participles used as nouns, e.g. *spelling is my favourite subject.*

12. Subordinate clause

Dependent clause to main clause (other than relative), e.g. *be quiet because/as/while/when/if they are doing an exam.*

13. Ellipsis

Required or highly preferred omission of same category to avoid repetition e.g. *I sat down and started my essay.*

14. Embedded clause

Fully embedded clause inside a discontinuous clause, e.g. *I think the reason ^ (that) the teacher gave us that topic ^ is she is interested in politics.*

15. Passives

Clause with passive verb construction using be or get as auxiliaries and “undergoer” as subject, e.g. *they were given good marks.*

16. Pre-posed sentence elements

Pre-posed elements (such as adverb, prepositional phrase or clause) optionally inserted before canonical subject-verb-object word order; e.g. *in science we have been studying forces.*

17. Elaborated noun phrases

Post nominal modification, using syntactic devices such as prepositional phrases, but not including relative clauses, e.g. *the performance with the highest marks received an award.*

18. Modality in verb phrase

Use of modal verb in verb group (not invariant adverb) to express modality, e.g. *students should study history.*

19. Adverbial elements

Adverbial and particles inside verb phrase, e.g. *we can probably/always/still/just do more maths problems.*

20. Aspect in verb phrase

Continuous, perfect or habitual overtly marked in verb phrase, but not through invariant adverbs, e.g. *we have been learning about narratives.*