THE PEDAGOGIC PROCESS OF WRITING IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) IN KENYAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

BY

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C82/15677/05

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Linguistics of Kenyatta University.

MAY 2010
Declaration

This thesis is my original work, except where due citation has been made, and has not been presented for the award of a degree in any other university or for any other award.

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Dedication

To my son and friend Andrew,
Always remember, fear will kill your dreams; make your courage greater than your fear and become the best human being you can be.

To my parents
You inculcated in me the value of education, determination, and hard work and of faith in God and in myself.

To teachers at all levels
Without you ignorance would be a virtue.
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<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a second language</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFL</td>
<td>English as a foreign language</td>
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<tr>
<td>SLW</td>
<td>Second Language Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KCSE</td>
<td>Kenya certificate of secondary examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KCPE</td>
<td>Kenya certificate of primary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNEC</td>
<td>Kenya national examination council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIE</td>
<td>Kenya institute of education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>First language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>Second language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TL</td>
<td>Target language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F1</td>
<td>Form one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2</td>
<td>Form two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3</td>
<td>Form three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F4</td>
<td>Form four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TESL</td>
<td>Teaching English as a second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOCs</td>
<td>Higher order Concerns such as organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCs</td>
<td>Lower order Concerns, such as spelling</td>
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Operational Definition of Terms

The definitions here are for the purposes of this study.

**Compose**
write a letter, story or essay usually with a lot of care and thought.

**Composition (noun)**
a short text that is written as a school exercise.

**Composition writing**
writing that implies the ability either to tell or retell pieces of information in the form of narratives or description, or to transform information into new texts, as in expository or argumentative writing.

**Essay**
a short piece of writing by a student as part of a course of study.

**Feedback**
Input from a reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision. Constitutes spoken or written advice, criticism or information given to learners about the correctness, appropriateness or value of their written work.

**Handwriting**
the particular way in which somebody forms letters when they write.

**Input**
Knowledge or ideas provided to learners to help them develop their writing skills.

**Pedagogic process**
the process of teaching and learning

**Product**
written essays

**Writing**
Activity of producing texts by making letters or numbers on a surface. The activity of writing in contrast to reading, speaking and listening.
ABSTRACT
The present study is a descriptive survey of the pedagogic process of ESL writing in selected secondary school classes in Kenya. The study describes the input provided by teachers with regard to writing in the ESL classes, explores the steps in the writing process followed by the learners, uncovers teacher feedback provision practices and finally surveys learners’ reactions to the writing lessons and to the feedback. The motivation for the study was the continued poor performance in the K.C.S.E English composition writing paper. The subjects of the study were Form Two students plus their teachers of English (writing) in eleven secondary schools selected using stratified random sampling. Data collection was by classroom observations, tape-recording of lessons, questionnaires, interviews and document analysis of marked essays. Data analysis and discussion of findings was guided by the tenets of Ellis’ theory of instructed second language acquisition, the affective filter hypothesis and the process-genre approach to the teaching of writing. Input in the classroom was found to touch on all important areas of writing though its comprehensibility could be improved by adopting a wide variety of learner centered classroom activities and use of a variety of resources. Learners were found to follow all the steps in the writing process but need training in specific strategies especially for pre-writing and revising. The most prevalent teacher feedback provision method was indirect uncoded error feedback accompanied by teacher commentary. The feedback focuses largely on weaknesses, touches on all important areas of writing but has a bias towards LOCs. Learners revealed that their writing lessons are interesting, but can be improved by including more writing practice, a wide variety of resources and samples of written communication. The learners also revealed that teachers provide useful and fair feedback that largely focuses on LOCs. The learners would prefer feedback in all areas, top among them vocabulary usage. Using a variety of error feedback strategies plus other methods of feedback provision as well as incorporating a requirement for revision of marked essays
into the feedback process could improve provision of feedback in the learners’ view. The findings of this study imply the need for: improvement of classroom practices, activities and resources; a better preparation of teachers especially with regard to feedback provision, and a re-evaluation of the examination practices for composition writing.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Introduction
This chapter provides background information, which delineates second language writing (SLW) as a subject of investigation within the broad area of English as a second language (ESL). The chapter further provides information on aspects specific to the Kenyan context that have a bearing on the pedagogic process. Among this contextual information are issues on syllabus and examinations in the education system. In addition, the chapter articulates the problem the study investigated, the objectives and the assumptions. Moreover, it defines the scope of the study, delves into possible useful outcomes of the study and finally provides an outline of the rest of the chapters of this thesis.

1.1 Background to the Study
Language has four skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing. Learning a language entails gaining knowledge in these skills. Speaking and writing are said to be productive skills requiring the user to produce language, while listening and reading are receptive skills, where an individual receives language from another language user. This study focused on the productive skill of writing. The term writing was used in this study to refer to the broad aspect of composition writing. This is writing that implies the ability either to tell or retell pieces of information in the form of narratives or descriptions, or to transform information into new texts as in expository or argumentative writing. This kind of writing requires a lot of care and planning both at the content and mechanics levels.

Tribble, (1996) observes that an ability to speak fluently, persuasively and appropriately is something most language learners aim to achieve and they do. However, an ability to write appropriately is something that evades many of us. He notes that writing is a difficult skill to learn. In comparison to speaking writing poses great challenges. The writer does not have at his disposal the advantages a
speaker has such as immediate feedback from his listeners, the help of extra-
linguistic features such as gestures, facial expressions and physical context. The
writer has to anticipate reader reactions and attempt to address them as clearly and
as completely as possible, since the readers are not present. He thus must
construct his sentences carefully, choose appropriate words and organize ideas in
a way they can be easily understood. Rosen, (1981:5) sums up the challenges
facing a writer thus:

The writer is a lonely figure cut off from the stimulus and
corrective intervention of listeners. He must be a predictor of
reactions and act on his predictions. He writes with one hand tied
behind his back, being robbed of gesture. He is robbed too of the
tone of his voice and the aid of clues the environment provides.
He is condemned to monologue; there is no one to help out, to fill
the silences, put words in his mouth, or make encouraging noises.

Writing skills, unlike speaking, cannot be “picked up” from the environment
through exposure to the language. Conscious effort must be made to equip
language learners with writing skills. Byrne (1990) notes that unlike other
language skills, writing is learned through a process of instruction. We have to
master the written form of the language and to learn certain structures, that are not
common in speech, but which are vital for effective written communication. In
addition, we have to learn how to organize our ideas so that a reader who is not
present and not even known to us can understand them. This underlines the
importance of the pedagogic process of writing, which was the subject of
investigation for this study.

Kroll (2003) observes that the current trends of globalization and Internet
revolution have come to require a proficiency in English that goes beyond the
spoken language embracing a variety of uses of the written language. Among
such uses are study writing such as summarizing, creative writing such as of
stories and poems, institutional writing such as business letters, social writing
such as invitations and public writing such as telephone messages and letters of
apology. This further underscores the importance of teaching the writing skill in English.

Early studies of writing were in the form of composition studies. According to Freedman et al. (Eds) (1983) composition teaching grew in the 19th century. Its emphasis was on correct usage of words, correct grammar, correct spelling, focus on the topic sentence, the various methods of developing the paragraph and ways of achieving unity, coherence and emphasis. Since then writing as an area of study has continued to grow and the aspects studied have broadened. Noteworthy though, is that the early composition studies focused on native speakers learning how to write in English, but this changed with the widespread use of English by non-native speakers.

Factors such as colonization, and industrialization led to the spread of English outside its native boundaries to areas such as Africa and Asia where it is used as a second language (SL) or as a foreign language (FL). Additionally, the conception of the world as a global village has meant that people from non-English speaking countries are increasingly going to study or do business in the English speaking countries as well as in other parts of the world. Generally, English has become an international language. This means there are more and more people using it either as a second language (SL) or as a foreign language (FL). As such teaching of English as a second language (ESL) or as a foreign language (EFL) has developed as distinct areas of study. These two areas, ESL and EFL, address questions related to how best to teach English to non-native speakers. Second Language writing (SLW) as an area of academic inquiry is in the broad area of ESL.

Matsuda (2003) records that with increased numbers of international ESL students in higher education requiring college composition courses, a need was felt for instruction in second language writing in United States’ higher education
institutions. This was the beginning of ESL writing as an area of academic inquiry. According to Johns, (1990) ESL composition research and teaching developed greatly in the 1980s and has continued to grow. Silva (1990) further observes that the unique context of ESL composition has necessitated somewhat distinct perspectives, models and practices. This has meant that it is a distinct field of research. This study falls in the area of ESL writing.

According to Polio (2003) various issues are investigated in ESL writing. These include writer’s texts, writing processes, student-writers’ and their teachers’ backgrounds and attitudes and social contexts of writing in or outside the classroom. Polio further notes that one study can investigate aspects touching on these different broad areas as they overlap. In line with this persuasion, our study looked at aspects of the pedagogic process and the social context with a view to establishing their implication on the learning of writing skills of secondary school students in Kenya. Specifically, this study focused on teacher input and feedback in the writing class, the steps students take in the writing process as well as their reactions to the writing lessons and feedback provided.

Input in the writing process is any information that may help the writer get ideas for writing. Such information may be on the writing process itself, or specific aspects of writing such as organization and development of ideas, formatting of letters and developing the plot of a narrative. Feedback, on the other hand, comprises the comments, questions or suggestions that a reader gives a writer in order for the writer to improve his writing. Feedback is also a form of input and is very important in the learning of writing. Kroll (1990) says that the response a writer gets may be the final arbiter of whether he will continue to write at all. Thus research reported in this study looked at input and feedback, which are two key components of the pedagogic process of writing.
The learners are major participants in the pedagogic process. They are the ones who are being helped to develop writing skills. Therefore their utilization of the provided input and feedback is significant. One pointer towards their developing competence is being able to take their essays through the stages of the writing process, namely, pre-writing, drafting, revising and editing. Additionally, the learners’ general response to the input, to the feedback and to writing in general will also determine how well they progress towards becoming competent writers. For this reason, in addition to the input and feedback, this study also looked into the steps in the writing process that secondary school students go through when they write essays as well as the learners’ reactions to the writing lessons and to the feedback provided by the teachers. All these aspects were studied in order to gain insights into how they aid or hinder the learning of writing skills.

The features investigated in the study were explained within the theoretical framework of Ellis’ theory of instructed second language acquisition, the process-genre approach to writing (Badger & White, 2000) and the Affective Filter Hypothesis. (Krashen, 1985). Ellis’s theory relates to the kind of opportunities provided in the classroom context and the learning outcomes that they result in. It focuses on input in a classroom setting and how it is turned into acquired knowledge or intake. The theory also borrows from Krashen’s (1985) Input Hypothesis to address the question of comprehensibility of input. The Input Hypothesis argues that learners acquire what they understand. It roots for the provision of comprehensible input in order to move learners from their current level (i) to a level slightly beyond their current level (i + 1). A major concern of this study was input and feedback in a writing lesson and how the two impact on the learning of writing skills.

The Process-Genre Approach to writing starts from the recognition that an effective methodology for writing needs to incorporate the insights from product, process and genre approaches. This approach is, therefore, a synthesis of the three
approaches; the product, the process and the genre approaches. The process-genre approach according to Badger & White (2000) is described in terms of a view of writing and a view of the development of writing. They argue that a writing class should recognize two things. First, is that writing involves knowledge about language, knowledge about the context in which writing happens and especially the purpose for the writing, and skills in using language. Second, is that writing development happens by drawing out learners’ potential and providing input to which learners respond. The concern with linguistic skills is borrowed from the product approach, the idea of drawing out learners is borrowed from the process approach, and the significance of context and purpose of writing is from the genre approach. The process-genre thus provided a framework for explaining the steps learners go through as they write essays, as well as aspects of input and feedback.

Learners are major participants in the pedagogic process. In fact, being student-writers, their attitudes towards writing, the writing lessons and to feedback generally have an impact on their development of writing skills. Thus the study also focused on the learners’ reactions to the pedagogic process in terms of writing development as well as affective factors. The Affective Filter Hypothesis was, therefore, useful in explaining the student reactions. The hypothesis holds that language acquisition is affected by such affective factors as motivation, and anxiety. These factors can either raise or lower the affective filter in effect impacting on the reception and utilization of input.

1.2 Context of the Study
In this section brief contextual background information is given on some important factors in the pedagogic process. These include the syllabus, materials and resources, teacher education and preparation, examination and general teaching of writing.
1.2.1 The syllabus

The teaching of English in Kenya secondary schools encompasses various aspects. The syllabus is designed around four areas, listening and speaking, grammar, reading and writing. The syllabus spells out content for each of these areas that needs to be taught in different classes; form one to four. The syllabus adopts an integrated approach allowing literature and language as well as all the language skills to be taught together and not each in isolation. It is argued that literature provides genuine and expressive samples of language in context. This helps the learner to gain familiarity with many different linguistic uses, forms and conventions of the written mode (KIE, 2002). As a way of developing the writing skills, learners are required to write essays based on literature set books.

With regard to the writing skill, the syllabus states that it is an advanced skill with wide ranging implications for learners’ thinking and learning. Teachers are urged to help learners to acquire skills that will enable them to express their ideas clearly and effectively in writing. Emphasis is on encouraging learners to achieve competence in writing using the language structures they have learnt. The secondary school English syllabus requires learners to cover the following varieties of writing: Study writing e.g. summaries, descriptive essays; Creative writing e.g. imaginative compositions, poems, dialogues; Institutional writing e.g. business letters, posters and adverts; Personal writing e.g. personal journals, shopping lists; Social writing e.g. invitations; Public writing e.g. telephone messages, filling forms, and letters of apology (Source KIE, 2002 (Form Two))

The syllabus urges teachers to use a variety of interesting activities including group discussions and other pre-writing activities and manageable writing tasks in order to demystify writing and to motivate learners. Some activities and exercises are suggested in the students’ course books and teachers’ guides to those course books. On resources, the syllabus encourages the use of a wide variety including class readers; literature set books, pictures and resource persons. On responding to
learner writing the syllabus urges teachers to “provide meaningful and helpful feedback to writing assignments.” No other guidance is given to teachers with regard to provision of feedback. Yet, teachers need guidance in responding to learner writing because as Ferris, (2003:119) observes:

For many teachers, the act of responding (whether orally or in writing) represents the largest investment of time they make as writing instructors. For students, the feedback they receive from both instructors and peers may be the most significant component in their successful development as writers.

1.2.2 Materials and Resources.
For the teaching and learning of English, there are recommended course books for each of the classes, form one to four. These English course books are based on the syllabus and are approved by the Ministry of Education through KIE, the organ of the ministry that deals with matters related to the curriculum in primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary colleges in Kenya. A spot check revealed that a total of six English course books have been approved for Form 2. Among these are: Head start Secondary English, New integrated English student’s book 2. Excelling in English: an Integrated Approach, New Horizons in English: a Course for Secondary Schools and Advancing in English. Each of these course books comprises a students’ book and a teachers’ guide. Each school, and sometimes the teacher decides which of the books to use with the students, while the other approved books act as supplementary texts. As for other materials and resources the teacher has to be imaginative and to make use of what is available in his or her environment.

1.2.3 Examination
At the end of the secondary school cycle, Kenyan students sit for the national examination called Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (K.C.S.E), which is used to determine those who do or do not proceed to universities and various tertiary colleges. These examinations are in English and candidates respond in writing. As such, English and writing play a central role in the school system.
Specifically, the English examination requires a lot of writing competence from the learners. Before the year 2006 the English exam had the following structure.

Paper 1 (101/1): Testing creative and functional writing (*marked out of 40*)
Paper 2(100/2): Testing summary, comprehension and grammar usage (*marked out of 80*)
Paper 3 (101/3) Testing literary skills and ability to present clearly argued points in response (*marked out of 80*)

(Source: KNEC, 2004)

In the year 2006 a new examination format was adopted. The structure of the English Exam is now as follows.

Paper 1 (101/1): Testing functional skills (*marked out of 60*)
Paper 2(101/2): Testing comprehension, literary appreciation and Grammar. (*Marked out of 80*)
Paper 3 (101/3): Testing conventional composition and Essays based on set texts (*marked out of 60*) (Source: KNEC, 2008)

The K.C.S.E is marked by a few teachers (examiners) trained by the examination council to mark specific papers in a subject. Therefore, teachers who are not examiners with the council may not have access to information on exactly how the marking is done. The teachers are however, charged with the responsibility of preparing candidates for this all-important examination.

**1.2.4 Teacher Education and Preparation**

Teachers for secondary schools in Kenya are either graduates from the various universities in the country such as Kenyatta University and Nairobi University or Diploma holders from Diploma Teachers’ Colleges across the country such as Kagumo Teachers’ College or Kisii Teachers’ College. Unlike universities where each university designs courses to offer to its students, the diploma colleges
follow a central syllabus designed by the Ministry of Education through KIE. However, in both universities and colleges, a pre-service teacher of English is supposed to be equipped with knowledge in the content of the subject (English). This should include knowledge in the four language skills as well as other areas like grammar. In addition, the pre-service teacher receives training in methodology of teaching. This includes aspects like lesson planning, designing classroom activities, and evaluating learning.

1.2.5 The Teaching of English and Writing
As mentioned earlier in this chapter, English is used as a second language in many countries in Africa (cf 1.1). Kenya is one such country. English is the official language used in government and administration, in the high court, in the media and in education in Kenya. The education language policy is that the language of the school’s catchment area is used for instruction in the first three years of primary school. English is the medium of instruction from primary 4 through secondary, tertiary and higher education (Koech Report on Education, 1999). English is a compulsory and examinable subject in both primary and secondary schools. All subjects in the curriculum, except other languages such as Kiswahili, French and German, are taught and examined in English. This important role of English places a big burden on the teachers to impart all necessary language skills, among them writing to the learners. The long-term goal of the teaching of English is the acquisition of communicative competence and not simply passing of examinations (KIE, 2002).

In secondary schools the time allocated for teaching English is six lessons of forty minutes each a week in Form one and two and eight lessons a week in Form three and four. The syllabus states that the use of the integrated approach will help to maximize the utilization of this time and ensure effective coverage of the syllabus (KIE, 2002:3).
The typical writing classes in Kenya are primarily product-oriented and writing is a “one-off” activity- students write a composition and submit it immediately afterwards for marking. In other words the classes are single-draft classes as opposed to multiple-drafts. Once marked and returned, no revision is required of the learners. A secondary level English teacher teaches an average of two English classes with about forty students in each class. The number of compositions written by the students per term varies from school to school but on average only three are written. Students in Form two are expected to write compositions of 200-300 words on average.

In a nutshell, great demands are placed on the secondary school students in terms of writing skills. In addition to writing essays in English as a subject, these students write essays in other subjects like History, Geography and Biology. Secondly, after graduating from secondary school, most of these learners move to higher institutions of learning where they write even more essays. Yet, in these institutions the learners are not systematically taught writing skills. Therefore, they fall back on the writing skills learnt in secondary school. Moreover, some learners move from secondary school straight into the job market where they need writing skills, for example in job applications and minute writing. In recognition of these great demands, secondary school students are taught writing skills right from form one. In this setting, the teacher is charged with providing input on different forms of writing, instructing, guiding, encouraging and providing feedback to the learners on writing. The learners, on their part, interact with the input and feedback provided by the teacher and work towards developing their writing skills. It is this process of teaching and learning composition writing in secondary schools that the current study investigated, with a view to establishing its implications on the learning of writing skills among secondary school students in Kenya.
1.3 Statement of the Problem
The writing skill is one of the language skills that are taught and tested in Kenya secondary schools. In addition to important aspects of writing such as handwriting, spelling, paragraph development and punctuation, the secondary school syllabus requires that learners be taught various forms of writing such as personal writing, social writing and creative writing (cf 1.2.1).

The learnt writing skills are most explicitly tested in the national examination, K.C.S.E done at the end of the four-year secondary school course. The English examination consists of three papers both in the format used before 2006 and in the new format introduced in 2006 (See Appendix 2: Exam format).

In the earlier format, paper 1 where composition writing was most explicitly tested, candidates were required to write two essays, one on functional writing such as a letter, memo or minutes and another on creative writing. Each of these essays was marked out of 20 making a total of 40 for this paper. Over the years, however, performance in this paper was low. KNEC attributed the poor performance to inadequate teaching of composition writing. Noteworthy also is that Paper 3 in which candidates wrote short essays in answer to questions from Literature set books, showed continued poor performance. The paper was marked out of 80 and recorded a mean score of below half over the year (see appendix 1a). In fact paper 3 was the most poorly performed of the three English papers. However, in addition to problems related to writing in English the poor performance in the Paper was linked to other problems such as failure to read and understand the set texts and a lack of understanding of literary concepts.

In the new format, it is in paper 3 where composition writing is explicitly tested. In this paper candidates write three essays. One of the essays tests imaginative writing and the other questions are essays based on the set texts. Like its counterpart in earlier years, this paper has recorded a low mean score compared to
the other two papers (See appendix 1b). KNEC has attributed the poor performance to low levels of language mastery, inadequate teaching of composition writing and lack of ample practice in composition writing.

Following from the continued low performance in composition writing and its attributed reasons as outlined above, a need was felt to investigate the teaching of composition writing in Kenya secondary schools. The study reported in this thesis thus investigated the pedagogic process of ESL writing in Kenya secondary schools. Specifically, the study concentrated on three aspects of the pedagogic process; teacher input in the writing lesson, teacher feedback to students’ writing, and students’ reactions to the writing lessons and to teacher feedback. In addition, the stages in the writing process that learners follow when they write compositions were also assessed. These aspects have implications for the development of writing skills among the learners.

1.4 Research Questions
The study was guided by the following questions

1. What kind of input do teachers provide to learners with regard to composition writing?
2. What steps in the writing process do learners follow when they write compositions?
3. How do teachers provide feedback on learners’ essays?
4. How do learners react to the writing lessons and to feedback provided by the teachers?

1.5 Research Objectives
1.5.1 General Objective.
To determine the importance of specific aspects of the pedagogic process on writing and their implication for the development of writing skills among the learners.
1.5.2 Specific Objectives

i. To describe the input teachers provide to learners with regard to composition writing.

ii. To determine and assess the steps in the writing process that learners follow when they write compositions.

iii. To establish and describe how teachers provide feedback on learners’ essays.

iv. To find out and describe learners’ reactions to the writing lessons and to the feedback provided by the teachers.

1.6 Research Assumptions

i. Input provided for composition writing can be described in terms of certain identifiable features.

ii. Learners go through identifiable steps in the writing process.

iii. Teachers’ feedback provision practices can be identified and described.

iv. Learners hold certain views, towards writing lessons and the feedback provided, that are significant to the pedagogic process of writing.

1.7 Rationale of the Study

Writing is an important language skill that cannot be “picked up” but has to consciously be taught. Polio (2003:35) observes that the main job of teachers of writing, whether to native speakers or L2 learners, is to work with their students to help them achieve improved writing proficiency in accordance with student needs and course goals, advancing beyond their current skill level. Polio contends that to do this, teachers benefit a lot from research. Such information helps teachers as they choose textbooks, plan curriculum and syllabus, work with student writers and generally carry out their teaching life. It is in a bid to
contribute towards this kind of information that this study focused on the teaching of writing.

The present study falls in the broad area of learning and teaching English as a second language (ESL) and specifically in ESL writing. Research in this area has continued to grow, as more and more people become second language (L2) users of English and other languages. The study is an addition to the continuing discourse.

English has increasingly become an international language and many non-native English-speaking countries have come to put it into wide use. For example, in Kenya, English is the official language of government, the language of instruction in schools, the language of courts among other areas (Githiora, 2008). Additionally, as Kroll (2003) observes students at institutions around the world are expected to submit high quality written work in English, a language that they did not acquire as native speakers. This makes SL Writing a critical area in SL teaching and learning and consequently a viable area of research.

Kroll (2003) further argues that the current trends of globalization and Internet revolution have come to require a fluency in English that goes beyond the spoken language, embracing a variety of uses of the written language. Such knowledge is essential for full participation in the world community with interconnected economic, technological and geopolitical realities. As such the challenge of those teaching L2 writing is enormous. This study sought to contribute knowledge towards dealing with the challenge of writing in English as a second language in a global set-up.

It is notable that most of the published works in SLW are from the U.S. Matsuda (2003) points out that the field has focused mostly on issues specific to the needs of ESL students in the U.S higher education because of the historical
circumstances surrounding the origin of L2 writing, Matsuda advocates for studies conducted in a wide variety of instructional contexts as well as disciplinary perspectives. The present study is a contribution in SLW from an African context.

Krapels (1990) argues that research in second language writing has left many questions unanswered. Among them is the question of how L2 students learn or acquire writing as a language skill. He points out that L2 writing process researchers may be able to discover how their subjects were taught English, but it is difficult to know how the subjects were taught writing or indeed whether they were actually taught writing. It is hoped that this study addressed this question by focusing on the teaching of writing in the classroom.

Knoblauch and Brannon (1981) observe that teacher comments on students’ papers do not seem to improve their writing. They note that most of the studies on this issue focus only on the comments teachers make on students papers without considering the ongoing dialogue between teacher and student, which might have, for example, established an environment in which the comments are received with hostility. Furthermore, they argue, if research has failed to establish that annotations on student papers help them improve their writing, it may well be that the problem is not the annotation but the entire teaching environment. The present study, by looking at the pedagogic process, went into the teaching environment to determine what goes on there and the effects of those happenings on the development of writing skills. The study could contribute to solving the mystery of lack of effect of teachers’ comments. On another level, the question of the effect of teachers’ comments on students’ writing is an issue that has not been addressed here in Kenya. It was hoped that this study would contribute in filling this gap.
Since the classroom is an important place of learning, investigations of the events that take place there have been carried out in what is termed classroom process research. Lier, (1988) more specifically notes that Second language classroom research, in studying the processes and circumstances of second language development, aims to identify the phenomena that promote or hamper learning in the classroom. By focusing on the classroom processes in a writing lesson, the present study aimed to provide insights into the factors therein that may aid or hamper the development of writing skills in our secondary school students.

Additionally, most of the studies carried out in the area of writing in Kenya have focused on aspects of grammar (Nyamasyo, 1992), Errors: types, causes and treatment (Maina, 1991; Njoroge, 1996; Ngan’ga, 2002) and cohesion (Thiga, 1997). Those focusing on the pedagogic process have looked at English language in general (Ndavi, 1982; Gathumbi, 1995; Ogutu, 2001) or other subjects such as code switching (Ochola, 1985; Muthwii, 1987; Kamau, 1996). To the best of our knowledge, no study has investigated the pedagogic process in relation to writing yet most Kenyans learn their writing in a classroom situation through teacher instruction. It was hoped that by focusing on this process insights could be gained to make our teachers better in the teaching of writing. Such information would also be useful to curriculum planners, syllabus designers and writers of textbooks on composition writing, examiners as well as to teacher trainers.

This study observed English writing lessons in the form two classes. According to the secondary education syllabus, in form two the learner is expected to have acquired writing skills to a considerable degree and therefore can write longer forms of writing such as narratives, and descriptions as opposed to the shorter forms written in form one such as addresses, packing lists and diaries. Narratives and descriptions render themselves more readily to the composing process. This study therefore focused on the teaching of narrative writing in form two.
At form two also, a lot of instruction related to creative forms of writing and on
the writing process itself is expected. In form three and four concentration is more
likely to be on functional writing such as minutes, and report writing, with
emphasis being laid on the formatting of such writings. Therefore form two was
ideal for the data needed for this study. A good deal of writing in English
language classrooms is undertaken as an aid to learning, for example to
consolidate the learning of new structures, vocabulary or to help the learner
remember new items of language. Much of this writing is at the sentence level.
This kind of writing has its value, but successful writing depends on more than
the ability to produce and put together clear and correct sentences. Successful
writing is that which helps students to write whole pieces of communication, to
link and develop information, ideas or arguments for a particular reader or group
of readers. Writing tasks, which have whole texts as their outcome, relate
appropriately to the ultimate goal of those learners who need to write in English in
their social, educational or professional lives. The teacher’s role is to build
communicative potential. This research focused on composition writing, an
example of a whole piece of communication. It was hoped that the insights gained
would help teachers in developing the communicative potential of the learners.

The research looked at aspects of the pedagogic process and their implications for
the product, because the process has a bearing on the product. The input from the
process is reflected in the product. Looking at the two, process and product,
helped establish if the perceived link is useful, and how it could be improved. In
addition, teaching and learning is interactive, with teachers and learners having
different ideas, attitudes, and perceptions of what is being learnt. Each of them
brings something unique to the learning situation. Consolidating the different
strategies and ideas of the participants would broaden their knowledge in this
field. That is why information was gathered from both teachers and learners.
1.8 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to the teaching and learning of writing skills in English as a second language. The teaching of other skills of language, namely, speaking, listening and reading were beyond the scope of this study as these can form independent studies. In addition, the study concentrated on secondary schools only. Great demands in terms of writing skills are placed on secondary school students as they write essays in English as a subject as well as in other subjects, and teachers are called upon to equip the learners with the necessary writing skills. As such the secondary school provided the data required for this study.

The population studied was limited to the form two students and their English language teachers in the English language writing lessons. Observations were carried out in English language writing lessons only, because writing in English, as a second language was the main concern of the study. Further, the lessons were observed in the form two classes because at this level the learner is expected to have acquired writing skills to a considerable degree and therefore can write longer forms of writing such as narratives, and descriptions as opposed to the shorter forms written in form one such as addresses, packing lists and diaries. Additionally, the form of writing looked at was the narrative. This represented a long communicative piece that revealed better the learned writing skills. In considering aspects of the pedagogic process, we limited ourselves to input and feedback related to writing, the learners’ reactions to that feedback and the composing steps in the writing process of the sampled learners. Input and feedback from other sources such as peers and parents were not looked at. These were beyond the formal setting of a writing lesson, which was the point of focus in the study.

Analysis of the product-the written text- was only in as far as it reflected aspects of the pedagogic process. Therefore a detailed text analysis of the product was beyond the scope of this study. In looking at feedback, the study was to be limited
to comments on students’ papers, but included verbal feedback provided in the feedback lesson. However an analysis of the errors was beyond the scope of this study as other studies have done this (Maina, 1991; Njoroge, 1996).

1.9 Overview of the Thesis
This introductory chapter has put down important introductory information and general principles of the present study such as the context of the study, the problem investigated and the motivation behind the investigation, the rationale of the study, the scope and limitations of the study.

The second chapter of this thesis presents a review of literature related to important aspects of the present study. Literature presented includes that on issues studied in ESL writing, and on input, feedback, student reactions and studies in ESL writing. This literature review situates the present study in the area of SLW and rationalizes it as a contribution to the discourse in this broad area of study. The chapter also presents the theoretical framework used in the discussion of the findings of the study. Ellis’ theory of instructed second language acquisition, the monitor model and the process-genre approach to the teaching of writing informed the study.

Chapter three presents the methodology used in this study. It gives information on the descriptive survey research design adopted for the study. The chapter further presents information on sampling, data collection and data analysis procedures used in the current study.

Chapters four to six present the findings and discussions related to the objectives of the study. Specifically, chapter four addresses the question of the input provided in the writing lessons. Chapter four also presents the findings and discussion related to the steps in the writing process followed by learners.
Chapter five gives attention to objective three of the study, which focused on provision of feedback, or teacher feedback practices. Findings and discussions relating to the fourth objective of the current study, which focused on learner reactions to the writing lessons and to the feedback provided by teachers, are presented in chapter six.

Chapter seven concludes the thesis by providing a summary of the findings of the study and their implications on factors related to classroom practices as well as on factors external to the classroom but related to the pedagogic process. The chapter finally gives possible areas of further research related to the study reported in this thesis.

1.10 Summary
This introductory chapter provides a background to and situates the current study into the broad area of SLW research. The chapter shows that writing is an important language skill with great implications for Kenya secondary school students especially because of the low performance in the papers testing writing at the national examination for form four-KCSE. The chapter goes on to present information on aspects related to the educational context in Kenya. Such aspects as the syllabus, examination, materials and resources, teacher preparation and the teaching of English are very significant for the pedagogic process of writing. They inform classroom practices a great deal. Further, this chapter presents the problem of study and spells out the objectives, questions and assumptions that guided the present study. The chapter also delineates the scope and limitations of the study and presents a rationale for the study. This introductory chapter ends with an overview of this thesis.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction
This chapter presents a review of various aspects related to the reported study. The study is in the area of ESL Writing; therefore, first, a brief historical background of ESL Writing is presented. A brief overview of issues studied in ESL Writing follows with a view to locating our study in this broad area. This overview is succeeded by a review of literature related to three aspects of the pedagogic process, which the present study focused on, namely, input, feedback and learner reactions to writing lesson and feedback. After this, studies related to these aspects are reviewed and their connection and relationship to the research reported in this study established.

The second part of this chapter presents a theoretical review; specifically, a review of theories of second language learning is presented briefly. This is because the study falls in the area of SLA and its theoretical framework is drawn from theories in this area. The study’s main concern is the teaching of writing. Therefore, in the theoretical review, various approaches that have been used over the years in the teaching of writing are also presented.

The chapter ends with a presentation of the theoretical framework. The theories used in explaining the findings of the study are presented in detail. These theories include Ellis’s Theory of Instructed Second Language Acquisition (Ellis, 1994), The Process-Genre Approach to the teaching of writing (Badger & White, 2000), and The Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1985).
2.1 A Brief Historical Overview of ESL Writing

Some authors have indicated that writing issues began to attract serious attention from L2 specialists in the 1960s (Silva, 1990; Raimes, 1991; Leki 1992). However, major developments in the ESL composition research and teaching developed and matured to a great extent in the 1980s and existing accounts of studies in L2 writing began to appear in the 1990s (Johns, 1990; Matsuda, 2003).

Matsuda, (2003) observes that writing was neglected in the early years of L2 studies because of the dominance of the audiolingual approach in the mid 20th Century. He argues that the neglect goes further back to early-applied linguists in the late 19th century. These linguists sought to literally apply the findings of scientific linguistics in the realm of language teaching. It is noteworthy that scientific linguistics had for a long time focused almost exclusively on spoken language; as such priority was given to spoken language because writing was defined merely as an orthographic representation of speech. Additionally, letter writing was considered to be the highest literacy need for most people. For this reason writing did not become an important component of L2 teaching until fairly recently.

Matsuda, (2003) further notes that L2 writing instruction became part of ESL programs in the early 1960s, though at this time ESL teachers were only professionally prepared for the teaching of the spoken language. Later, L2 writing emerged as a sub-discipline of teaching English as a second language (TESL) with a strong pedagogical emphasis. Research in composition studies and ESL writing continued to grow. The exchange of insights from the two areas led researchers to recognize the complexity and multidisciplinary nature of L2 writing research and teaching. Thus, L2 writing evolved into an interdisciplinary field of inquiry situated in both composition studies and L2 studies simultaneously. The area has continued to grow. The most notable indication of maturing scholarly
communication in the area was the establishment of the Journal of Second Language Writing in 1992 (Matsuda, 2003).

2.2 Issues Studied in ESL Writing.
Polio, (2003) records that objects of inquiry in L2 writing are varied. They include writers’ texts, writing process, participants in the learning and teaching process and social contexts of L2 writing both inside and outside the classroom. Texts or essays are checked for different aspects such as linguistic accuracy, content, coherence, discourse features or overall quality. Such studies according to Polio (2003) could have various reasons. These include: to establish the effect of some intervention such as kind of feedback or program of instruction on writing, to understand the cognitive processes involved in producing different kinds of writing or writing under different circumstances, to focus on development in writing over time. The study reported in this thesis is related to this line of research in that, it examines the students’ essays in a bid to establish how teachers provide feedback for the essays.

A second issue studied in L2 writing according to Polio (2003) is the writing process. Studies here focus on how the writer produces the text, but not the text itself. Focus could be on the whole process or some part of it. Aspects addressed here could include, how various kinds of feedback are given and used during the writing process, how writers change what they write (revision), how fast one writes (fluency), the prewriting process, how students interpret and use teacher feedback while revising and what happens during peer review or conferencing sessions. The present study addresses issues related to this particular line of research. Among the questions the study sought to answer was how teachers provide feedback, how learners react to this feedback and the stages in the writing process that learners go through as they write their essays. In fact to a large extent, this study concentrates on aspects of the process and only examines the product to extract details related to aspects of the process, such as feedback.
There cannot be a process and a product without participants. As such, another line of research in L2 writing focuses on participants. Teachers and learners are the major participants in the teaching and learning of L2 writing. Among questions raised about participants are: what are the attitudes, backgrounds and behaviours of the participants? For example, what are the views of teachers on the teaching of writing? What are the views of students on the teaching of writing, on teacher feedback, or peer feedback? These are important questions as the participants’ views and attitudes come to bear on the writing process as well as the product. Bearing this in mind, the reported study sought views of both teachers and learners on the pedagogic process of writing. Specifically, the study sought the views of learners on the writing lesson and the feedback provided with a view to establishing how these reactions impact on their (learners’) development of writing skills.

The participants work within certain contexts and these too are potential areas of research. Polio (2003) reports that studies here focus on students’ goals outside the L2 classroom such as the kind of texts they are expected to produce, and writing instruction at either classroom or programme level without singling out one particular set of participants. Among questions addressed in this line of research are speech moves in an ESL composition class, the structure of ESL composition programmes and the attitudes of those involved towards the programme (Polio, 2003). The present study does not directly focus on such issues, but being concerned with the pedagogic process and its implications for the development of writing skills, the study’s findings provide some useful information to those carrying out research in the line of social contexts of L2 writing.

2.3 Features of the Pedagogic Process.
Second language classroom research, in studying the process and circumstances of second language development aims to identify the phenomena that promote or hamper learning in the classroom (Lier, 1988). In line with this view, the
researcher went into a L2 writing classroom to study a few features therein and establish their effect on the development of writing skills in the secondary schools. In this section of this chapter a review of the three aspects of the pedagogic process that were the major concern of the present study is presented. The three aspects are: input, feedback and the students’ views on the writing lesson and on the feedback provided by their teachers.

2.3.1 Input
Keh, (1990) defines input in writing as anything, which helps students get ideas for writing. This includes invention strategies such as brainstorming, fast writing, clustering and interviewing. It may also include readings for models of good writing (for a particular type of assignment or related to a particular topic) and vocabulary development (brainstorming words associated with a particular topic). Thus input could include ideas related to the writing process itself such as pre-writing, revising and editing, important aspects of all forms of writing such as how to achieve cohesion, unity and aspects of grammar as well as ideas related to a specific type of writing such as how to develop conflict in a narrative. Input comes at the beginning of the writing process before the first draft is written, so that the learner is equipped in a way before beginning the hard task ahead.

There are four important features of effective writing namely, unity, support, coherence and sentence skills (Hall, 1995; Langan, 2001). Unity requires that the text has a clear line of thought or argument from the beginning to the end. All ideas presented should be related and tied to the opening statement. Support constitutes clear, specific and plenty of evidence supporting the main ideas presented. It is in presenting the supporting evidence that the essay or story develops. The main ideas and supporting evidence need to be clearly organized so that it is easy to follow the line of argument or progress of the essay from the introduction to the conclusion. This organization is termed cohesion and coherence and is achieved by having a specific way of ordering ideas or events in
a story e.g. chronologically and proper use of transitional and other connective
devices. Proper paragraphing also is useful in achieving cohesion and coherence.
Any piece of writing calls upon the writer to present his ideas in clear, correct and
appropriate language. This aspect is what Hall (1995) calls sentence skills. These
encompass aspects of grammar such as tenses, choice of words, and sentence
construction, punctuation mechanics, spellings, handwriting. Even if the writer
has good ideas, without the language with which to express them, he will not be
able to communicate. These four important features of writing should form a part
of the input in a writing lesson. The learner needs to be guided on how to achieve
them in whatever kind of writing they engage in; imaginative or functional.

The four features can be related to what Keh (1990) refers to as Higher Order
Concerns (HOCs) and Lower Order Concerns (LOCs) in writing. Unity, support,
coherence can fall into HOCs while sentence skills can be looked at as LOCs.
According to Keh (1990) LOCs are those aspects of writing that are a bit easy to
notice and deal with such as mechanical errors of punctuation, spelling, aspects of
grammar such as tense, wrong pronouns, wrong choice of words, among others.
HOCs include aspects like development of ideas, organization, overall focus of
writing (relevance) and creativity. These are more difficult to learn and to deal
with. While both concerns are important, it is the HOCs that can be considered the
backbone of any text. Being conscious of a topic, getting creative ideas to develop
that topic, and organizing those ideas into a cohesive and coherent text are
paramount to a good writer. A teacher needs to be aware of this and therefore pay
great attention in providing input for the same. It is argued that as the writer
grapples with HOCs during the writing process, there is a possibility of dealing
with LOCs. For example, while trying to organize ideas, the writer may make
changes on sentence constructions, word order or even choice of words.
Generally, LOCs are said to be much easier to deal with and can be tackled at the
editing stage of the writing process. Bearing in mind the four important features
of writing and the fact that there are HOCsand LOCs, the present study sought to analyse the input provided by the teachers in the writing lesson in terms of HOCs and LOCs. The aim was to find out which of the two concerns do most teachers pay attention to in the writing lesson and how does this impact on the development of writing skills.

According to Krashen, (1985) and Ellis, (1994) input needs to be comprehensible for acquisition to take place. Krashen (1985) in the Input Hypothesis argues that we can only acquire what we understand. He reckons that acquisition will occur when a learner understands input that is slightly beyond his current level; and this he terms i+ 1. Krashen goes on to describe two ways of achieving comprehension of input containing new linguistic material. The first way is by utilization of context by the learner. Krashen singles out three kinds of contextual information as being very important- extra-linguistic information; learner’s knowledge of the world and the learner’s previously acquired linguistic competence. The second way is by provision of simplified input by the teacher, though he acknowledges that input can be comprehensible without simplification. Krashen argues that simplification is designed to promote communication, in effect, making comprehension by means of inference easier. He goes on to say that simplified input can be made available to the learner through one-way or two-way interaction. Examples of one-way interaction include listening to lectures, watching TV and reading. Two-way interaction occurs in conversations. Krashen acknowledges that two-way interaction is a particularly good way of providing comprehensible input, because it enables the learner obtain additional contextual information and optimally adjusted input when meaning has to be negotiated because of some communication problem. An aspect of the input that the present study addressed was its (input’s) comprehensibility. Specifically, the classroom activities utilized in the writing lesson were checked with a view to establishing their implication for the comprehensibility of the provided input.
Ellis, (1994) further notes that other important aspects that may affect the comprehensibility of input are variables such as the source of explanations (the teacher, student or text books) and manner of presentation (oral or written). A variety of sources such as course books, magazines, journals, resource persons and sample texts have positive effects on comprehensibility. The source used is especially significant in the Kenyan case because this is what the syllabus recommends. Thus, this study also investigated the sources of input utilized in the writing lesson in order to establish their implication for the comprehensibility of the provided input and hence development of writing skills.

2.3.2 Feedback
Another important aspect of the pedagogic process of writing focused on in the present study was feedback. Feedback is defined as input from a reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision. Feedback comprises the comments, questions and suggestions a reader gives a writer to produce “reader-based prose” as opposed to “writer-based prose”. Through feedback the writer learns where he has misled or confused the reader by not supplying enough information, illogical organization, lack of development of ideas or something like inappropriate word-choice or tense (Keh, 1990). Feedback also serves as an assessment of learning and can be given in the form of marks or grades.

Feedback and its provision is an integral and important part of the teaching of writing. Provision of feedback is a great investment, in terms of time, on the part of writing instructors, and for the learners the feedback received contributes a great deal to their successful development as writers.

A review of literature on writing reveals three major ways of providing feedback: Peer feedback, teacher-student conferencing, and written commentary and error
correction. (Ferris, 2003; Zhu, 2001; Keh, 1990). A discussion of each of these methods is presented hereafter.

2.3.2.1 Peer Feedback

Peer feedback involves students critiquing and providing feedback on one another’s writing in small groups or in pairs. According to Keh, (1990) peer feedback is referred to by many names, for example, peer response, peer editing, peer critiquing and peer evaluation. She notes that each name connotes a particular slant to the feedback. Peer response may come earlier in the process with focus on content (organization of ideas, development with examples), peer editing may come at the end with focus on grammar, and punctuation.

Several studies on peer feedback have shown that it has a number of advantages in writing instruction (Moore, 1986; Mittan, 1989; Leki, 1990b; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994). For a start, peer feedback saves teachers’ time on certain tasks, freeing them for more helpful instruction. Peer feedback is considered to be more at the learner’s own level of development. In addition, it gives learners a greater sense of audience, because of the several readers, readers other than the teacher. It also helps the reader learn more about writing through critically reading other peoples papers. Further, peer feedback enables learners to take an active role in their own learning. It helps students to rethink and reconceptualize their ideas on the basis of their peers’ reactions. More so, peer feedback makes it possible for learners to engage in unrehearsed, low-risk exploratory talk, which is less feasible in whole–class or teacher-student conferences. The fact that it is done in a group makes it possible to receive feedback from multiple sources and seeing own peers’ strengths and weaknesses in writing helps build the learners’ confidence in their own writing (Zhu, 2001).

Despite these advantages, peer feedback also poses a few challenges especially in L2 settings. According to Zhu, (2001) there are unique challenges associated with
peer response in the L2 setting, given the cultural and linguistic variables involved. For instance, Zhu, (2001) observes that it is a big challenge for learners to comment on peer writing in a language in which they are still developing reading and communicative skills. Secondly, the learners, being from different cultures must learn to accommodate different communication styles of peers from different cultures if success is to be achieved. They must also learn to cope with different attitudes towards working in groups and different expectations concerning group norms.

Another difficulty facing the teacher in the use of peer feedback is the fact that students tend to read for surface mechanical errors or LOCs, yet they need to read for HOCs, such as development of ideas, organization, and focus of what they are writing. This last issue is said to be related to what the teacher does in the writing lesson. Howard, (2001) and Connor & Asenavage, (1994) have suggested that learners’ approach to peer feedback will be modeled on their teacher’s. If the teacher only functions as a proof reader, marking grammar, spelling and punctuation with little or no comments on content, his or her learners are likely to focus on the same issues when giving each other feedback.

A key to success in peer feedback is training (Mittan, 1989; Keh, 1990; Stanley, 1992; Ferris & Hedgcok, 1998; Berg, 1999). Views relating to training and how to carry out peer feedback are varied. Ferris (2003), for example, records that some researchers feel it is best if peer response is unstructured and students are allowed to set the agenda (Lockhart & Ng 1995; Nelson& Murphy, 1999). Others argue for “teacher choreographed” peer feedback sessions. This would include careful modeling and training of students before beginning peer feedback, giving specific tasks and questions for the session, and building in an accountability mechanisms so that those involved take the process seriously (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998). Such careful intervention is felt to be necessary because as Reid, (1994) and Mittan, (1989) argue, students are novice writers hence lack the necessary knowledge to
assess each other’s work, give helpful feedback and frame it in appropriate terms. Keh, (1990) agrees that training for peer feedback can go a long way in overcoming the problems associated with its use. The teachers must go out of their way to train students to read for more than LOCs. Keh, (1990) further, argues that training students for peer feedback is no easy task given that it takes a lot of time and effort, but the rewards are worth the effort.

Keh, (1990) provides an example of how she goes about conducting such training for her students. She records that early in the course she begins to train students to read critically in preparation for peer feedback. Examples of their samples of writing are presented to the students. Using these samples, she focuses on HOCs. The HOCs focused on are linked to lesson objectives such as logical presentation of ideas and use of appropriate transition words. Instruction is then structured around these. Such instruction gives students an example of how to look for HOCs as well as the vocabulary and means to carry out such a focus. The students get to know words like cohesion, logic, restatement, later used in conferences and comments. This makes the teacher’s work easier.

Another method Keh, (1990) reports is use of group paragraph writing, followed by analysis, revision and evaluation, done by groups. In this one, groups are given certain topics to develop. Once the paragraphs are completed they are compiled and criteria for evaluation, suggestions for revision and instructions for identification of LOCs are given at the end. These are meant to help the group critique the paragraphs. As the training progresses learners are provided with guidelines for critiquing their peers’ work. At first the guidelines are very structured checklists, which become less structured and finally no guidelines are given as the students’ competence in peer reading grows in the “no guidelines” method.
Keh, (1990) records that she uses Chandrasegara’s (1989) recommendation, where students write questions about their own drafts specifically to a reader in the wide ruled margins of their drafts. Once they receive feedback from their peers they revise their papers, writing a second draft.

Despite the stated problems of peer feedback researchers have reported that it is well received by student writers and they enjoy the process (Leki, 1990b; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994). Thus it would be a useful method to adopt in the writing class.

2.3.2.2 Teacher-Student Conferences

This is another method that has been widely recommended especially in a process approach to writing. Teacher-student conferences involve a face-to-face interaction between the student writer(s) and the teacher. Conferences can be individual or group lasting for 10 to 30 minutes (Keh, 1990).

In the conferences aspects related to the students’ writing are discussed. Group conferences have been found to be more successful because students seem more comfortable speaking in a group than one-to-one with the teacher. More discussion takes place in a group as questions can be directed to the whole group relieving the writer off some pressure. Students also enjoy group conferences as they gather ideas from their classmates and learn from them (Ferris, 2003).

Conferences have both advantages and disadvantages. For a start, the teacher – reader is a live audience and thus able to ask for clarifications, check the comprehensibility of oral comments made, help the writer sort through problems and assist the student in decision making. Secondly, conferences allow more accurate feedback to be given compared to writing comments. Additionally, students value conferences as they build up their confidence in oral work in addition to developing their writing (Keh, 1990; Ferris, 2003).
Other researchers have pointed out disadvantages of using conferences. Ferris & Hedgcock (1998) for instance, argue that in “empowering students to retain ownership of their writing, teachers force them (students) into roles for which they are not prepared and with which they are not comfortable.” In addition, some students may have aural comprehension problems that may hamper the effectiveness of conferences. Another problem could arise where students feel inhibited from questioning or arguing with the teacher, and therefore incorporate the teacher’s suggestions verbatim into their papers. After all, the teacher has superior knowledge (Ferris, 2003).

Suggestions on why conferences fail and how to make them successful have also been made. Keh, (1990) warns that conferences fail when teachers assume an authoritarian role; when they lead conversations, ignore questions that do not fall into their preconceived “ideal agenda” rather than focusing on the concerns of the students as they emerge in dialogue. To remedy this Keh advises that the teacher gives the students time to formulate questions and give answers. The teacher should listen to the students patiently. Keh (1990) further advises that it is best to use a non-directive approach when conducting conferences, whether individual or group. This approach she records is based on counseling techniques in which the teacher asks for more information, shows appreciation for what the student says, uses acceptance and approval words, such as “I see”, “I understand” and tells the students that their ideas are not strange. This is said to build the students’ self esteem, reassure them and gives them further confidence to write.

Ferris & Hedgcock (1998), on their part, suggest that to curb some of the problems associated with conferences, the teacher to explain the purpose, nature and dynamics of conferences, students take notes and/ or audiotape conferences to augment their memory and conferences be conducted in threes during class with peers engaged or online via email.
2.3.2.3 Error Feedback and Written Comments

Error feedback involves giving feedback on the actual grammatical and lexical choices that student writers make in their compositions when such choices violate conventions or rules. Error feedback can be accompanied by comments pointing out specific aspects that the learner may need to deal with.

A distinction has been made between direct or explicit error feedback and indirect feedback. Direct feedback happens when the teacher identifies an error and provides the correct form. In indirect feedback the teacher indicates the presence of an error by underlining, circling or use of a system of symbols that represent categories of common grammatical errors. The teacher does not however provide a correction, but rather leaves the student to diagnose the error and correct it. Indirect feedback has further been subdivided into coded feedback and uncoded feedback. Coded feedback points to the exact location of an error and the type of error involved is indicated with a code, for example, SP (spelling). Uncoded feedback involves the teacher underlining or circling an error, or placing an error tally on the margin but in each case leaves the student to diagnose and correct the error (Chandler, 2003; Frodesen & Holten, 2003).

According to Frodesen. & Holten, (2003) error feedback serves several important functions for the ESL writer. It helps them gain awareness of where their written texts do not follow conventions of standard written English. It also helps them develop self-editing skills by focusing their attention on patterned nature of their errors. When careful feedback on language features is provided, it sends a powerful message that clarity and appropriateness of language form is a key to effective written communication. Error feedback also allows teachers to individualize grammar instruction, hence acknowledging that language learning is complex and varies from one individual to another. At the same time, it allows
teachers to integrate attention to grammar while not deterring from the primary aim of the course, that is, teaching writing skills.

The question of the place and usefulness of error feedback is controversial and has resulted in a lot of research. The debate was started by Truscott (1996) when he wrote, “Grammar correction has no place in writing classes and should be abandoned.” Basing his arguments on several studies (Semke 1984; Robb, Ross & Shortreed, 1986; Kepner, 1991; Sheppard 1992; Fleek & Leder 1998,) Truscott suggests that error correction, regardless of method of implementation does not improve the accuracy of a student’s written text. In his view the method might not work for various reasons:

Truscott observes that the notion that marking errors will show students the gap between their production and correct forms of written English fails to acknowledge the complexity and idiosyncratic nature of language development. Secondly, he reckons that the structures noted by the instructor may not be ones that the student is developmentally ready to acquire. Thirdly, Truscott is of the opinion that teachers often lack the training, ability, consistency or time to notice errors and even if they do, they may not be able to explain what is wrong. Lastly, students sometimes find the teachers’ marks or explanations difficult to understand or demoralizing or they may not be motivated to use the feedback.

Despite these arguments there are those who hold that error feedback can be effective. Most notable is Ferris (1999). She bases her arguments on her studies (Ferris 1995, 1997) and from others who have studied the effects of error correction (Cardelle & Corno, 1981; Lalande, 1982; Frantzen & Russel, 1987; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ashwell, 2000; Ferris & Roberts, 2001), among others. These studies showed students who received error feedback improved their accuracy while those who did not receive such feedback were not seen to improve.
In addition, Ferris points out other problems related to Truscott’s position. She notes that though Truscott advocates abolishing grammar correction in L2 Writing classrooms, he does not suggest anything to put in its place. As such, Ferris argues that a classroom adopting Truscott’s position would largely provide learners with lots of meaning-focused practice but no opportunity for practice with forms that self-editing provides, yet learners need instruction and practice that focuses both on form and meaning in language development. Secondly, it has been pointed out that raising students’ grammatical consciousness helps them to focus on the gap between their output and what native speakers would write. It also exposes them to language that they will acquire in later stage. It should be noted, however, that the debate as to whether error feedback is useful and whether or not it should be abandoned is far from over.

As though in agreement with Truscott, or perhaps as a result of his arguments, teachers of writing agree that making comments on student papers takes a lot of time and is most frustrating. Teachers always have to worry whether the comments will be understood, produce the desired results or even be read. But Keh, (1990) offers a word of advice towards offering effective and efficient comments. Keh advises that the first step is for the teacher to respond as a concerned reader to a writer- as a person, not as a grammarian or grade giver. She urges teachers to communicate in a distinctly human voice, with sincere respect for the writer as a person and a sincere interest in his improvement as a writer. Additionally, Keh contends that it is best to limit comments according to fundamental problems, keeping in mind that students cannot pay attention to everything at once. This requires teachers to distinguish clearly between HOCs and LOCs when giving written comments. Keh notes that LOCs may disappear in later drafts as the writer changes content.

Keh feels adopting the following roles or points of view towards student writing may also be of help when it comes to giving comments. One, the teacher should
adopt the role of a reader interacting with a writer. In this role the teacher responds to the content with comments such as “good point” or “I agree.” Two, the teacher could see himself as a writing teacher concerned with points of confusion and breaks in logic, but still maintaining the role of a reader. Comments made in this role refer to the specific point of confusion, for example, “I as your reader am confused by….” The teacher could also refer to strategies for revision, choices of problem solving options or possible examples. Thirdly, the teacher could adopt the role of a grammarian, giving comments that focus on grammar giving particular reasons why a particular grammatical form is not appropriate. Keh records that she adopts all three roles when reading her students’ work. Therefore, to help maintain focus she uses HOCs lists that help her focus on overall problems or point out what the student has done well. At the same time she keeps her lesson objectives in mind in order not to overwhelm students with marks and comments. Keh also advocates for the provision of both margin and summative comments. The summative comment at the end of the paper points out the overall strengths and weaknesses and suggests a goal for the next paper. For further improvement in giving comments teachers are advised to check their students’ reactions to their comments, and put these reactions into consideration when giving comments in future.

According to Ferris (2003), for error feedback to be effective several measures need to be taken. For a start, teachers are advised to limit error feedback to certain types of errors, such as global errors that interfere with communication, very frequent errors, or errors that may stigmatize writers such as use of non-standard forms considered “uneducated” The teacher should also provide indirect rather than direct corrections. Further, the teacher should consider the individual writer’s learning style, metalinguistic knowledge and overall proficiency level in deciding when and how to provide feedback. The teacher should focus on aspects of grammar that can be explained, understood and generalized to students’ particular writing needs (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998). For the teacher to provide effective
error feedback he or she also needs thorough knowledge of English structure and pedagogical grammar.

Finally, to prevent fostering the conception that L2 writers are error producers and the L2 classroom an error repair shop, error feedback should be combined with lessons on the essential relationship between language and discourse structure, for example, the use of modal verbs to hedge in argumentations. This helps to make learners co-researchers discovering how grammar functions in academic texts and eventually transferring the discoveries into their own writing (Ferris, 2003).

A look at the three approaches to provision of feedback indicates that each has its advantages and disadvantages. This then means that the best way to go is to adopt a multifaceted approach where all three can be used at different times or together in the course of writing instruction. As Ferris, (20003) observes, the three approaches should co-exist peacefully within a writing class, as there is no evidence or argument advanced to suggest that one should replace the other. In Ferris’ view the three approaches are qualitatively and practically different from one another and therefore all three have their legitimate roles within L2 writing instruction. With this in mind the present study sought to find out which of the three approaches is most prevalent in the secondary schools and the implication this could have on learners’ development of writing skills.

2.4 Students’ Reactions
Students are the most important participants in the pedagogic process. They are the apprentices being helped to develop skills; in this case writing skills. Therefore, it is important to consider their views and attitudes on what goes on in the process. In this study, the focus is on students’ reactions on two important aspects: the writing lesson and feedback. This sprang out of the study’s broad concern with the provision of input and feedback for writing. Input is most
explicitly provided in the writing lessons and feedback in both the lessons and marked essays.

According to Hyland (1998), student responses can be looked at in terms of affective factors or in terms of their writing development. In studying students’ reactions, the present study focused more on affective factors though general comments on how students’ reactions may relate to their writing development are made.

Researches on students’ reactions in L2 writing classes have focused on various aspects. For example, researchers have sought to discover what L2 students themselves want from the written teacher feedback (Leki, 1991). In this study Leki surveyed ESL students at a university to discover their attitudes to error correction and error in their own writing. She discovered that because having error-free work was a major concern for these students, they wished to have their errors corrected by their teachers.

Other studies have tried to find out the kind of feedback learners value (Ferris, 1991; Hedgecock & Lefkowitz, 1994). They found out that student writers paid attention to and valued feedback on all aspects of their writing; that is; they valued feedback focusing both on form and content. Additionally, students appreciate clear concrete and specific feedback (Ferris, 1995; Straub, 1997).

Student survey research indicate that they appreciate praise but not at the expense of constructive criticism, that they struggle with understanding correction symbols and codes, that teacher questions may either be too specific or too general and therefore confusing. They value feedback on all aspects of their writing although they feel most strongly about receiving feedback on their grammar problems (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Leki, 1991; Hedcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Ferris,
On the approach to feedback, it was found that students preferred teacher feedback to peer feedback or self-evaluation (Hedcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Saito, 1994; Zhang, 1995).

Several other observations have been made on students’ reactions among native speakers and users of English as a second language. Burkland & Grimm, (1986) report that students just read the grade on a paper and discard it, often in disgust at the injustice of receiving a low mark for an essay they had worked on. According to King, (1979), Hahn, (1981) and Sperling & Freedman, (1987) even native English speaking students do not understand the meaning of comments on their papers. Even when they have managed to decipher a comment they have no idea how to respond to it.

Other studies found students to be hostile to teachers’ comments. They resented the teacher’s suggestions that the content of a paper was weak, immature or superficial. They were angry at the idea that someone else had the right to put a grade on their thoughts (Lynch & Klemans, 1978; Burkland & Grimm, 1986; Sperling and Freedman, 1987).

Second language writers were found not to mind error correction though they expressed concern for the lack of interest in the teacher’s reaction to the content of their papers. Others expressed hostility at having their errors pointed out for them to correct, but appreciated supportive comments without indication of errors. These improved the students’ attitudes (Gee, 1972; Semke, 1984; Burkland & Grimm, 1986; Leki, 1986; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Fathman & Whalley, 1990). Leki, (1990) thus observes that research on student reaction to written comments remains inconclusive. The present study, thus, in focusing on student reactions sought to contribute towards this area of research in second language writing. It addressed issues such as addressed by the studies reviewed above.
These include, the kind of feedback the learners would prefer, whether they understand teacher comments and whether they feel the comments are helpful or not.

2.5 Studies in ESL Writing
In this section a review of studies touching on various aspects of second language writing are presented with a view to locating the study reported in this thesis in this vast area of research. Among studies reviewed here are those on provision of feedback using the different approaches such as peer feedback, teacher written comments and error feedback, reactions to the feedback as well as studies on the writing process.

Feedback and its provision is a fundamental component in writing instruction. As such various aspects related to feedback have been studied. One such area is peer feedback. Zhu, (2001) notes that writing research has examined various issues related to peer response in first as well as second and foreign language classrooms. There has been focus on the impact of peer response on students’ revision and quality of writing. (Chaudron, 1983; Nystrand & Brandt, 1989; Herrington & Cadman, 1991; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1992; Nelson & Murphy, 1993; Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994). Results from these studies are mixed. A second line of research according to Zhu (2001) has examined the effects of training students for peer response tasks (Stanley, 1992; Zhu, 1995; Hacker, 1996; Berg, 1999). In these studies, students are trained and helped to develop strategies for peer response. Very positive results are realized in both L1 and L2 settings. Specifically, trained peer response is found to result in more and better quality peer feedback and peer talk and to increase student engagement and interaction during peer response.

Another major area of peer feedback that has been studied is peer response process, focusing on student interaction and negotiation (Gere & Abbott, 1985; Spear, 1988; Freedman, 1992; Nelson & Murphy, 1992; Sommers & Lawrence,
1992; Lockhart & Ng, 1995; Villamil & De Guerrero, 1996; Zhu’ 2001). Studies in this line of research have examined oral and/or written feedback generated during peer response, with a particular interest in peer talk during the response process. They have also analyzed turn-taking behaviours and amount and functions of peer talk by inspecting the different aspects of writing addressed by peer comments. Sommers & Lawrence (1992) for example found that female students talked less and were interrupted more than male students in groups that did not receive specific guidelines for conducting peer group sessions. Gere & Abbott (1985) in examining peer response talk coded transcriptions of peer group discussions into idea units, which they later coded in terms of language functions (inform, direct or elicit), area of attention (writing or group), and specific focus (process, content, form or context). These researchers found that the highest proportion of the idea units fell under “inform” function where students informed peers about the content of writing. This was followed by “direct” function in which peers directed their friends on revisions to be made, for example.

Another issue addressed in peer interaction and feedback concerns the language functions of peer utterances, aspects of writing attended to by students, readers’ stances and group dynamics (Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger; 1992; Nelson & Murphy, 1992; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; Lockhart & Ng, 1995). Lockhart & Ng (1995), for instance, analyzed transcripts of 27 L2 dyads and identified four types of reader stances during peer response; authoritative, interpretive, probing, and collaborative. They also found differences across the stance types with regard to language functions performed and aspects of writing attended to during peer response. The readers with authoritative stance and interpretive stance performed the “give opinion” function (evaluation of writing) more, those with probing and collaborative stances performed the “give information” (insights and examples) function more.
Yet another area looked into with regard to peer response concerns the unique challenges associated with peer response interaction in the L2 setting given the cultural and linguistic variables involved (Carson & Nelson, 1994, 1996; Nelson & Carson, 1998). They found that peer response in the L2 setting might be particularly challenging for various reasons. First, the L2 learners must comment on peer writing in a language in which they are still developing reading and communicative skills. Secondly, the L2 learners must accommodate the different communicative styles of peers from different cultures and cope with different attitudes toward working in groups and different expectations concerning group norms.

In a nutshell, peer response studies focusing on student interaction and feedback have shed considerable light on several aspects of peer response such as how groups function, how students perform peer response and comment on peer writing, what characterizes successful peer response groups and what factors may affect peer interaction. They also suggest possible areas for intervention during peer response training. These studies on peer response are significant to the reported study in that it also sought to find out if peer response is practiced in the classes studied in the research reported in this thesis.

Another area of feedback that has generated a lot of research is error feedback. As noted elsewhere, (cf, 2.3.2.3) there are two opposing sides, one spearheaded by Truscott and the other by Ferris. The former argues that error feedback does not seem to have any positive effects on student writing and should, therefore, be abandoned (Truscott, 1996, 2007) while the latter is of the view that error feedback has positive effects and learners do actually want and value it (Ferris, 1999, 2007). Here we review some of the studies presented for and against the use of error feedback in writing instruction. These studies are significant to the
present study because it touches on error feedback, which was found to be a major
method employed in the provision of feedback in the studied classes

We begin with studies that have shown that error feedback may not be useful. These include: Hendrickson, (1981). Lalande, (1982); Semke, (1984); Kepner, (1991); Sheppard, (1992); Frantzen, (1995); Polio, Fleck & Leder, (1998) and Fazio, (2001). These studies addressed different questions related to error feedback. Kepner (1991) reported that college students who received error correction did not make significantly fewer errors in their journals than those who received message-related comment. Semke (1980, 1984) carried out a 10-week study of the journal writing of third quarter students at a U.S university. Students were divided into four groups: direct correction, coded feedback with self-correction by students, comments on content only, and a combination of direct correction and comments on content. She found no significant differences in accuracy between the three correction groups and comments group.

Polio et al (1998) did a one-semester study in an ESL writing course for graduate and undergraduate students. Their experimental group received correction, grammar reviews, and training in editing their writing, while the controls received none of these. Effects were measured by an in-class essay and an in-class revision of that essay, each using two very closely related measures. None produced any significant contrasts. Sheppard (1992) compared an ESL group that received extensive correction over a 10-week period to one that had identical instruction but received only content-oriented comments, including marginal statements saying when a portion of the writing was difficult to understand. Students in each group had individual conferences with the instructor, in which they talked entirely about their errors or about meaning. The results indicated that the content group had significantly higher scores in marking sentence boundaries. On accuracy of verb forms, this group had a non-significant higher score. It was therefore felt that
correction in this study was not only ineffective but also probably harmful to students’ learning, relative to providing feedback only on meaning.

Fazio (2001) looked at the effects of correction on accuracy in the journal writing of Grade 5 students in a French-language school over a period of almost four months. The study included both native and non-native speakers. The subjects were divided into three groups. One of the three groups received focused correction on two aspects of French grammar. The second received only comments on content, while the third got a combination of these treatments. All three groups declined in accuracy, with no significant differences among them. The performance of the comments group was somewhat better than that of the correction group (d = .378) and much better than that of the combination group (d = .759). The implication is that the correction harmed students’ accuracy, as all groups received correction in the class and all declined in accuracy. The group that did not receive it on their journals had clearly the smallest decline on the journals.

Teachers have been criticized for various types of responses: being too general, e.g. “be specific”, (Sommers, 1982), being too specific (giving advice that is so text specific it cannot be used in subsequent writing) and for focusing too heavily on surface features (Searle & Dillon, 1980). In response to these criticisms, Knoblauch and Brannon (1981) review studies that test numerous hypotheses on better ways for teachers to respond to student writing. Such responses include, praise versus criticism, effect of oral versus written responses, end commentary versus side comments, long responses versus brief responses, response only to error versus response to content, outright correction of errors versus naming errors and offering rules, explicit suggestions for change versus implicit suggestions for change. Knoblauch & Brannon (1981) observe that each of the different studies conclude that none of the different ways of responding to student writing
produced significant improvement in students subsequent writing. Hillocks (1986) also reviews other studies and notes that they all strongly suggest that teacher comments have little impact on student writing – teaching by written comment on compositions is generally ineffective. Such findings make a case for continued interest in the area of provision of feedback to writing.

On the other hand, there are studies demonstrating the efficacy of error feedback from the teacher (Lalande, 1982; Robb, Ross & Shortreed, 1986; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1997; Ashwell, 2000; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Ferris, 2002; Chandler, 2003; Butchner, Young & Cameron, 2005). Just like those studies that showed error feedback to be ineffective, these studies also looked at various aspects such as the effect of error feedback on accuracy; particularly the effects of different types of teacher feedback on student writing. Chandler, (2003), for example, addresses two questions; should teachers give error feedback? How should error feedback be done? Chandler uses an experimental and a control group data to show that students’ correction of grammatical and lexical errors between assignments reduces such errors in subsequent writing over one semester without reducing fluency or quality. Four methods of error correction are used: direct correction, marginal description of type of error, underlining with marginal description of type of error and simple underlining. Chandler uses a number of measures to answer these two questions. These measures include change in accuracy of both revisions and of subsequent writing, change in fluency, change in holistic ratings, student attitudes toward the four different kinds of teacher response and the time required by student and teacher for each kind of response. The findings showed that both direct correction and simple underlining are significantly superior to describing the type of error even with underlining for reducing long-term error. Direct correction is best for producing accurate revisions and students prefer it because it is the fastest and easiest way for them and the fastest for the teacher over several drafts. Students, however, felt that they
learn more from self-correction and simple underlining takes less teacher time on the first draft. Chandler concludes that any method is viable depending on other goals of the course.

Fathman & Whalley, (1990) found fewer grammatical errors by students receiving error feedback. The study, however, only examined text revisions and not new pieces of writing over time. Lalande, (1982) examined U.S students of German as a second language. The experimental group improved grammatical accuracy on subsequent writer after using an error code to rewrite. The control group, which received direct correction from the teacher, actually made more errors on the essay at the end of the semester. Lalande observes that the difference in improvement between the groups was not statistically significant. In Frantzen’s (1995) study of U.S, college students of intermediate Spanish, both the group receiving direct correction and the no-grammar group whose errors were marked but not corrected improved in overall grammar usage on the post essay. However, neither group showed significant improvement in written fluency over the semester. The four treatment groups of Japanese college students learning English reported in Robb, Ross & Shortreed’s (1986) study improved in various measures of accuracy after receiving different types of error feedback: direct correction, notation of the type of error using a code, notation in the text of the location of error, and marginal feedback about the number of errors in the line. The groups also improved in fluency and syntactic complexity. Noteworthy though, neither Lalande (1982) nor Robb, Ross & Shortreed’s (1986) study had a control group receiving no correction, and both did not find any statistically significant differences between the various teacher response types. Ng’ang’a (2002) notes that some methods of error treatment, especially those that clearly indicated the type of error: spelling, tense etc, led to improvement in subsequent drafts.

It is important to note that both the proponents and opponents of error treatment as a form of feedback are in agreement that the research base on error correction
in L2 writing is insufficient and researchers need to prove its usefulness or lack of it by carrying out more research. The present study, in looking at methods of feedback provision contributes to the discourse on error feedback.

Other studies have been done on the writing process in different parts of the world. The studies focus on various aspects of writing, such as the behaviours that seem to be successful or unsuccessful in producing effective L2 compositions, specific composing behaviours, specific types of L2 writers, features unique to L2 composing (Krapels, 1990). Among the early second language writing process studies were those by Jones, (1982); Zamel, (1982); Zamel, (1983) and Raimes, (1985). These studies focused on the composing processes of learners with different linguistic proficiencies. These studies found out that good writer were those more competent in the composing process. Such writers were found to revise more and spend more time on their essays than the unskilled writers. They concerned themselves with ideas first, revised at the discourse level, exhibited recursiveness in their writing process, and saved editing until the end of the process. The unskilled L2 writers revised less and spent less time writing than the skilled writers. They focused on small bits of the essay and edited from the beginning to the end of the process. Generally, these studies found competence in the composing processes to be more important than linguistic competence in both English as L1 or L2. These studies are of relevance to the reported study as it also looked at the teaching and acquisition of composing competence in English though in a different context.

Certain instructional approaches, especially those focusing on form, might not develop the composing competence that was intended. This is according to studies by Jones (1985) and Rorschach (1986). Such teaching hindered the development of L2 writers. These two studies closely relate to the current study. In looking at input and feedback in terms of focus, whether on content or form, the study
reported in this thesis shows that an over concentration on form prevents learners from developing a concern for HOCs such as organization and development of ideas.

A key finding of studies reviewed here is that a lack of competence in writing in English result more from the lack of composing competence than from the lack of linguistic competence (Jones, 1982; Zamel, 1982; Raimes, 1985a). The present study sought to find out what the situation in Kenyan secondary schools is. It was discovered that composing competence is an important part of writing skill and therefore, this study recommended more training of learners in the composing process.

The subjects of most of the studies on the writing process are usually females (Chelala, 1981; Jones, 1982; Hildebrand, 1985) advanced second language learners (Zamel, 1982; Zamel, 1983; Jones, 1985; Rorschach, 1986), undergraduate students and native speakers of either Spanish, Chinese, etc. The current study focused on speakers of mixed African first languages, such as Dholuo, Kikuyu, writing in English. Additionally, the current study looked at both male and female writers in an ESL classroom setting.

2.6 Theories of Second Language Acquisition
This study is located in the broad area of second language acquisition, as it focuses on the pedagogic process of writing in English as a second language. A number of theories, models and approaches have informed second language research. Among these are Krashen’s Monitor Model, the Interlanguage Theory, Error Analysis, Acculturation and Nativization models and Ellis’s theory of Instructed Second Language Acquisition. A review of some of these theories that have a bearing on the current study follows.
2.6.1 The Monitor Model.
David Stephen Krashen advanced this model. It evolved in the late 1970s in a series of articles (Krashen 1977a, 1977b, 1978a, 1978b). It was elaborated in a number of books (Krashen 1981, 1982, 1985). Krashen argued that his account provides a general overall theory of second language acquisition with implications for language teaching. He presents a number of scientific studies in a wide variety of language acquisition and learning contexts to support his arguments. The model has, however, been seriously criticized on various grounds; details into which we will not get. Despite the criticism, the model achieved considerable popularity among second language teachers and has informed studies in second language acquisition. It is for this reason that the model is reviewed here as the study concerns itself with an aspect of language teaching. As such, some of the arguments from the model are used in explaining the findings of the present study.

The model has five main hypotheses.

i. The acquisition-learning hypothesis
ii. The natural order hypothesis
iii. The monitor hypothesis
iv. The input hypothesis
v. The affective filter hypothesis

Four of these are reviewed briefly here. The affective filter hypothesis is very significant to the current study. The Affective Filter Hypothesis helps explain students’ reactions.

In the acquisition-learning hypothesis, Krashen argues that a language can be acquired or “picked up” through exposure to it, or it can be consciously learned. In learning, the learner is aware of the rules of the language and can explain what it is he/she knows about the language. In the natural order hypothesis, it is argued that there is an order in which language forms are acquired, with some being acquired earlier than others. Language rules are seen as playing the single role of
monitoring. They come in to edit what we produce from our acquired knowledge. This is the main argument in the monitor hypothesis. Krashen goes on to add that comprehensible input is what leads to acquisition, as we can only acquire what we understand. He reckons that acquisition will occur when a learner understands input that is slightly beyond his current level (i+1). This is the main argument in the input hypothesis. The arguments in these four hypotheses seem to be subsumed in Ellis’s theory of instructed second language acquisition, which forms part of the theoretical framework of this study.

2.6.2 Interlanguage theory
This is a term that was coined by Selinker (1972) to describe the learner’s language. The term won favour over similar constructs such as approximative system (Nemser, 1975) and transitional competence (Corder, 1967). McLaughlin (1987) points out that interlanguage has come to characterize a major approach to second language research and theory. The main argument of this theory is that the learner at any given stage in the process of learning a second language will have a language that is somewhere between their L1 and the target language (TL). According to Selinker (1972) an interlanguage is a separate linguistic system resulting from the learner’s attempted production of the TL norm. The features in the interlanguage are neither L1 nor TL.

The interlanguage is constantly evolving towards the TL system. As such the interlanguage is envisaged as a continuum with the learner moving gradually from one part to the next as he progresses towards the TL. The interlanguage is said to have three principal features: permeability, dynamism and systematicity. It is said the interlanguage is permeable in that the rules in the system are not fixed but are open to amendment as more language is acquired. The principal of dynamism relates to permeability in that the interlanguage is said to be constantly changing as the learner accommodates new hypotheses about the TL. In addition to this the
interlanguage is said to be systematic in the sense that the rule-based nature of the learner’s use of the TL can be detected.

An important notion related to interlanguage is fossilization. This is the state of affairs that exists when the learner ceases to elaborate the interlanguage no matter how long there is exposure to new data or new teaching. When this happens wrong forms in the interlanguage fossilize as errors. Fossilization may result from language transfer or strategies of communication according to Selinker. Related to fossilization is the notion of backsliding. Sometimes, when not careful about his language, the learner can backslide to wrong forms, but when monitoring, he produces the correct forms. These two notions, fossilization and backsliding could explain some of the errors found in second language learners’ language. However, in the interlanguage, errors are seen as evidence of an evolving system and not unwanted forms. They are therefore viewed positively. The concept of interlanguage can be seen to relate to the learning of writing as it is a skill that develops over time. At any one point the learner can be said to write aiming towards the TL samples. Fossilization and backsliding could explain some of the errors found in learners’ writing. However, this study does not concern itself with a detailed analysis and explanation of learner errors therefore the interlanguage theory is not directly applied to our data.

2.6.3 Error Analysis
This is the study of learner errors. It is mostly associated with Corder (1967). Corder points out that errors are an important part of language and language learning. Errors tell how far towards the target language (TL) the learner has progressed and consequently what remains of him to learn. Errors provide a researcher with evidence of how language is learned and evidence of strategies or procedures the learners employ in discovering the language. Most importantly, according to Corder, errors provide a way for the learner to test his hypotheses about the nature of the language he/she is learning.
The process of error analysis involves identification of errors, their description, explanation and evaluation. This helps determine which features in the TL are problematic. This information can then aid in planning teaching, selecting and preparing materials and designing syllabuses. Therefore errors should be viewed positively.

Error feedback is an important though controversial approach to the provision of feedback in writing. The research reported in this study, in dealing with provision of feedback therefore borrows some ideas from error analysis.

2.7 Approaches to the Teaching of Writing
Silva (1990) observes that the history of ESL composition since 1945 can be viewed as a succession of approaches or orientations to L2 writing, a cycle in which particular approaches achieve dominance and then fade, but never really disappear. As such, the influence of different approaches continues to be felt in the ESL writing field. The following are the four most influential approaches.

i. Controlled composition
ii. Current-traditional rhetoric
iii. The process approach
iv. Genre approach

Each of these is reviewed briefly as they relate to the present study.

2.7.1 Controlled Composition
Also referred to as guided composition, this approach is said to have its roots in Charles’ Fries’ oral approach (Silva, 1990). In this oral approach, language was seen as speech and learning a language was seen as habit formation. For this reason, writing was regarded as a secondary concern, only useful for the reinforcement of oral habits. Following from this view, those adopting a
controlled composition approach preferred practice with previously learned discrete units of language. This meant imitation and manipulation of model passages carefully constructed and graded for vocabulary and sentence patterns, (Silva, 1990).

In the controlled composition approach therefore, the writer is simply a manipulator of previously learned language structures. The teacher is the reader who adopts the role of editor or proofreader. Consequently, the teacher is not interested in the quality of ideas or expressions but only with formal linguistic features. The text is simply a collection of sentence patterns and vocabulary items- a linguistic artifact, a vehicle of language practice. The approach had little concern for audience or purpose of writing. This approach’s failure to look at writing as a form of communication involving the writer, the text and its purpose and the audience, makes it inadequate for the kind of data dealt with in this study.

2.7.2 Current-traditional Rhetoric
This was an approach in vogue in the 1960s. It arose as a result of the feeling that there was more to writing than building grammatical sentences. It aimed at bridging the gap between controlled and free writing. Proponents of this approach combined the principles of current traditional paradigm (controlled composition) with Kaplan’s theory of contrastive rhetoric (Kaplan, 1967). In this theory Kaplan defines rhetoric as “the method of organizing syntactic units into large patterns” (Kaplan, 1967:15). It was argued that L1 interference extended beyond the sentence level, therefore more pattern drill at the rhetorical rather than syntactic level was required.

Consequently, the central concern of the current-traditional rhetoric approach was the logical construction and arrangement of discourse forms. The main concern was the paragraph-its elements- topic sentences, support sentences, concluding sentences, and transitions- and the various ways of developing a
paragraph such as by illustrations, exemplification, comparison, contrast, classification, definition, and causal analysis. The essay development was also tackled. The essay was seen as the extrapolation of paragraph principles to larger stretches of discourse. Addressed here were large structural entities such as, introduction, body and conclusion and organizational patterns, for example, narration, description, exposition, and argumentation.

In the classroom context, the current-traditional rhetoric approach can be applied in different ways. Firstly, students can be asked to choose among alternative sentences within the context of a given paragraph or longer discourse. The second way can involve reading and analyzing a model then applying the structural knowledge gained to a parallel piece of original writing. Alternatively, the students –already provided with a topic can be asked to list and group relevant facts- derive topic sentences and supporting sentences from those facts, assemble an outline and write a composition from that outline.

In this approach, therefore, learning to write involves becoming skilled in identifying, internalizing and executing patterns. The text becomes a collection of increasingly complex discourse structures (sentences, paragraphs, sections etc.) each embedded in the next largest form. As a result, unfamiliar patterns of expressions may even confuse the reader. The teacher is the judge representing the community of educated native speakers. This approach has greatly influenced the teaching of composition writing. It can even be observed in classrooms today where teachers insist on the outlining and developing of texts from the outlines.

The approach’s main point of weakness is the lack of concern for communication, which is the main goal of writing. The question of development and organization of paragraphs and essays is however useful for any successful writing. Thus this
approach in a way informs the pedagogic process of writing, which was the central concern of the study reported in this thesis.

2.7.3 The Process Approach.
This is an approach associated with researchers like Taylor, 1981; Zamel, 1982 and Raimes, 1985. It was developed as a reaction to current-traditional rhetoric. The process approach lays emphasis on the writer as an independent producer of texts. The process through which the writer goes to create and produce discourse is the most important aspect of the theory. Thus, it lays particular stress on the cycle of writing activities, which move learners from the generation of ideas and the collection of data through to the publication of a finished text (Silva, 1990; Tribble, 1996).

In this approach writing is seen as going through the following stages as outlined in Tribble (1996:38.)

**Prewriting** (specifying the task/planning and outlining/collection data/making notes)

**Composing/drafting**

**Revising** (reorganizing/shifting emphasis/focusing information and style for your readership)

**Editing** (checking grammar/lexis/surface features, for example, Punctuation, spelling, layout, quotation conventions, references)

The proponents of the approach, however, point out that writers do not follow a linear sequencing of the stages. They say that writing is a complex, recursive and creative process or set of behaviors (Raimes, 1985). By recursive, it means that at
any point in the preparation of a text, writers can loop backwards or forwards to whichever of the activities involved in text composition they may find useful. For example, way into the writing, they can go back to the library to collect more information or data, they may revise the plan or may change the style of earlier sections before going on to write later parts as they come to appreciate how best to reach the intended audience. Therefore, learning to write entails developing an efficient and effective composing process.

The audience or reader is an important factor to consider in any writing (Berlin 1982, 1987; 1988). In taking cognizance of this, the process approach advocates for an interactive approach. The writer must have a sense of his/her audience in mind and try to interact with them in the writing. This then calls for use of language that will appropriately deliver the intended content to the envisaged audience. In the process approach to writing, the language should come from the content—what the writer wants to say. Therefore, the language should be the writer’s own from his prior experience and creative urge (Silva, 1990). However, it is pointed out that the writer must make concessions to the readers’ language.

In a nutshell, the process approach treats the composing process as a “non-linear, exploratory and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning” (Zamel, 1983: 165). In this view, the content, ideas and the need to communicate determine form. In this approach, the teacher facilitates the learner’s writing and provision of input or stimulus is considered to be less important. Teachers draw out the learner’s potential. Process approaches see writing as the same regardless of what is being written and who is writing.
2.7.4 Genre Approach

This is an approach that developed as a reaction to the process approach. Hyland, (2002) observes that process approaches have little to say about the ways meanings are socially constructed. They fail to consider the forces outside the individual, which help guide purposes, establish relationships and ultimately shape writing by offering students explicit and systematic explanations of the ways language functions in social contexts. This deficit, Hyland (2002) notes, is what genre-based pedagogies seek to address.

Swales (1990:58) defines a genre as “a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes.” Genre refers to abstract, socially recognized ways of using language. It is based on the assumption that the features of a similar group of texts depend on the social context of their creation and use, and that those features can be described in a way that relates a text to others like it and to the choices and constraints acting on text producers.

Genre approaches emphasize that writing varies with social context in which it is produced so we have a range of kinds of writing such as sales letters, research articles, and reports. These different kinds of writing are used to carry out different purposes. The purpose of a text is the central aspect for the genre analyst. The genres, are however, also influenced by other features of the situation such as subject matter, the relationship between writer and the audience and the pattern of organization. In terms of writing development, genre approaches can be said to have three phases according to Cope & Kalantzis (1993). These are: modeling the target genre, where learners are exposed to examples of the genre they have to produce; the construction of a text by learners and teacher; and the independent construction of a text by learners.

In summary, according to Badger & White (2000) genre based approaches see writing as essentially concerned with knowledge of language, and as being tied
closely to a social purpose, while the development of writing is viewed as the analysis and imitation of input in the form of texts provided by the teacher. In analyzing the data for the present study an eclectic approach that borrows ideas from the different approaches was used. Specifically, a model proposed by Badger & White (2000), called the process genre approach was used. Details on this model are presented in the theoretical framework section (cf 2.9).

2.8 Narrative as a Type of Writing
Writing has broadly been categorized into creative writing and functional writing. Creative writing includes narration, description, exposition and argumentation. This kind of writing requires the writer to use imagination to create material for the composition. The material may be from the writer’s experiences or from other people’s experiences that he/she has heard or read about. The writer here is free to make a personal response to the subject he/she is writing about. Functional writing, on the other hand, is the kind of writing mostly done in work places such as memos, minutes, letters of sale, and letters of invitation, reports among others. In such writing, the writer draws on his knowledge of facts and practical experiences. The subject of the writing is normally clearly defined and some have clearly laid out formats therefore exercising control over the writer’s response.

The learner needs to be able to come up with texts of either creative or functional nature. Therefore the pedagogic process of writing involves teaching both types of writing. The present study, however, focused on creative writing and specifically on narrative writing because this allows more freedom to the writer. Here a brief explanation of narrative as a form of writing is presented.

A narrative is a story or an account of something that happened or that is imagined. Most narratives are based on real-life events that the writer has seen, or heard about. He/she uses these to make up his/her own stories. A good story should arouse and sustain the reader’s interest. The important aspects of a
narrative are: conflict, plot, characters, setting, and language (Hall, 1995; Langan, 2001). *Conflict* is a problem or difficult situation facing the main character(s) in the story. *Plot* is the outline or the unfolding of events in the story. The plot has three parts: beginning, middle and ending. The beginning introduces the problem or conflict facing the main character(s). The middle shows the attempt by the character(s) to resolve the conflict. The end shows the resolution and climax of the story. *Characters* are the participants in the events of the story. These can be based on real or imagined people or animals. Characters give depth to a narrative and move the plot forward. Characters can be developed through description, what they say, what others say about them and through their actions. The characters should be realistic but not too predictable. *Setting* refers to the place and time of the events in the narrative, such as in a rural village in Africa during the 19th century. *Language and style* refers to the manipulation of linguistic resources to capture the interest and imagination of the reader. Included here are aspects such as diction, the sentence structures used, use of descriptions, dialogues, direct speech, and flashbacks. Effective narrative writing also requires a lot of creativity. This involves coming up with fresh ideas and presenting them in a captivating manner. These important aspects of narratives should form part of teacher input on narrative writing and also be part of the focus for feedback.

### 2.9 Theoretical Framework

This study adopted an eclectic approach for its theoretical framework, using theories from second language acquisition, and from writing to explain its findings. In this section the three main theories that formed the theoretical framework namely, Ellis’s theory of instructed second language acquisition, the affective filter hypothesis, and the process genre approach to the teaching of writing are presented.
2.9.1 Ellis’s Theory of Instructed Second Language Acquisition

This is a theory advanced by Rod Ellis in Ellis, N. (1994). Ellis notes that instruction involves an attempt to intervene directly in the language learning process. He further argues that the goal of communicative language teaching is to impart knowledge of what is correct, what is appropriate and what is coherent text. Therefore, the goal of instruction is the development of learner’s capacity to use his/her linguistic and pragmatic knowledge. The theory, therefore, attempts to explain how instructed learners develop the ability to use their linguistic and pragmatic knowledge in the production of correct and appropriate sentences.

In discussing the theory, Ellis focuses on grammatical proficiency but explains that the theory can provide explanation of both linguistic and pragmatic aspects of proficiency. Learning to write requires both linguistic and pragmatic knowledge. One needs to write correct language and use it appropriately in the context of what they are writing. Therefore, Ellis’s theory can apply to the learning and acquisition of writing skills.

The theory mainly relates to the kind of opportunities provided in the classroom context and the learning outcomes that these opportunities result in. The theory focuses on the following principles and how they relate to language acquisition.

i. Input in a classroom setting
ii. Types of L2 knowledge
iii. Changing input to knowledge
iv. Automatizing L2 knowledge
v. The role of other knowledge
vi. Second language performance
2.9.1.1 Input in a Classroom Setting

Ellis, R. (1994) argues that the type of instruction determines the characteristics of input in a classroom. Ellis, (1994) then identifies two types of instruction that determine the kind of input in a classroom setting. These are: code oriented instruction and communicative oriented instruction. Code oriented instruction is instruction aimed at teaching specific linguistic aspects, for example, use of past tenses in narratives, the formatting of a formal letter, the language of an argumentative essay, the structure of a narrative. Communicative oriented instruction on the other hand, is aimed at providing learners with opportunities to communicate naturally, for example, writing letters to their friends or parents, writing a story for the school magazine, writing a poem for school entertainment.

The characteristics of input in the two types of instruction differ on various aspects including frequency and salience of certain features, and provision of explicit rules. Input in code-oriented instruction will reflect the aspect being focused on. For a start, this aspect can be made artificially frequent in the input for the period of time devoted to it. Additionally, the salience of the feature or aspect being focused on can also be increased by the teacher’s treatment of learner errors relating to the feature. For example, a teacher focusing on the use of past tenses in a narrative will make sure this stands out in the writing lesson. In marking too, comments and corrections will also focus more on this specific area. The frequency and salience enhance the noticeability and learnability of the feature (Lightbown & Spada, 1991). On its part, communicative type of instruction does not allow easy manipulation of input to focus on specific items, make them more frequent or salient. Instead the features present in the input are a product of the language the participants in the task choose to complete it. In such a setting, learners could be asked to discuss in groups and come up with a story for the school magazine, for example. From their discussion, they determine what areas, such as use of language, content or organization they may need teacher’s
input. Ellis, points out that it may be possible to devise communicative tasks that elicit the use of specific features, though these tasks may not lead to “natural” and “essential” use of such features.

Another difference in the characteristics of the input provided in the two types of instruction is in the provision of explicit rules and the elaboration of the rules. Explicit rules are more likely to be provided in code-oriented instruction. Explicitness refers to the extent to which the teacher makes use of linguistic metalanguage. The teacher can simply hint with the help of an example or provide a complete statement of the rule. For example, in relation to narrative writing a teacher may state the rule that the plot has a beginning, middle and ending. At the beginning, a problem afflicting the main character(s) is introduced. In the middle we see an attempt to resolve the problem and at the end there is the final resolution. Alternatively, an example of a story may be given showing these parts of the plot and learners guided in discerning them. Elaboration has to do with the time spent in the presentation of the rule. Since writing is a language skill that makes use of linguistic as well as communicative skills, both types of instruction could be employed in a writing class. The concern of the present study was, therefore, with the characteristics of input in relation to its focus.

Ellis (1994) goes on to argue that regardless of the type of instruction, there is always some shaping of the input in the classroom. This occurs through modifications of input and modifications of interaction (Parker & Chaudron, 1987). These modifications occur naturally in the teacher-talk as he/she attempts to communicate with the not so proficient learners. According to Parker & Chaudron, (1987) interaction modifications involve changes in the linguistic form (in relation to the forms that would be used in comparable interaction with a native speaker). They can involve simplifications (shorter utterances, use of less complex syntax and lexis) and elaboration involving redundancy (for example,
paraphrases, use of synonyms, slower speech and rhetorical signaling or framing) and alterations to thematic structures (for example, through use of extraposition or cleft constructions). There are other modifications that involve features of conversation or discourse functions. These are efforts made by the teacher to manage the discourse so that mis-or non-understanding does not occur (for example, choosing simple topics) and to repair any communication problem when it arises (for example, by means of requests for clarification or confirmation). It has been hypothesized that the comprehensible input that results from such modifications facilitates the natural development of a second language.

In terms of provision of comprehensible input, Ellis (1994) holds the view that the classroom does not constitute an “acquisition-rich setting” for various reasons. First, the teacher dominates the talk in the classroom with display questions designed to elicit predetermined responses (Long & Saito, 1983). Secondly, classroom talk is impoverished compared to talk outside the classroom, and finally the classroom rarely affords students opportunities to negotiate meaning (Pica, & Long, 1986). Therefore, researchers have advocated for use of small-group work as these give learners more opportunities to negotiate meaning, than when they are engaged in a teacher-directed activity.

Ellis, R. (1994) further notes that other important aspects that may affect the comprehensibility of input are variables such as the source of explanation (the teacher, the students, textbooks) and manner of presentation (oral or written). In describing input in the writing lesson, the current study looked at such aspects as the source of input, and the kind of classroom activities; learner or teacher-centred activities as ways of increasing comprehensibility.

Ellis (1994) concludes that input in the classroom may not always be the best. It advances the teacher’s agenda, and input from other learners is often
ungrammatical. Ellis however contends that the classroom must be seen as the primary source of information about the L2 for the learner. This then underscores the importance of the teacher making his/her input as informative as possible. The present study sought to assess how informative teacher input was by establishing the aspects of writing that most teachers paid attention to and summarizing the important points raised for each of the areas.

2.9.1.2 Types of L2 knowledge
The theory of instructed second language acquisition distinguishes two types of knowledge internalized by the learner- explicit and implicit knowledge. Ellis, (1994) notes that in the case of language, explicit knowledge refers to knowledge that is analyzed (in the sense that it exists independently of the actual instances of its use), abstract (it takes the form of some underlying generalizations of actual linguistic behaviour) and explanatory (the logical basis of the knowledge is understood independently of its application). Explicit knowledge is available to the learner as a conscious representation.

The learner can say what he/she knows about the language. Such explicit knowledge could include a general knowledge of what is writing, writing skills and different types of writing such as narratives, argumentations and minutes, as well as a general knowledge of English as a language.

Explicit knowledge may help the learner to notice features in the input that would otherwise be ignored. For example, when learners know that a narrative must have a plot organized in a certain way they are likely to notice the plot in a sample story. Furthermore, explicit knowledge may facilitate the process of noticing the gap between what has been noticed and what is missing in their writing. That is, explicit knowledge may sensitize the language processor so that it takes account of data available in the input leading to a more adequate analysis. In relation to
writing, explicit knowledge makes the learner conscious of his writing, for example, in terms of the language he uses or even the formatting of a specific kind of text such as a letter. Explicit knowledge can also convert directly to implicit knowledge, through continued practice, if the rule is not developmental, or if the learner is psychologically ready for developmental rules.

Implicit knowledge is of two types: formulaic knowledge and rule-based knowledge. These two types are intuitive. The learners may not tell when they learnt them. Sometimes they are unaware of their existence. Formulaic knowledge constitutes formulas- fixed and semi-fixed expressions, which have been internalized as unanalyzed units and are accessed in the same way as other lexical materials (Pawley & Syder, 1983). Such formulas include expressions such as “Showing a clean pair of heels” “As proud as a peacock” “The early bird catches the worm.” In writing, use of such idiomatic expressions adds flavour to a story. The learner is however advised to guard against clichés. Rule-based knowledge has to do with the ability of a speaker to judge the grammaticality or ungrammaticality of a sentence. Rule-based knowledge could be very useful at the editing stage. In writing, a learner needs both kinds of knowledge. Instances of creativity and imagination in writing may rely on implicit knowledge, while the more formal aspects of writing such as paragraphing, mechanics and sentence structures may rely on explicit knowledge. In providing input, it would help to provide both types of knowledge: explicit and implicit.

2.9.1.3 Changing input to knowledge.

The learner plays an active role in converting input into stored knowledge. Both explicit and implicit knowledge can be learned and converted into intake. This can be achieved in various ways such as memorization and problem-solving. Memorization occurs when the learner attempts to consciously consign information to memory. Some of the expressions that learners use in writing are
normally memorized, for example, such expressions as “As happy as a queen” or “A stitch in time saves nine.”

Problem solving is seen when learners attempt to induce explicit information about the L2 from the input data they are exposed to. For example, learners may be presented with a dilemma and asked to write a story on it. They would then go on to analyze this story to see the different parts of the plot. Studies have shown that learners can actually internalize rules, which help their correction of errors (Pickett, 1978; Seliger, 1979; Sorace, 1982; Green & Hecht, 1992; Hecht, 1992). In the teaching process the teacher can use problem solving to help learners internalize aspects of writing.

Ellis (1994) further says that input can become implicit knowledge when the learner engages in the following:

- **Noticing**-involves paying attention to specific features

According to Schmidt (1990) a number of factors may induce a learner to notice something in the input. Firstly, the task demand can force the learner to heed specific features because they are important for the completion of the task. For example, in writing a formal letter, attention has to be paid to the format and the language as these differentiate it from a friendly letter. Secondly, the frequency of a feature as a result of formal instruction or teacher talk can also cause noticing. Unusual features, which surprise learners because they do not conform to expectations, are easily noticeable. Such may include instances of personification, irony, sarcasm, and paradox. Interactional modifications as well can lead to noticing. Schmidt (1990)’ however, points out that the presence of one or more of the above conditions does not guarantee noticing, but simply makes it more likely.

- **Comparing**-the learner can compare the noticed feature with those in their output. New items become intake if the learner establishes how they differ from their existing interlanguage representation. In relation to writing this
can be aided by looking at comments made by teachers on various issues against what they have written, with a view to improving. These first two, (noticing and comparing) constitute the first stage of turning input into implicit knowledge. At this point features are stored in the short-term memory. The input becomes intake or stored knowledge.

- Integrating: this involves using intake to modify the interlanguage system. This can take two forms: hypothesis revision, leading to implicit knowledge or storage of features, which become part of explicit L2 knowledge. The features become part of the long-term memory. Integrating constitutes the second stage of turning input into implicit knowledge. It must however, be noted that intake does not automatically become part of interlanguage.

This study in looking at input and provision of feedback tried to find out whether teachers facilitate noticing, comparing and integration. From an analysis of student reaction to the feedback provided the study tried to determine if learners engage in these processes that aim at improving their acquired knowledge in writing.

2.9.1.4 Automatizing L2 knowledge

Ellis, (1994) argues that knowledge becomes intake through practice. He goes on to say that the most useful practice is that which provides “real operating conditions” and is continual. “Real operating conditions,” means opportunities for using the language in natural communicative situations. Johnson (1988) suggests that the kind of practice that is most likely to lead to increased accuracy will involve the stages of corrective action and retrial. Corrective action is best executed by means of confronting the learner with the mismatch between the flawed and model performance. This means, for example, where there is
misspelling instead of just underlining or marking “sp”, the teacher indicates the correct spelling. This might be more useful than formal explanations.

Retrial entails opportunities for performing the skill in “free practice” (practice in real language situations that corresponds to the type of language use that the learner is trying to master, e.g. writing a story for the school magazine, writing letters to friends, writing a job application.. Retrial can also involve drafting and redrafting of the same text incorporating corrections.

Ellis, (1994) notes that learners may need continual access to such “free Practice” to ensure that automaticity is maintained over time. This calls for continued practice, both in real life and in simulation, especially with regard to writing, since developing writing skills is continuous and developmental. Automatization, especially of explicit knowledge can be achieved through “controlled” grammar practice activities in the classroom, for example, practice in the use of past tenses, leading to more efficient use in actual performance like in the writing of narratives.

The theory of instructed second language acquisition emphasizes the need to suit the type of practice to the type of knowledge (explicit or implicit) that is the goal of instruction. Automatization is of crucial importance in L2 acquisition because it leads to improved L2 performance and enables learners to release attention and effort for controlled processing of new L2 forms, (Van Patten, 1987). This means, for example, if learners have practised and learnt one aspect of writing, like developing the plot in a story, they can then concentrate on another aspect like creating cohesiveness. In analyzing the pedagogic process the present study sought to find out how much practice learners are exposed to and of what nature it is. Does it reflect real language use situations to enable automatization?
2.9.1.5. The role of other knowledge

Ellis, (1994) distinguishes two forms of other knowledge: World knowledge and Learner’s first language. World knowledge has been characterized as a set of content schema, a term derived from Bartlet (1932). This relates to one’s experience, preferences and tendencies, which influence how people view and interpret new information.

Learners use content schema to help them interpret messages, that is, to fill in gaps in linguistic processing of input by inferencing probable meaning. Content schema may play a potential role in the acquisition of new vocabulary and formulas by enabling the learner to discover the meaning and contextual use of these items through inferencing. They may also help the learner discover the meaning of grammatical features in the same way. Such vocabulary and grammatical structures can be used in their writing.

In developing writing skills, world knowledge is important as it can enhance interpretations and discussion of a topic or form of writing e.g. one who has had experience with snow, or life in the slums can say more about these topics than one who has not. Functional writing, like of recipes minutes, and letters relates directly to world knowledge. The learner’s L1 is significant in that it can be a source of negative or positive transfer. It is viewed as negative when it causes proactive inhibition, but positive when it enhances learning. A learner’s knowledge of the world and the effects of his L1 on his L2 can be evident in the essays he/she writes.

2.9.1.6 Second Language Performance

L2 production or output is said to contribute to acquisition in two principal ways: pushed output and auto-input. Pushed output is output that comes as a result of the learner being required to produce correct and appropriate forms.
In other words, the learner is pushed to produce correct forms. Pushed output is a term used by Swain (1985) to refer to output that is precise and sociolinguistically acceptable. In other words, it encourages learners to use language correctly and appropriately. For example, in writing on a topic like “Fire in the school” the learner is expected to be realistic. For instance it would be unrealistic to say that angels put out the fire. In the teaching of writing the teacher must push the learners to produce correct and appropriate forms of writing. Drafting, feedback and redrafting could be useful in achieving pushed output.

Learner output constitutes a kind of auto-input. This means that utterances that have been constructed with the help of explicit knowledge can provide feedback into the system responsible for processing implicit knowledge. Learner output can most explicitly be got by use of peer feedback and student-teacher conferences. These methods of feedback help the learners to learn from their own work as well as from others. This way learner output becomes auto-input.

In the pedagogic process of writing, it is important to use methods that utilize the learners’ performance as a source of input or to facilitate acquisition. In this study we tried to find out if learners’ performance is utilized by looking at methods of providing feedback and observing what goes on in the writing lessons.

In summary, Ellis’s Theory of Instructed Second Language Acquisition was useful in describing the kind of input provided in the writing lesson in terms of its characteristics and how it was made comprehensible. The theory also helped explain classroom activities with regard to their contribution to acquisition or internalization of input for writing.

2.10 The Affective Filter Hypothesis
This hypothesis is one of the five hypotheses in Krashen’s monitor model (Krashen, 1985), which he developed to explain the nature and processes of language acquisition and learning (cf.2.6.1). The Affective Filter Hypothesis
relates to how affective factors relate to the process of second language acquisition. Affective variables such as motivation, self-confidence and anxiety have been found to affect success in second language acquisition. It is said that performers with high motivation, generally do better in second language acquisition. Those with self-confidence and a good self-image also tend to do better. Additionally, low anxiety, whether personal or classroom anxiety, appears to be conducive to second language acquisition.

The Affective Filter Hypothesis captures the relationship between affective variables and the process of second language acquisition by advancing the argument that acquirers vary with respect to strength or level of their affective filters. Those with negative attitudes seek less input and have high affective filters. Even if they understand the message, the input will not reach that part of the brain responsible for language acquisition (language acquisition device) (Krashen, 1987). Those with positive attitudes to second language acquisition will seek and obtain more input and have lower or weaker filters. The affective filter hypothesis claims that these factors are outside the language acquisition device, input is the primary causative variable in language acquisition. An acquirer can obtain a great deal of comprehensible input and still not acquire native-like competence or fossilize due to the affective filter. In relation to writing we reckon that a negative attitude towards writing in general, or the kind of comments and grades given to a learner could negatively impact on his/her development of writing. The vice versa could also be true.

The affective filter hypothesis implies that pedagogical goals should include supplying comprehensible input as well as creating a situation that encourages a low filter. The effective language teacher is one who endeavors to provide comprehensible input in a low anxiety situation. This hypothesis was important to the present study, as it helped explain factors that might hinder acquisition of
writing skills. It was useful in explaining students’ reactions to teacher feedback, to the writing lesson and how these affect their development of writing skills.

2.11 The Process- Genre Approach
This is an approach advocated by Badger and White (2000) out of the recognition that an effective methodology for writing needs to incorporate the insights from product, process and genre approaches. Therefore the process genre approach is a synthesis of the three approaches. The model sees writing as a series of stages leading from a particular situation to a text, with the teachers facilitating learners’ progress by enabling appropriate input of knowledge and skills.

The process genre approach according to Badger & White (2000) is described in terms of a view of writing and a view of the development of writing. Badger & White, (2000) argue that a writing class should recognize the following.

- Writing involves knowledge about language, knowledge about the context in which writing happens and especially the purpose for the writing and skills in using language.
- Writing development happens by drawing out learners’ potential and providing input to which learners respond.

Writing in the process genre approach would have to be concerned with the piece of writing and its purpose, the process by which the writer decides what are the most important aspects to be included in the text and knowledge of appropriate language. With this in mind, in the writing classroom the teacher is encouraged to replicate the situation as closely as possible, provide sufficient support for learners to identify the purpose and other aspects of the social context as well as support in using appropriate language skills.
In a process genre approach class for example, learners could pretend to be estate agents and therefore required to write descriptions of houses for sale. In carrying out this task they have to bear the following in mind:

- The description is meant to sell a house (purpose)
- The description must appeal to a certain group of people-potential buyers (tenor)
- The description must include certain information (field)
- Such descriptions are presented in certain ways (mode)

They should then draw on their linguistic skills, for example, vocabulary, grammar, organization and use appropriate skills, such as, drafting, redrafting and proofreading to produce a description of a house which reflects the situation from which it arises. Badger & White (2000) recognize that different genres require different kinds of knowledge and different sets of skills, and therefore urge teachers to draw on their own knowledge of and skills in particular process genres when teaching.

Development of writing in a process genre approach classroom is said to happen when we draw out the potential of learners as well as provide input to them. It must be recognized though that the development will vary between different groups of learners, because they are at different stages of their writing development, for example, some may be aware of how potential audience may constrain what is written, while another group may lack knowledge of what language is appropriate for a particular audience. Thus these two groups require different input. The teacher is therefore, encouraged to assess the needs of the particular group to determine the kind of input needed. One way of doing this, according to Badger & White (2000) is to ask learners to carry out one element in a process genre and then compare their texts or skills in text production with some expert’s, possibly the teacher’s version. On the basis of the comparison they or the teacher can decide if they need further input of knowledge or skills.
Badger & White (2000) indicate three possible sources of input in a process genre approach classroom: the teacher, the learners and examples of the target genre. The teacher may provide input in terms of instruction on language, learners may do the same in group discussions, and samples may be an important source of input about contextual and linguistic knowledge. From samples of the kind of texts the learners want to write, they may investigate the kind of sentence structures and vocabulary used. Flow charts to illustrate the organization of particular genres can also be used.

Input may also be required about skills needed for writing. This can be achieved from observing other students and the teacher. Teachers may use direct instruction, for instance, by asking learners to think about why they are writing a particular description or story. An alternative is a demonstration by the teacher or other skilled writer possibly accompanied by a commentary on the mental processes that underlie the exercise of the skill, for example brainstorm and explain why they choose to include certain information about a house and leave out some other information. This model was useful in explaining the stages in the writing process that learners go through in their writing.

2.12 Summary
This chapter has two broad parts, namely literature review and theoretical framework. The literature review section presents literature relevant to the study reported in this thesis. Since the study is within the broad area of ESL and SLW, the chapter begins with a historical overview of ESL writing, showing that this area of research began receiving attention from researchers in the 1960s and since then research interests have continued to grow and widen.

The chapter, further, gives a general review of issues studied in SLW. Among these issues are writer’s texts, writing process, participants in the teaching and
learning process and social contexts of writing. The present study focused on the writing process and participants in the teaching and learning of writing. The chapter then goes on to give detailed information on the specific aspects of the pedagogic process that the present study investigated. These are: input, feedback, writing process and students’ reactions to the writing lesson and to the feedback provided by their teachers. A review of studies focusing on these different aspects and their (studies’) relevance to the present study follows.

The study reported in this thesis takes an eclectic approach in its theoretical framework. It uses theories from second language acquisition, and from approaches to the teaching of writing to explain its findings. For this reason, the second section of the present chapter presents a review of some theories in SLA. Among these are the monitor model, the interlanguage theory, and error analysis (cf. 2.6). Different approaches to writing such as controlled composition, current-traditional rhetoric and the process approach are also reviewed (cf. 2.7). The second section of the present chapter concludes with a detailed presentation of the theoretical framework constituted of Ellis’s Theory of Instructed Second Language Acquisition, The Affective Filter Hypothesis, and the Process-Genre approach to the teaching of writing. Tenets of the theory, hypothesis and approach were used in discussing the findings of the study.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction
In the previous chapter a review of literature was done to situate and rationalize the present study in the area of second language writing. This chapter explains the methodology used in conducting the present study. Specifically, the chapter describes the research design, the study area, study population, sampling procedures, data collection and the data analysis procedures used.

3.1 Research Design
The present study is a descriptive survey of the pedagogic process of writing in secondary schools in Kenya. The study included a combination of qualitative and quantitative aspects of research.

A descriptive survey is concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular group or individual. A descriptive research determines and reports the way things are (Kothari, 2004; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The present study sought to describe the pedagogic process of writing in secondary schools by focusing on four aspects, namely, input in the writing lessons, steps in the writing process followed by learners, teacher feedback practices and learner reactions to the writing lessons and to the feedback provided by the teachers, thus making a descriptive approach the most appropriate design.

Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) and Kothari, (2004) further point out that a descriptive research has the following steps.
   i. Formulating objectives
   ii. Designing data collection methods
   iii. Selecting a sample
   iv. Data collection
   v. Data analysis
   vi. Reporting findings
The present study followed the various steps above. In addition, the present study adopted a combination of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. It has been argued that the two paradigms, qualitative and quantitative, only constitute different perspectives on the most appropriate method to adopt for a particular research question (Reichard & Cook, 1979). Chaudron (1988) points out that, for instance, before hypotheses are tested with quantitative methods, they are derived from qualitative conceptual considerations. Chaudron, therefore, concludes that the two paradigms are mutually dependent and can therefore be used in combination.

Qualitative research includes measures, techniques that produce non-statistical data. Such data includes words, symbols, pictures and other non-numerical records (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003; McNabb, 2004). This kind of data is useful for describing, creating understanding for subjective interpretation as well as for critically analyzing the subjects under study. The qualitative approach was useful for this study because its data was largely non-numerical, in form of sentences and observations regarding input in the L2 classes, feedback practices, steps followed in the writing process and learner reactions. This data was critically analysed and interpreted in light of the theoretical framework and reviewed literature.

Quantitative research, on its part, includes techniques and measures that produce numerical data (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). An important aspect of quantitative research is descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics refers to measures or numbers used to summarize and describe data sets. The summary can be captured in tables, charts or graphs. Descriptive statistics includes measures of central tendency (mean, median and mode), measures of variability (standard deviation, the range and interquartile range), measures of relative position (percentiles and standard scores) and measures of correlation (McNabb, 2004). The present study
used descriptive statistics to summarize its data. Specifically, frequencies and percentages of various aspects related to the objectives were worked out (cf 3.6.1).

In summarizing and describing the findings of the present study aspects of descriptive statistics were used. Specifically, frequencies and percentages were used, for example in summarizing the focus of input, focus of teacher feedback and students’ reactions.

3.2 Study Area.
The present study was carried out in public secondary schools in Kiambu district of central province of Kenya. The district has various categories of public secondary schools, namely, national, provincial, district and day secondary schools. The secondary schools teach the 8-4-4 curriculum adopted by the government for the Kenyan education system and the candidates sit the Kenya certificate of secondary education (K.C.S.E) at the end of the four- year secondary school course. The secondary schools in Kiambu district vary in their over all performance in K.C.S.E, ranging from high performers, above average performers, average performers and below average performers. This was a useful criterion for stratifying schools selected for the present study since performance in K.C.S.E was a major motivating factor for current study.

Additionally, the different schools in the district are spread across rural and urban centers, taking care of factors relating to these two different settings that may come to bear on performance. Further, because its proximity to Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, and accessibility the schools in the district are relatively cosmopolitan (have students from different parts of Kenya), although due to the quota system advocated by the government, majority of the students especially in the provincial and district schools are drawn from central province. From a different perspective, living conditions in the district are quite good - favourable
climate, relatively low poverty levels and a stable community. This then reduces the possibility of performance in the national exam being affected by factors beyond the school and the classroom. Performance in K.C.S.E was the major criterion used for sampling schools for study in the present study.

3.3. The Target Population
The targeted population of study was form two students and their teachers of English. Teachers and students are the central participants in the pedagogic process. Teachers are the providers of input and feedback while the learners are the apprentice writers being helped to develop writing skills, hence the target on the two groups.

The secondary school English syllabus is drawn for the four secondary school classes; form one to form four. Form one is the first class in secondary school. Learners at this point have already had exposure to English as a language of instruction (LOI) from class four and as a subject for eight years in primary school. They have also learnt a bit of composition writing. In form one the foundation for more advanced writing is laid. For instance, the concentration in form one is on the mechanics such as handwriting, spelling, punctuation, paragraph writing and simple forms of writing like diaries, informal letters and packing lists. Form two is the middle class of the secondary school. The learners are now fully settled in secondary school and a lot of serious teaching and learning is undertaken. In relation to writing, form two learners are still developing their writing skills and a lot of teacher input is expected and given at this level. Aspects of writing taught at this level include descriptive and narrative essays. By form three and four the learner is expected to demonstrate some level of competence in writing different types of essays. The writing here is more complex and functional such as reports, argumentative essays letters of application for jobs and expository writing (KIE, 2002). Since the present study
was investigating the teaching of narrative writing form two was thought ideal for providing the necessary data.

3.4 Sampling and Sample Size
Two main methods of sampling were used in the present study. The first method of sampling used in the selection of schools for study was stratified random sampling. In stratified sampling the population is divided into two or more groups using a given criterion and then a given number of cases are randomly selected from each population sub-group (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). In line with this, secondary schools in Kiambu district were stratified using the criterion of performance in the K.C.S.E of 2004. Four strata were drawn to represent high performing schools, above average performing schools, average-performing schools and below average performing schools. This was to make the sample as representative as possible of other similarly performing schools in other parts of the country.

The maximum points a school can obtain as a mean score in K.C.S.E is 12 representing grade A. The minimum is 1 representing grade E. In order for a school to be ranked, it must fall within the range of 1-12 (A-E). Schools with irregularities (normally marked Y) are never ranked. The sample was therefore drawn from the ranked schools. High performing schools were taken as the national schools with a mean score of 7 and above. Above average school were taken as those with a mean score of 7 and above but not categorized as national schools. 7 represents grade C+ and this is the minimum grade for admission into the university. Average performing schools were taken as those with a mean score of 7 and above but not categorized as national schools. 7 represents grade C+ and this is the minimum grade for admission into the university. Average performing schools were taken as those with a mean score of between 6-4 (C-D+). Candidates with these grades qualify to join various tertiary colleges including diploma teachers’ colleges and primary teachers’ colleges. Below average performers were taken as those with between 3-1 (D-E).
Central province has six national secondary schools and these are treated as a category on their own in the provincial analysis of KCSE results. Most of them are high performers with mean scores higher than those of the high performing provincial and district schools. Consequently, this study also treated national schools as a separate category.

The sampling frame for the current study was the KCSE examination Analysis-Central Province, 2004. From the sampling frame schools were stratified as indicated above. On the basis of this stratification, schools form Kiambu district were extracted and simple random sampling was used to select eleven (11) schools constituting two (2) national schools (high performers), three (3) above average performing schools, three (3) average performing schools and three (3) below average performing schools. Gay (1981) says that for a descriptive study 10% of the accessible population is enough sample. According to information obtained from the District Education Officer’s (DEO’s) office public secondary schools in Kiambu in 2004 were 105. Thus, 11 schools constitute more than 10% of this population. Besides, the real data dealt with in the study were lessons and essays, and in linguistic studies massive data is not recommended as it can lead to data handling problems (Milroy, 1987). A summary of the selected schools is shown in Table 3.1.
Table 3.1: Categories of Sampled Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of school</th>
<th>School code</th>
<th>Mean score</th>
<th>Total schools per category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National schools (high performers)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10.11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>9.21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above average performers</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>9.32</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
<td>9.09</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I</td>
<td>8.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average performer</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>J</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>G</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below average performers</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total sample</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Having selected the schools using stratified random sampling, cluster sampling was used in selecting form two as the focus of the study. Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) note that cluster sampling involves the selection of an intact group such as a school or class for study. All the members of such an intact group are included in the sample and each member becomes a unit of observation. Secondary schools have streams ranging from one (in small schools) to four (in large schools like the national schools). Sometimes, the different classes in the stream are taught the same subject by different teachers. Therefore, in schools where there was only one form two class it was taken as an intact group. Where a school had more than one form two classes, one of them was randomly picked for observation. Once selected, the writing lessons observed involved the whole class.
Cluster sampling was used to enable get a sample with similar characteristics. For example, a common syllabus is followed in all schools, and students are taken to be at the same level of proficiency.

A total of two (2) double lessons were observed and tape-recorded in each of the eleven schools. This added up to 22 double lessons. A double lesson in secondary schools takes 80 minutes. Double lessons were selected to allow time for teachers’ instruction and for learners’ essay writing. The first double lesson was considered the input lesson. The first composition (Composition1) on the topic “A win at the National Schools’ Drama Festival” was written within this lesson. The second double lesson, which took place two to three weeks after the first was considered the feedback lesson. The two weeks were to allow teachers time to mark the first essays and prepare the feedback lesson. It was felt that the feedback provided, especially on cross-cutting issues of writing such as organization, cohesion and sentence skills, and on aspects of narratives such as developing the plot and characters, would help the learner in their next writing task, even though on a different topic. The second essay, on the topic “You were traveling on a bus that got involved in accident. You lost someone close to your heart. Narrate the happenings of this fateful day” was written within the second lesson. The topics for the essays were given to the teacher by the researcher. The teacher marked each of the two compositions for all the students in the class.

Though generally the observations in the classrooms involved all the students, further sampling among them was done for a close monitoring of the steps followed by learners in the writing process. Students were selected using stratified random sampling. The students were stratified into above average, average and below average performers based on their performance in the English exam done at the end of the previous term. Performance in English was used because it was felt that this would better reflect learner performance in composition writing.
In writing, learners also make use of other aspects of language such as grammar and therefore there is a connection between performance in a general English exam and in writing which was the main concern of this study, compared to overall performance. The teachers were asked to provide these marks, which were then used as the sampling frame. Five students were selected for each stratum making a total of fifteen (15) per class and 165 for the eleven schools. The 15 students were observed for steps followed in the writing process, and they were also the respondents to the questionnaire. Additionally, their essays were part of data analysed for teacher feedback practices. The students did not know they had been sampled until the very end when they were called upon to fill the questionnaire.

As noted above, all the learners in the classes under study wrote two essays each that were marked and returned by their teachers. After the essays had been marked, the teacher was asked to make photocopies of essays belonging to the 15 sampled students and hand them over to the researcher. The originals were returned to the respective students together with the rest. A total of 30 essays per class and 330 for the eleven schools were therefore sampled for analysis. In addition, the eleven teachers in the eleven schools were also interviewed. In summary the study sample was as follows.

Table 3.2: Sample Sizes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample category</th>
<th>Number per school</th>
<th>Total sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double lessons</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essays</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5 Data collection

Data collection for the current study encompassed triangulation. Triangulation involves collecting data using different methods as well as analyzing the data from different perspectives (Ferris, 2003; Hyland, 2006). Triangulation allows for a more comprehensive base for conclusions drawn from the data. A triangulation of data collection methods was employed in the present study. For example, information on input in the writing lessons was gathered by tape-recording as well as observations. Data on feedback practices was gathered by tape-recording of feedback lesson as well as by document analysis of learners’ marked essays. Additional information was got from teacher interviews. The data collection tools and procedures used in the present study were tape-recording, observations, questionnaires, interviews and document analysis. In the following sections information on these data collection procedures and instruments is presented.

3.5.1 Tape-recording

Van Lier (1988) observes that recording in a classroom is very important since many things go on at the same time and in rapid succession. Recording, in Lier’s view helps achieve objectivity, as it is an estrangement device that can mediate between the selectivity and subjectivity inherent in all on-the-spot observing and the demand for detachment necessary in research. According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) tape-recording has several advantages. For a start, it reduces the tendency to choose what to record or leave out as it captures everything. It captures a great amount of detail that could be left out when only note-taking. In addition, the recorded information can be replayed and examined many times, and the information can be analysed and evaluated by another person. Thus the reliability of the data can easily be established. Tape-recording also speeds up the interviewing and ensures a smooth-flow of communication. The interview need not be interrupted to note down some points.
A major disadvantage of tape-recording is the much time and energy required to transcribe and analyze the information. Despite this disadvantage, very informative data for the present study was collected via tape-recording. Tape-recording was done of the lessons as well as of the interviews. Both the input lesson and the feedback lessons were tape-recorded. The recording was openly done as the participants (teachers and learners) had been informed that this would be done. In both lessons the recorder was placed near the teacher as teacher input was the main concern of the present study. The tape-recorded lessons provided data for the first objective of the study, which was to describe the input provided in the writing lesson. The recordings of the feedback lessons provided information on teacher feedback practices, while recordings of the interviews provided support information for different objectives of the study.

3.5.2 Observation

Additional information on the lessons, such as the classroom activities and materials and resources utilized, was gathered via observations. Observations were also made on the steps in the writing process that learners follow. This was the concern of the second objective of the present study.

According to Kothari (2004), under the observation method of data collection, information is sought by way of direct observation without asking the respondents. The method is said to have several advantages and disadvantages. Kothari (2004) argues that accurately done observations enable the researcher to gather current information without the complications of past behaviour, future intentions or attitudes. Secondly, the method does not rely on the respondent’s willingness to supply information and can therefore be used to verify the truth of statements made by informants in questionnaires or interviews.
Among the disadvantages of the observation method is that it provides limited information, it may be expensive especially for studies involving large samples, and unforeseen factors may interfere with the observation task. Therefore, Kothari (2004) warns that a researcher who uses this method must be clear on what is to be observed, how it is to be observed and how the accuracy of the observation is to be ensured.

Kothari (2004) further points out that observation has been categorized in different ways, namely, structured versus unstructured observation, participant versus non-participant versus disguised observation and controlled versus uncontrolled observation.

A structured observation is one characterized by a careful definition of the units for observation, style of recording the observed data, standardized conditions of observation and the choice of important data for observation. This kind of observation is useful in descriptive studies. Unstructured observation does not possess the characteristics above and is more appropriate for exploratory studies. The present study made use of both structured and unstructured observations. A structured observation, using an observation schedule was used to gather information on the steps in the writing process followed by learners and the sources of input used in the classes under study. Unstructured observations were made on other aspects like participation in the lessons, utilization of feedback and what learners did with the marked essays. The combined use of both structured and unstructured observations was in line with the triangulation employed for this study, to enable gather as much data as possible and from different perspectives.

Participant observation involves the researcher taking a regular part in the activities he/she is studying, while non-participant observation sets the researcher outside the events being observed. The researcher does not take part in the
activities being observed or even pretend to be part of the group being studied. Disguised observation happens when the presence of the observer is unknown to the subjects under observation. The study reported here made use of non-participant observation. The researcher did not participate in the lessons but rather observed and recorded the happenings in the classes using an observation schedule (Appendix 7) and observation notes. This study adopted the descriptive survey design and the goal of the researcher was to describe things, as they are in the population under study hence the use of non-participant observation.

Uncontrolled observation takes place in the natural setting. In this type of observation precision instruments are not used, instead the aim is to get spontaneous behaviour of a person or group of people. This kind of observation can however lead to subjective interpretation of behaviour and is useful for exploratory studies (Kothari, 2004). Controlled observation on the other hand uses precision instruments to aid accuracy and standardization. This method is useful in experimental studies carried out in laboratories under controlled conditions. These two types of observations were not used in the present study.

3.5.3 Questionnaires.
Questionnaires were used to gather additional information on teacher feedback practices as well as on students’ reactions to the writing lessons and to the feedback provided by their teachers (see chapter 6)

According to McNabb (2004) questionnaires are the most popular way of gathering primary data on questions about attitudes, opinions and motivations. McNabb reckons that questionnaires are very appropriate for descriptive research. Questionnaires have both positive and negative aspects. Among the positives is that they can be customized to meet the objectives of any type of research, they can be designed for different groups of respondents and respondents’ answers are relatively easy to code and tabulate. A major negative of questionnaires,
especially those associated with self-report measures is reliability problems. Hedgcock & Lefkowitz (1994) note that some factors such as respondents’ level of understanding of question items, respondents’ accuracy in reporting their own beliefs and behaviours, willingness to supply all the information desired and frankness cannot be controlled or detected through analysis of questionnaire items. Nevertheless, questionnaires are a highly informative tool.

In the present study, a 35-item questionnaire was administered. The questionnaire consisted of 23 closed or structured questions and 12 open-ended questions (see appendix 5). The questionnaire items sought students’ views on various aspects related to the objectives of the study, such as the students’ judgments of the vocabulary used in their writing lessons, teacher feedback practices, students’ understanding and utilization of provided feedback, their preferences for feedback and the steps in the writing process that they follow. The open-ended questions mainly required students to give reasons for certain answers chosen for the structured questions. For example, to explain why they felt their writing lessons were interesting or not interesting. Other questions sought students, opinions on ways of improving teaching and provision of feedback for writing.

The questionnaires were administered to the 15 sampled students in each of the classes under study. This was done in every school after the feedback lesson had been done and the second essay written. At this point, the 15 sampled students were separated from the rest of the class and given time to respond to the questionnaires. The researcher then collected all answered questionnaires. This way, non-response was minimized. However, not all the 165 sampled students filled in the questionnaires because in some schools some of the sampled students were absent on the day the task was done for various reasons. A total of 151 students filled in the questionnaires.
Questionnaires were found appropriate for the present study because it was possible to design questions targeting specific aspects related to the objectives of the study. Additionally, questionnaires were most appropriate for the large group of students being dealt with in the study.

3.5.4 Interviews
In the present study interviews were conducted with the eleven teachers of English for the classes under study. The interviews sought information on the teachers’ views on the focus of their teaching of writing, the focus of their feedback, their training and how to improve the teaching of writing. Generally, the interviews provided additional information cutting across the different objectives of the present study.

Interviews involve a presentation of oral-verbal questions and responses in form of oral–verbal replies (Kothari, 2004). Interviews can be personal, conducted face-to-face, or telephone interviews. Interviews can also be structured or unstructured. Structured interviews use predetermined questions (interview schedules) and highly standardized techniques of recording. The interviewer asks questions in a form and order already prescribed. Unstructured interviews are more open-ended with no set questions or order in which to ask them (Kothari, 2004).

Structured interviews are useful for descriptive studies because they are more economical hence provide a safe basis for generalizations. Additionally, they require relatively lesser skill on the part of the interviewer according to Kothari (2004). The present study made use of a structured interview schedule, though, in conducting the interview, flexibility was allowed. Questions, for example, were not asked in the exact order or format in which they appeared on the schedule. The interviewer was also free to probe and seek additional information related to the pedagogic process. This is an aspect of triangulation.
Like all other data gathering instruments, interviews have got their advantages and disadvantages. In an interview more detailed information can be obtained via probing questions. Secondly, a skilful interviewer can easily overcome respondent resistance and go on to gather very important and useful information. Thirdly, compared to questionnaires, interviews are more flexible when it comes to on-the-spot restructuring to help the respondent understand the question. It is possible to restructure the questions in the course of the interview especially when using unstructured interviews. The language of the questions can also be adapted to the ability and education level of interviewees limiting misinterpretation of questions. In addition, it is highly likely to obtain spontaneous reactions from respondents in interview situations. Supplementary information about the interviewee’s personal characteristics and environment, useful in the interpretation of results, can also be easily collected.

Among the disadvantages of the interview method is that interviews can be expensive especially for large and widely spread samples. Inadequate data may be gathered where respondents are not easily approachable. A third disadvantage is that respondents may get excited and give imaginary information just to make the interview interesting. Further, the necessary rapport between respondents and interviewees to facilitate free and frank responses is not always achievable. Even with these hurdles though, interviews have been successfully used as data collection tools.

3.5.5 Document analysis/ Library research
McNabb, (2004) records that texts, documents and artifacts can provide data for research. Included in these broad sources of data are written texts, such as books, periodicals, reports, pamphlets and other published materials including mass
media. Research using these sources is referred to as library based research or desk research (McNabb, 2004). Documents are said to be a valuable source for cross-checking data from other sources such as interviews. This, in turn improves validity though triangulation. Therefore, in addition to gathering data using the tools above (cf 3.5.1-3.5.4), a document analysis of learner marked essays, the secondary school syllabus, KNEC examination reports, approved English course books for form two, diploma teacher education syllabus and course outlines from universities was done for the present study.

As noted earlier (cf, 3.4) teachers marked two essays for all the students in the classes under study. After marking, essays belonging to the 15 sampled students in each class were photocopied and given to the researcher. These are the essays that were examined for teacher feedback practices including methods of highlighting and the kind of comments made.

The secondary school syllabus was examined for areas of writing that are supposed to be taught in form two, the guidance it gives to teachers for responding to learner writing, and guidance on the use of materials, resources and classroom activities. These are key factors in the pedagogic process of writing, which was the central concern of the present study. In addition, the six approved English course books (cf 1.2) were checked for the information they provide on the teaching of writing and how it is presented. This was after it was established that the course book was a common source of input in the writing lesson. And that both teachers and students felt it was not adequate (cf, 6.2.3).

The diploma teacher education syllabus and the course outlines of courses touching on writing from universities were referred to for the content of writing covered, guidelines to responding to student writing that they set out to equip the pre-service teachers with, and the teaching methodology that they teach. This
followed the indication by the teachers interviewed in the present study that they did not feel adequately prepared for the teaching of writing. Two KNEC examination reports provided the data on performance in the KCSE English examination. This data formed a part of the background motivation for the present study. It is also from these reports that the marking guide (Appendix 9) for the writing paper was extracted. Expectations of the examination council have a bearing on the classroom practices. The information gathered from the syllabuses, the reports and the course books was useful as additional information for some of the conclusions and implications of the present study.

3.6 Data Analysis
Data analysis for the present study was both qualitative and quantitative. The data for the study was largely qualitative, but was summarized and described using quantitative descriptive statistics. Qualitative data is non-numerical in the form of words and expressions (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003) According to McNabb (2004) qualitative data can be written texts, transcripts of conversations or interviews, tape recordings and field notes. The present study had this kind of data. Thus, qualitative analysis was done of the tape-recorded lessons, interviews, observations and questionnaires.

In addition, content analysis was employed in the analysis of learners’ marked essays and other documents including the syllabuses, course books, and KNEC K.C.S.E reports. Kothari (2004) says that content analysis involves analyzing the contents of documentary materials such as books, magazines, transcripts of recordings and field notes. McNabb (2004) adds that content analysis involves any techniques for making inferences about one or more variables (constructs that refer to broader complex issues of behaviour or attitude) by objectively and systematically identifying specific characteristics of messages. The present study aimed at making inferences about the pedagogic process of writing by focusing on the input provided in the writing lesson, steps in the writing process followed by
learners, teacher feedback practices and learners’ reactions to the writing lessons and to the feedback provided by their teachers. Information from the listed documents was useful for achieving this goal.

The analysis was to uncover relevant details for the description of the input in the writing lessons, explain the steps in the writing process followed by learners, explain teacher feedback practices as well as learner reactions to the writing lessons and to the feedback provided by their teachers.

3.6.1 Statistical Computations
Along with the qualitative analysis, aspects of descriptive statistics (quantitative analysis), such as, frequencies and percentages were employed in order to summarize the findings from the data. The percentages relating to various aspects of the data were worked out using the following general formula:

\[ \text{Percentage} = \frac{X}{N} \times 100 \]

Where:
\( X \) = the number of subjects exhibiting a certain feature under scrutiny.
\( N \) = the total number of subjects in the whole group.

Percentages computed using the formula related to number of teachers, number of students and number of comments for feedback. The value of \( N \) varied for these different groups as shown in table 3.3.
Table 3.3: Value of N for various groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Value of N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students under observation in lesson 1</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students under observation in Lesson 2</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who responded to questionnaire questions 1-29</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who responded to questionnaire questions 30-35</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of comments in composition 1</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of comments in composition 2</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Therefore, for example, where the number of teachers found to focus on content in the input lesson was seven (7), the percentage was worked out as follows using the above formula:

\[
\frac{7 \times 100}{11} = 63.64\% 
\]

Frequencies were used to summarize questionnaire responses to the open-ended questions such as those asking for suggestions and reasons (see appendix 5: questions 27-29). In this case the cumulative frequency of a certain response was worked out and used in reporting the findings. For example, the need for more practice in writing compositions as a way of improving the teaching of writing had a cumulative frequency of 69 (see table 6.7). Following next is a detailed presentation of data analysis.

3.6.2 Analysis of tape-recorded lessons

1. Input lessons

The tape-recorded lessons were first of all transcribed. From the input lessons, two categories of information were looked for.

- The main focus of the lesson. This could be discerned from the introduction of the lesson and the general content of the lesson. The main focus was generally found to be narrative writing also referred to as imaginative writing.
- The specific details given in the lesson. These covered the content of the lesson.
Further the specific details were summarized and categorized as per the eight important aspects of writing, namely content, general organization, organization and development of a narrative, coherence, style, creativity, grammar and mechanics (cf 4.2). This was to determine the area of focus in the input lessons, depending on the number of teachers focusing on a certain area. This number was counted and a percentage out of eleven worked out.

Finally, a summary was done of the details on each of the important aspects of writing for all the lessons. The summary revealed that teacher input contains information touching on all the important areas of writing.

Interpretation and inferences relating to the kind of input provided in the writing lessons were made from this analysis alongside that of observations made on classroom activities and sources of input used in the lessons.

2. Feedback lessons

Unlike the input lessons three categories of information were analysed from the transcribed feedback lessons:

- The main focus of the lessons. It was established that these lessons focused on weaknesses found in the marked learners’ essays.
- The specific details of the lessons. The content of the feedback lessons was summarized to reveal the extent to which the feedback focused on the important areas of writing.
- The advice or suggestions for improvement given to learners with regard to the observations made during the marking. This was captured in the conclusions to the feedback lessons. Generally,
teachers advised learners to look into the marked essays and effect the necessary corrections.

The findings from these lessons along with those from the marked learners’ essays informed the discussion of teacher feedback practices.

3.6.3 Analysis of observation data
Observation data in the present study covered the classroom activities used in the writing lessons, sources of input or resources and materials used, and steps in the writing process followed by learners. The classroom activities and sources of input found to be in use were tabulated. The number of teachers using each was enumerated and percentages worked out. Teacher lecture was found to be the most common classroom activity. It was used by 100% of the teachers. Teachers’ notes were also found to be used by 100% of the teachers. These observations added onto the description of the input provided in the writing lessons.

Observations on the steps in the writing process followed by learners were made as the learners wrote both the first and the second compositions. The focus was on the 15 sampled students in each class. The researcher ticked on a schedule (Appendix 7) the steps the learners followed. From the schedules the number of learners observed to undertake a particular step was counted and percentages computed. The information generated from this analysis went into the discussion of the second objective of the present study.

3.6.4 Analysis of data from marked learners’ essays
From the marked essays the following categories of information were extracted.
- Method of highlighting problem areas in the essays used by the teacher such as circling or underlining plus other correction symbols used.
- The grading strategy used such as giving a mark or a grade
- Comments made per essay. These were extracted and divided into marginal or summative comments.

The comments were further sub-categorized according to form such as questions or statements, pointing out weaknesses or strengths. The total number of comments in each of the subcategories was then worked out. Additionally, the comments were also sub-categorized according to their focus on the eight important aspects of writing (cf 4.2). The information from the analysis of marked learners’ essays aided the discussion of teacher feedback practices.

### 3.6.5 Analysis of data from questionnaires

The questionnaire, though not distinctly labeled, had two broad parts. One part focused on learners’ views on the writing lesson and on the feedback provided by their teachers. The other part focused on learners’ views on the steps in the writing process that they follow. The questionnaire contained both closed and open-ended questions. Frequencies for all the closed questions were tallied and percentages of students choosing particular responses computed. Relevant responses to the open-ended questions were extracted and their frequencies recorded. Such questions included suggestions on how to improve the teaching of writing and the provision of feedback.

The data from the questionnaires informed the objective on learners’ reactions to the writing lessons and to the feedback.
3.6.6 Analysis of data from interviews
The interviews with the teachers provided additional information useful for the discussion of the input provided in the writing lessons, the feedback practices as well as general factors affecting the pedagogic process of writing. Responses to each question in the schedule were extracted from the transcribed interviews and summarized. They were then used, where relevant in the discussion of the findings.

3.7 Ethical Considerations
Any research, especially one involving human subjects is liable to forces emanating from the ethical environment. Therefore, research ethics is a critical part of any research. McNabb, (2004:55) defines research ethics as the application of moral standards to decisions made in planning, conducting and reporting the results of research studies. Research ethics should apply at four stages of research, according to McNabb, (2004). These four stages are: the planning stage, data gathering stage, the processing and interpretation of data stage and the dissemination of the research results stage.

At the first stage, ethical considerations demand that only participants who know why they are volunteering to participate in the research should be selected. The participants should make an informed consent. The informed consent encompasses voluntary consent, knowledgeable consent and freedom from harm. This means that the participant should know that their consent to participate in the research should be voluntary and free and not through coercion and that the consent can be withdrawn with no consequences at all. With regard to knowledgeable consent, it is imperative that the participants be made aware of any risks and or benefits that may emanate from participating in the research study. The participants should also be protected from any physical, cultural social or
even psychological harm. It is therefore the duty of the researcher to make sure that the participants in the research make an informed consent.

At the data gathering stage, ethical considerations require honesty to be maintained when observing behaviour, conducting interviews or surveys. The researcher here can demonstrate honesty by being very clear on how procedures like interviewing will be carried out. Bias on the part of the interviewer or in the wording of questions, for example, designed to produce a certain response should be avoided.

Ethics in the processing and interpreting data requires honesty in the interpretations made from the data. Any conclusions made should emanate from the data. The data should not be used to provide credence to some pre-established conclusions. Finally, ethics in disseminating research results requires that three participant ethical issues be put in mind. These are protecting the privacy of participants, ensuring the anonymity of participants and respecting the confidentiality of individuals involved in the research. Privacy means ensuring that participants’ identity cannot be deciphered from the findings. Anonymity is related to privacy. It can be achieved by giving descriptions that focus on group characteristics, but not individually except in interpretive studies that focus on a single case. Confidentiality means that no one else other than the primary researcher should know the sample members’ names and addresses. Ethics in the dissemination of research results also requires that researchers should not report incomplete research results; issue misleading reports or biased reports.

In line with these ethical requirements a number of measures were taken as part of ethical considerations for the study reported in this thesis. To
start with, a research permit (appendix 10) was obtained from the Ministry of Education. When applying for the permit a copy of the research proposal complete with an abstract detailing the nature and purpose of the research, (to write a doctoral dissertation), was given to officials at the ministry. The permit so obtained allowed the researcher to visit and conduct research in secondary schools but not before obtaining consent from the District Education Officer (DEO). Coupled with the research permit was a letter of introduction (appendix 11) from the University.

In the district, permission was sought from the District Education Officer. Copies of the research permit and the letter of introduction were given to him and the nature and purpose of the study explained. The DEO granted permission and signed his endorsement on a copy of the letter of introduction (appendix 11). Copies of the letter with the DEO’s endorsement plus the those of the research permit were given to head teachers in all the sampled schools, as permission to conduct research in their schools was sought. The head teachers then introduced the researcher to the teachers of English who in turn introduced the researcher to the students. Before, any data could be collected, the nature and purpose of the study was explained to the teachers and students and their consent to participate in the study sought. Two consent forms shown in Appendix 12 and Appendix 13 had been designed for this purpose. At this point, the researcher also explained that no financial or material benefits would accrue from participating in the research. Instead, benefits would be in as far as the findings of the study would help in improving the teaching of writing in secondary schools. The teachers and other interested parties would be able to access the results of the study from the ministry of education where copies of the research report would be deposited. The results could also be accessed from the University library.
During data gathering, ethical concerns were taken care of by the following measures: The participants (teachers and students) were made aware that the lessons and interviews were being tape-recorded. The tape-recorder was placed near the teacher both in the lessons and the interviews. Secondly, observations were done openly and observation schedules marked as the lesson and writing was going on. In conducting the observations, interviews and administering questionnaires, due honesty was exercised. The interviewer limited him/herself to the questions pertaining to the study as outlined in the interview schedule (appendix 6) and questionnaire (appendix 5). Additionally, the interviews were conducted in a private place with only the teacher (interviewee) and the researcher (interviewer). This ensured some privacy and confidentiality during data gathering. The sampled students also filled in the questionnaires privately. Before filling in the questionnaires the researcher explained their purpose and asked the students to be as honest as possible. The researcher would then be at hand to explain any questions that the students raised. Where students did not voluntarily give information to certain questions they were not coerced to do so.

In the analysis and dissemination of results a number of measures were taken to ensure privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. First of all, the names of the schools in the sample, and the names of teachers were not used. Instead schools were coded A-K randomly, then the teachers were correspondingly coded, such that Teacher A, belongs to School A. The students, on the other hand, were coded as S1 to S15. In filling in the questionnaires, students were only required to fill in the name of their school but not their own names. Sample essays used in the analysis of teacher feedback practices had the names of students erased to ensure anonymity.
Generally, the discussion of the findings is based on the trends that emerged from the data and not from any preconceived ideas. The researcher did not know the participants and this also helped to reduce bias.

3.8 Summary
In this chapter details on the research design and the methodology used in the present study are presented. The present study adopted a descriptive survey design with a combination of qualitative and quantitative research aspects. Further, the chapter describes the stratified sampling and cluster sampling methods used in the study reported in this thesis. The chapter also describes the process of collecting data, noting that triangulation of methods was done with different tools and procedures such as tape-recording, questionnaires, observations, interviews and document analysis being used. Additionally, the chapter records details on data analysis noting that qualitative analysis and content analysis methods were employed to the corpora. The data was summarized and described using qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques such as frequencies and percentages. A more in-depth analysis of the findings and corresponding discussions touching on the specific objectives of the study are presented in the following three chapters.
CHAPTER FOUR
INPUT IN THE WRITING LESSONS

4.0 Introduction.
This chapter presents the findings and discussions on two objectives of the present study. The first part focuses on the input for writing provided by teachers in the writing lessons. Among issues discussed in relation to input is its focus on important features of writing and the classroom activities, resources and materials used in the provision of the input. The second part of the chapter focuses on an analysis of the steps in the writing process followed by learners in the classes under study.

4.1 Input
According to Byrne (1990) people grow up learning to speak. They appear to speak without much conscious effort or thought, and they talk because they want to, about matters of interest or relevance to them socially or professionally. Writing, on the other hand, is something that more often than not is imposed on people, and it is learned through a process of instruction, causing a cognitive challenge. One has to learn the written form of language, learn certain structures important for effective communication in writing, and learn to organize ideas in a way that they can be understood by a reader, who is not present at the time of writing, and is not known to the writer. The fact that one needs to learn various things with regard to writing makes the pedagogic process, very significant. The study reported in this thesis sought to investigate the pedagogic process of ESL writing and its implication for the development of writing skills.

The significance of the pedagogic process is further underscored by the various challenges that a writer faces. Byrne (1990), further, points out that writing causes psychological and linguistic problems to the writer. Psychologically, writing is a solitary activity. The writer is a lone figure without the possibility of interaction or the benefit of feedback because the reader is not physically present with the writer. At the linguistic level, writing places a lot more demands on the writer
than speech on the speaker. Because of the spontaneity of speech, little attention is paid to sentence structure, organization or sentence connection. Repetitions, false starts, backtracking are all allowed in speech. Incomplete and even ungrammatical utterances often pass unnoticed in speech. The case is different when it comes to writing. The writer does not have the benefit of a present audience, paralinguistic features or extra linguistic cues that the speaker has at his/her disposal. The writer must therefore keep the channel of communication open through his/her own effort. He/she has to ensure that his/her choice of words, sentence structures, sentence organization and connections work together to produce a text that can be interpreted on its own.

In view of all these challenges, input provided to apprentice writers is very important. Thus, the first objective of the present study was to describe the input teachers provide to learners with regard to composition writing. The major source of data for this objective was writing lessons. The teachers had been asked to prepare lessons on narrative writing. Additional information was gathered by observations, interviews with the teachers of writing in the classes under study as well as from student questionnaires (see chapter 3 for details).

The Oxford Advanced Learners’ dictionary defines input as the time, knowledge and ideas that are put into work or a project in order to make it successful. Keh (1990) defines input as anything that helps students get ideas for writing. As such, input could include ideas related to the writing process itself (pre-writing, drafting, revising and editing) and important aspects of different forms of writing such as how to achieve cohesion, paragraph development, or development of conflict in a narrative. Borrowing from these two definitions, input in this study is taken to mean any knowledge or ideas that are provided to learners to help them to develop their writing skills. In describing the input the following three important questions were focused on.
4.1.1 Type of Instruction.

According to Ellis (1994) the type of instruction determines the kind of input in a classroom setting. Thus, before embarking on a description of input, the type of instruction prevalent in the classes under study had to be established. Ellis (1994) goes on to identify two types of instruction that determine the kind of input in a classroom setting. These are: code-oriented instruction and communicative oriented instruction. Code-oriented instruction aims at teaching specific linguistic aspects, for example, the structure of a narrative. Communicative oriented instruction, on the other hand, is aimed at providing learners with opportunities to communicate naturally, for example, writing a story for the school magazine. The characteristics of input in the two types of instruction differ in relation to the frequency and salience of certain features, and provision of explicit rules. Input in code-oriented instruction will reflect the aspect being focused on. For a start, this aspect can be made artificially frequent in the input for the period of time devoted to it. Additionally, the salience of the feature being focused on can also be increased by the teacher’s treatment of learner errors relating to the feature. On its part, communicative oriented instruction does not allow easy manipulation of input to focus on specific items, make them more frequent or salient. Instead the
features present in the input are a product of the language the participants in the
task choose to complete it.

Another difference in the characteristics of input provided in the two types of
instruction is in the provision of explicit rules. Explicit rules are more likely to be
provided in code-oriented instruction. Explicitness refers to the extent to which
the teacher makes use of linguistic metalanguage. The teacher can simply hint
with the help of an example or provide a complete statement of the rule Ellis,
(1994).

Data from the classrooms under observation in the present study indicate that the
type of instruction most prevalent in the writing lesson was code-oriented
instruction, although instances of communicative oriented instruction could be
identified. An analysis of the input lessons revealed that the lessons concentrated
on aspects of writing in general and narrative writing in specific. This conforms to
the tendency of code-oriented instruction to give salience to the aspect being
focused on at a particular point in time.

Secondly, in all the lessons, explicit rules on writing and important features of a
narrative were relayed to the students. In the tape-recorded lessons, for example,
teachers impressed upon the students the importance of planning their stories. In
planning, students were advised to draw an outline with three important parts,
namely, introduction, body and conclusion. The teachers went on to explain what
makes up each of these parts of an essay. In addition, teachers explicitly explained
important aspects of a narrative, such as plot, conflict, characters, setting,
language and style, and creativity or imagination. The code-oriented instruction
was also reflected in the classroom activities used (see lessons 1, 2, 3 tables 4.1-
4.3). It was found that the most common activity that was used was teacher
lecture used by 100% of the teachers (Table 4.7).
Activities such as group discussions and role-plays that render themselves to communicative-oriented instruction were minimally used. Group discussions, for example, were only used by one teacher, which constitutes only 9.9%, while whole class discussions were used by 4 (36.36%) of the teachers (Table 4.7). Ellis, (1994) says that it is possible to design communicative activities such as group work and role-plays to focus on certain aspects of interest in the lesson. For example, in the teaching of narrative writing, learners in groups or pairs could be asked to discuss the important features of a narrative and probably identify them from a given sample story. This makes learning more interactive, realistic and enjoyable. These are aspects that aid acquisition. Lessons 1 –4 (see full transcripts in Appendix 3), show the salience given to aspects of writing and aspects of narrative writing. They also illustrate the explicit information on writing given in the writing lesson. Additionally, they indicate the classroom activities and sources of input used in the writing lessons.
Table 4.1 Summary of input Lesson 1:School J

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom activities</th>
<th>Source of explanations and materials or resources.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic</strong>: writing: narrative writing</td>
<td>Teacher lecture with teacher questions and students’ answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of narrative: A story</td>
<td>Tom and Teacher notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be asked to imagine something and write a story</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Important points to remember when writing</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title or topic or heading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plan or outline: the plan has an introduction, body and conclusion.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It should be appropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is the first paragraph</td>
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<tr>
<td>Should be brief; 2-3 sentences</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should capture the interest of your readers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carries the composition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can have 2-4 paragraphs depending on the ideas that your story has</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Each paragraph carries a main idea. The main idea should be introduced by the first sentence in the paragraph. Other sentences build on the main idea</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should be one paragraph</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should be short because it is just summing up the story</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major points to have at the back of mind when writing a story</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid subject, scenes or actions you are not familiar with</td>
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<tr>
<td>Think of convincing experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>The sequence of events should be coherent. One idea should lead to the next. This creates a smooth flow.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Include an element of suspense to create interest in your story</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vary the pace of your story. Use different types of sentences; alternate simple, compound and complex sentences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Your composition needs to have a good general impression. This is achieved by: appropriate subject choice, proper organization, and the kind of language used.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>● We will now give you a topic to write on.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In this lesson (Table 4.1: School J), the teacher dedicates a good part of the lesson to writing in general. This teacher emphasizes the importance of planning for writing and goes on to explain important points relating to the three organizational parts of a piece of writing, namely, introduction, body and conclusion. She notes, for example, that the introduction should capture the readers’ interests while the conclusion should sum up the story. Secondly, the teacher dedicates time to talk
about some important points to note when writing a narrative, for example, the need to use convincing experiences. This giving of salience to a certain aspect being focused on, such as planning for writing is an aspect of code-oriented instruction. The teacher uses only teacher lecture with questions to students method of delivery. No communicative activity is utilized in this lesson.

### Table 4.2: Summary of input Lesson 2: School B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Classroom activities</th>
<th>Source of explanations and materials or resources.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic: Imaginative Compositions</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Parts of a composition</strong>&lt;br&gt;Title: Should be at the top of the page. Should be underlined&lt;br&gt;Introduction: Introduces characters and setting of the story&lt;br&gt;Not labeled introduction. The language used shows that it is the introduction&lt;br&gt;Body: Has several paragraphs because that is where we tell the story&lt;br&gt;Conclusion</td>
<td>Teacher lecture with teacher questions and students, answers&lt;br&gt;Looking at pictures and brainstorming on adjectives to describe feelings after a win.</td>
<td>Teacher and teacher notes. Pictures from newspapers, of people engaged in various competitive events, such as sports and dance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body</th>
<th>Important parts of a story that come out in the main body</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characters&lt;br&gt;Setting: where the story is taking place e.g. school, roadside. The setting could change e.g. begin from school, travel to Nairobi, from Nairobi to Mombasa.&lt;br&gt;Conflict: the problem or issue at hand that the characters are solving. It influences the activities of the characters.&lt;br&gt;Why this writing is called Imaginative?&lt;br&gt;You write about something you are not. For example can be asked to imagine you are a bird, a market woman or a</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>


deputy principal of your school. 

Imagination is influenced by our experiences. When we write about something for which we have no experience we are very limited. Looking at pictures on various competitive activities. Think of one or two words to describe what the people in the pictures feel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Each of the pictures is a story in itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The pictures help you to imagine of a situation where you have won.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- We are going to write a composition about a win at the National Drama Festivals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher B (Table 4.2) also dedicates time to important organizational parts of a composition. She notes that a composition should have a title, an introduction, body and conclusion. On narrative writing, this teacher gives salience to three aspects, namely, characters, setting and the conflict. Giving salience to specific aspects of concern is a feature of code-oriented instruction. But, unlike teacher J, Teacher B uses pictures as part of her teaching materials. Learners are asked to look at pictures of people engaged in various competitive activities and to think of adjectives to describe feelings after winning. This is a pre-writing activity, to prepare the learners to write on the topic “A win at the National Schools’ drama festivals.” This introduces an aspect of communicative instruction as opposed to the purely code-oriented instruction employed in school J.
### Table 4.3: Summary of input Lesson 3: School E

| Introduction | Topic: Narrative Writing. | Classroom activities | Source of explanations and materials or resources.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In this kind of writing you tell a story depending on the topic given.</td>
<td>Teacher lecture with teacher questions and students, answers</td>
<td>Teacher and teacher notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Calls for creativity in order to capture readers’ interest.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body</th>
<th>Steps involved in writing a story</th>
<th>Teacher lecture with teacher questions and students, answers</th>
<th>Teacher and teacher notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You are presented with a situation to write about.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Plan for the story.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Focus on the topic. The topic will guide you to get a theme.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You must have a title. You must have a plot: how the story will begin and end-the flow of your narrative.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You need characters. These are participants in the story.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have few characters so that you develop them well within a limited time.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Use creative language such as flashbacks, dialogue, imagery, similes, metaphors, and repetition.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You need to be original in your writing. This means you do not use someone else’s ideas like reproducing a story read from a book, or reproducing a movie you have watched.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Your events must be real and convincing. Real means something that is ordinary, understood and acceptable in your environment.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To achieve reality the events must be logical. Events must follow in an orderly manner.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Your story should appeal to reader’s emotions. It should be interesting. To achieve this use imagery, hyperbole, proverbs, suspense, and dialogue to avoid monotony of continuous prose.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Layout       | Must have a title. The title must be relevant to the story. |                                                  |                          |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------|                                                  |                          |
|              | Introduction. This should be the                          |                                                  |                          |
first paragraph. Your introduction should be strong to capture interest of the reader. Introduce the conflict

- Body: has several paragraphs
  - Here is where you tell the story
  - Should be logical so that there is an advancement of the story
  - Use connectors to show steps from one paragraph to the next
- Conclusion: the end

**An example: Writing about an accident**

- Introduction:
  - Talk about when the accident happened
  - May be the circumstances surrounding that particular accident
  - How you began the ordinary day
- Body:
  - What caused the accident?
  - Were there many people involved?
  - How many cars were involved?
  - There are so many things to say in the body.
- Conclusion
  - What happened after?
  - A lesson you learnt from the particular accidents
  - Developments in hospital

**Conclusion**

- Answering students’ questions on length of composition and aspects of style
- Length of composition should be 1-2 pages or 400 words.
- Asked students to write an essay.
Teacher E (Table 4.3) too gives salience to narrative writing, but goes on to give very explicit rules on important aspects of a narrative. For example, the teacher states that a story needs characters, that is, the participants in the story. The writer needs to be original and to use real and convincing events. This teacher also gives explicit information on the lay out of writing. But this teacher too employs an aspect of communicative oriented instruction by engaging learners in brainstorming on ideas and a possible story on an accident. These learners therefore are taken beyond the statement of rules to practical application with teacher guidance.

Table 4.4: Summary of input Lesson 4: School F

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Classroom activities</th>
<th>Source of explanations and materials or resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td><strong>Topic: Imaginative writing</strong>&lt;br&gt;In an exam: You can be given a proverb and told to write a story based on that proverb. You can be given a sentence and instructed to start your story using those lines, or end your story with those words or have them within your story. You can be given some characters and asked to write a story about any of those characters. This question is easy because it is not confiding. It allows you to explore your imagination.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body</strong></td>
<td>● Imaginative writing or creative writing requires one to think and come up with a story of his or her own. The story could be of something heard from somebody, an event that occurred, from a movie you watched or from a book you read.&lt;br&gt;● Story should be as real as possible. Avoid gross exaggeration.&lt;br&gt;● Make scenes as vivid as possible. The reader</td>
<td>● Teacher lecture with teacher questions and students, answers&lt;br&gt;● Note-taking&lt;br&gt;● Brainstorming or whole class discussion of a possible plot of a story with a given beginning sentence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
should be able to visualize everything read. Description is very useful here. In describing, appeal to the five senses: sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing. These broaden your imagination.

- Broaden imagination to develop plot.
- Use different aspects of style, such as description, and flashbacks.
- Linguistic ability is very important for this kind of writing. Considered under linguistic ability are aspects such as:
  i. Fluency and ease of expression,
  ii. Variety of sentences (use simple, compound, and complex sentences)
  iii. Range of vocabulary and idioms - be careful not to use clichés (over-used idioms e.g. as proud as a peacock).
- Use words that you are able to communicate in. Vocabulary does not mean big words that will require the reader to keep referring to the dictionary.
- Use simple language. Use language economically. For instance, use one apt word to explain something. Instead of saying he lost his memory, simply say he suffered amnesia.
- Vocabulary is developed from wide reading. It is

- Teacher reading sample story, followed by teacher led discussion of the story.
not crammed. To develop your vocabulary practice using newly learnt words in talking and writing.

- Engaged learners in brainstorming a possible plot for a story beginning with the sentence “The sitting room was in a real mess. Mwavu must have left in a hurry.”

Conclusions

Read a sample story, “Money cannot buy happiness”
Noted the following from the sample story

- Your story need not be too long. The sample story was short but very rich in vocabulary and description.
- A good story should be able to communicate.
- A good story should show you are knowledgeable of things around you. For example, even if you have never seen a Jacuzzi or sauna, you can talk about them if you have read about them, as shown in the story.
- You are now going to write a story.

The Lesson in school F(Table 4.4), though focusing on narrative writing, pays less attention to explicit features of writing such as planning, and the different features of a narrative. This teacher concentrates on how to use language and aspects of style to capture the reader’s interest. This teacher goes beyond giving the explicit rules. She engages learners in brainstorming a possible plot for a story beginning with the sentence “The sitting room was in a real mess. Mwavu must have left in a hurry.” This part of the lesson was highly interactive with learners suggesting different possibilities. A lot more ideas would probably have been generated if learners were allowed to discuss this in groups. In addition, this
teacher read a sample story to the learners. She then went on to discuss some aspects of that story, such as the rich vocabulary and description, as well as the display of knowledge of the world, as in when the writer in the sample story talks about the Jacuzzi and the sauna. Such a text provides a good framework for contextualization of input on writing and aids acquisition (Byrne, 1990; Ellis, 1994). This lesson thus combines aspects of code-oriented and communicative-oriented instruction.

Notice that in all these lessons salience is given to narrative writing also referred to as imaginative writing, and this is what teachers capture in the introductions of the lessons. In the body, teachers then go on to talk about important aspects of writing in general and narrative writing in particular. Note, for example, in school J, the teacher identifies two important points with regard to writing in general—the need to have a title or heading for a piece of writing and the importance of planning for writing. She goes on to explain important parts of an outline. The second part of this lesson dwells on points to remember when writing a story. Among these are to think of convincing experiences to inform one’s story and to include an element of suspense to create interest in the story. The lessons are concluded with learners being given an essay topic to write on. Where an element of communicative activities is employed, it is whole class discussions, led by the teacher, that are utilized. Teachers need to explore the use of more learner-centered communicative activities.

Ellis, (1994) notes that it is possible to design communicative activities such as group work and role-plays to focus on certain features. For example, in the teaching of narrative writing, learners, in groups, can identify and discuss the important features: plot, characters and style. This way the learning becomes more interactive and realistic. Thus teachers in the classes under study could have found a way of incorporating communicative oriented instruction into the writing lessons. The question of classroom activities will be revisited in section 4.3.
The use of code-oriented instruction is not without advantages, however. The explicit rules provided in the lessons can be said to constitute what Ellis (1994) calls explicit knowledge. Explicit knowledge refers to knowledge that is analyzed in the sense that it exists independently of the actual instances of its use. It is abstract, in the sense that it takes the form of some underlying generalizations of actual linguistic behavior. Explicit knowledge is also explanatory. The logical basis of the knowledge is understood independently of its application. For instance, the rules that a narrative should have a conflict, or problem afflicting a character(s) in a setting, the actions of the characters as they attempt to resolve the conflict constitutes the plot, and the story reaches its climax when the conflict is resolved, can be said to constitute explicit knowledge. Another, example of explicit knowledge is the idea of planning or outlining an essay, where learners are told that they need to plan their essays so that they are clear on the content of their essays and how to organize the essays from the introduction to the conclusion. Explicit knowledge is available to the learner as a conscious representation. The learner can say what he/she knows about the language. Such conscious knowledge helps learners notice features in the input that would otherwise be ignored. This is the first step in changing input into intake (stored knowledge), and is important for acquisition. From our data, for instance, because of the emphasis laid on the need for planning or outlining essays, it was observed that majority of learners took time to plan their essays in accordance with the provided rules. Perhaps without such explicit statement, they wouldn’t have been so conscious of planning and would probably have ignored it.

In addition, explicit knowledge helps learners engage in noticing (Ellis, 1994). Noticing involves paying attention to specific features. This noticing has been said to be important in changing input into stored knowledge (intake). Thus, being made aware of the unique aspects of style in narratives such as flashbacks,
metaphors and descriptions help learners notice these features in stories they read or hear and in turn try to use the same aspects in their own writing.

Generally, given that English is a second language in Kenya, and the learners in secondary schools, (form two) are still developing the necessary building blocks of language such as grammar, vocabulary and the basics of writing they benefit a lot from an explicit statement of the requirement for a specific writing task. Thus, being clearly told, for example, that a narrative has a conflict, a plot with a beginning, middle and ending could be very beneficial to the learners.

The limited use of communicative oriented instruction in the writing instruction seems to have an implication for the development of writing skills among the students. Ellis (1994) argues that knowledge becomes intake through practice. The most useful practice is that which provides “real operating conditions” and is continual. Real operating conditions mean opportunities for using the language in natural communicative situations. The limited use of communicative oriented instruction as well as practice means, to a large extent, learners are denied real operating conditions useful for automatizing the provided knowledge.

In the same vein, Badger & White (2000) argue that writing development happens by drawing out learners’ potential and providing input to which learners respond. Communicative activities such as role-plays and simulations as source of writing assignments would go a long way to draw out the learners’ potential. This aspect does not seem to be fully utilized in the observed classes due to limited use of communicative oriented instruction.

A general observation from the teachers interviewed indicated that students have a negative attitude towards writing. Learners see writing as an unnecessarily demanding task whose only use is to be marked by the teacher, and one in which
many of them do not expect a good mark. This point was further reinforced by one of the teachers who pointed out that learners are not motivated to write narratives because they argue that at the end of the day it is all imagination, and without any purpose save for teacher’s marking. Some students also demonstrated the negative attitude towards writing. From the questionnaires 33.76% of students indicated that they found the writing lesson fairly interesting because they do not enjoy writing, but do it for the teacher. One student wrote, “I do not enjoy writing. I only do it because the teacher needs the books.” Perhaps if the learners had been given an opportunity to envisage the forms of writing as natural communicative events relevant to real life, then the attitude that they simply write for the teacher would change.

4.1.2 Focus on Important Features of Writing and of Narratives

A second concern of the present study with regard to input was to find out what important features of writing in general and of narratives in particular teachers focus on in the provision of input.

4.1.2.1 Features of Effective Writing

The following are important features of effective writing: unity, support, coherence and sentence skills (Prentice Hall, 1995; Langan, 2001). Unity refers to a singleness of effect. A paragraph has unity when each sentence relates to the topic. An essay has unity when each paragraph relates to the main idea. Unity is achieved by having related ideas moving through the writing. Thus the idea of relevance to the topic of writing is paramount. Unity works together with support so that all details presented support the main ideas in the writing. Supporting sentences add information or details about the main idea expressed in the topic sentence. Supporting sentences are the pillars or beams of the paragraph because they reinforce or “hold up” the main idea (Prentice Hall, 1995).
Coherence refers to the orderly arrangement of ideas within a piece of writing. The ideas are neatly tied together through proper use of transitional words, use of synonyms, and repetition and reference items like pronouns to refer to nouns. Sentence skills encompass aspects of grammar such as sentence construction, sentence variety, tenses, vocabulary choice and usage, subject-verb agreement as well as mechanics of punctuation, spelling and paragraphing.

To achieve these four features of writing it is important to plan one’s writing. There is need to put down ideas that will go into the writing before beginning to write. Additionally, a good writer will need to organize what goes into the introduction, body and conclusion of his writing. This underscores the importance of outlining in the writing process.

The features explained here; unity, support, coherence, sentence skills and outlining are important for any type of writing. There are, however, features unique to narratives. These include conflict, plot, characters, setting, language and style as well as creativity. (cf, 2.8).

It is the above important aspects of writing in general and of narratives in particular that were expected to be the main focus of the observed writing lessons. Therefore, the second question relating to input sought to find out the features of writing in general and of narratives in particular that teachers paid attention to in the provision of input. For purposes of the current study the aspects were summarized as follows

- **Content:** concerned with focus on the topic plus the supporting ideas, evidence, or examples. We sought to find out how many of the teachers impressed upon the learners the importance of getting enough relevant ideas to support the topic and of keeping the topic in mind in order to achieve unity.
• **General organization of writing.** Included here was outlining and general paragraph sequencing and logical development. The concern here was whether emphasis on the need to brainstorm and draw an outline for the story in order to achieve proper sequencing and logical development was brought out in the lessons.

• **Organization and development of a narrative:** Expected to be captured here was the fact that a narrative has a conflict(s) affecting the characters in a certain setting. In addition, the narrative should have a plot, which is the unfolding of events as the characters try to resolve the conflict.

• **Aspects of style:** The input was expected to contain information on the unique ways in which language can be used in a narrative, in order to bring out a certain tone or mood. Such aspects include flashbacks, figurative language, dialogue, and creation of suspense.

• **Coherence:** Expected on this one was ways of achieving connectedness in writing such as by use of conjunctions, connectors and reference items.

• **Creativity:** this was expected to cover the need for originality and the ability to tell a story in a fresh and interesting manner.

• **Grammar:** Included here were various aspects related to words and sentences such as choice and use of vocabulary, word order in sentences, sentence variety, tenses, use of pronouns, and sentence construction.

• **Mechanics:** covered under this were aspects of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, paragraph lay out and handwriting.

The aspects above are related to what Keh (1990) refers to as higher order concerns (HOCs) and Lower order Concerns (LOCs). According to Keh (1990) HOCs include aspects like development of ideas for support and unity, organization, achieving relevance and creativity. These are more difficult to deal with in the process of writing. LOCs, on their part, are easy to notice and deal with, especially because their use is guided by certain rules. Thus LOCs include
mechanics of spelling, punctuation, handwriting and paragraphing, as well as aspects of grammar such as tenses, wrong pronouns, and subject-verb agreement. From the list above we can therefore conclude that the elements of content, general organization, organization and development of a narrative, coherence, aspects of style, and creativity are HOCs. It is argued that HOCs need to be given a lot more attention when providing input for writing.

4.1.2.2 Findings on Input’s Focus on the Features of Writing and of Narratives
The important features teachers focused on were examined in terms of the number of teachers who touched on each of the features in 4.1.2.1 in the input lesson. The findings are captured in table 4.5

Table 4.5: Distribution of number of teachers focusing on different features of writing and of narratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Content (relevance)</th>
<th>General organization including outlining &amp; paragraph development)</th>
<th>Organization &amp; development of a narrative</th>
<th>Aspects of style in a narrative</th>
<th>Creativity</th>
<th>Coherence</th>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Mechanics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of teachers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of teachers</td>
<td>63.64</td>
<td>72.73</td>
<td>90.91</td>
<td>72.73</td>
<td>536.36</td>
<td>27.27</td>
<td>63.64</td>
<td>27.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was found that organization and development of a narrative received the highest attention, with 10 out of 11 or 90.91% of the teachers touching on it. Among the points mentioned in relation to the organization and development of narratives is that a narrative has a conflict with a beginning, middle and ending. The unraveling of the conflict causes the development of the plot. The plot is moved forward by characters participating in events within a certain setting. On the whole, teachers impressed upon the learners the need to outline their stories in
order to have a clear introduction; body and conclusion (see lessons 1, 2, 3 and table 4.6). The fact that majority of teachers mentioned something on the organization and development of a narrative could be explained by the fact that the teachers had been asked to prepare a lesson on narrative writing and is in line with the code-oriented instruction characteristics of giving salience to the feature of concern.

General organization of writing and aspects of style were second in terms of getting attention. Eight teachers or 72.73% of the teachers dwelt on each of them respectively. In relation to general organization, all the eight teachers insisted that learners need to plan their writing into a clear introduction, body and conclusion. Some of the teachers even went on to give some important details for each of the three parts. Teacher J (see lesson 1), for example, tells the learners that the introduction should be appropriate, it is the first paragraph, and it should be brief and should capture the reader’s interest. The body carries the composition and can have two to four paragraphs depending on the ideas one has as each paragraph carries a main idea. The conclusion sums up the story and should therefore be short. It should be one paragraph. Similar ideas were relayed by teacher E (see lesson 3). Two of the teachers in the study actually, brainstormed with the students and drew an outline of a story on the board. One of the teachers led students in drawing an outline for a story on “The day I will never forget”. The other class outlined a story on “An accident” (see lesson 3).

On aspects of style learners were reminded to flavour their writings by using such aspects as descriptions, flashbacks, dialogues and figurative language. 72.73% of the teachers talked about this important feature of narratives. Teacher F (see Lesson 4) talked a great deal about style. He emphasized the need to make scenes as vivid as possible by use of descriptions that appeal to the five senses of sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing as well as by use of flashbacks and appropriate idiom.
The aspects of content and grammar received attention from 7 or 63.64% of the teachers. The most important point raised in relation to content was the need to be relevant to the topic and to ensure that the story is convincing. With regard to grammar, the most recurrent point was on the need to use a variety of sentences. The use of a mixture of simple, compound and complex sentences was emphasized. The areas of coherence and mechanics received the least attention, with only 3 (27.27%) out of the eleven teachers, explicitly pointing out something touching on these areas. These teachers reminded the students the need to check their spellings, observe proper punctuation, and have clear handwritings. With regard to coherence, the need to use connectors to achieve connectedness of ideas and paragraphs was mentioned. Teacher A went on to talk about different types of connectors such as those of addition, contrast and sequence. A more detailed summary of the important details provided for each important feature is captured in table 4.6.

**Table 4.6: Summary of details per each important feature of writing found in the input lessons**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Summary of details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>-Have a title relevant to the topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Story be realistic, logical and convincing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Keep topic in focus when writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Use familiar experiences in writing your stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General organization</strong></td>
<td>-Plan or write an outline before beginning to write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Organize composition into introduction, body and conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization and development of a narrative</strong></td>
<td>A narrative is a story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-A story has a plot, conflict and character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Introduce characters, conflict, setting and set atmosphere and mood in the introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organize your story into an introduction, body and conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-the body is where you tell the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Develop characters in the body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Fold up story in the conclusion. Do not introduce new ideas at the conclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Style</strong></td>
<td>-Use descriptions, flashbacks, figures of speech, suspense and hyperbole to make story interesting and colourful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Descriptions</strong></td>
<td>Descriptions should appeal to the five senses of sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coherence</strong></td>
<td>Connect ideas and paragraphs by use of connectors such as however, nevertheless, in addition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creativity</strong></td>
<td>Be creative&lt;br&gt;-Be simple and original&lt;br&gt;-Read to expand your imagination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grammar</strong></td>
<td>Make appropriate choice of vocabulary&lt;br&gt;-Use a wide variety of vocabulary, making sure to use words you are sure of. Vocabulary does not mean big words that the reader has to keep checking from the dictionary.&lt;br&gt;-Vary sentences. Use simple, compound and complex sentences&lt;br&gt;-Avoid lengthy sentences&lt;br&gt;-Use simple language&lt;br&gt;-Avoid clichés&lt;br&gt;-Avoid redundancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mechanics</strong></td>
<td>Check handwriting. Should be legible and letters properly shaped&lt;br&gt;-Check spellings&lt;br&gt;-Observe punctuation, especially in dialogues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of points emerge from the findings on the focus of the input. First, it is clear that learners were provided with explicit information regarding writing in general and narrative writing in particular. This is in line with the code-oriented instruction found to be prevalent in the observed classes. It is also a clear indication that teachers are aware of these important features of writing and therefore consciously make an effort to provide learners with input on them. Noteworthy though is that not all teachers touched on all the eight important areas. On average each teacher touched on four areas. Only one teacher dwelt on all except the aspect of creativity. It also appears that more teachers talked on HOCs compared LOCs, although from the summary of details it appears that the area of grammar had more issues talked about. These findings are contrary to those in the feedback lesson, marked essays and learner views where it was found that teachers focused more on LOCs (cf 5.3.2).
Another important point that emerges relates to Badger & White’s (2000) views on the development of writing. These authors contend that writing development happens by drawing out learner’s potential and providing input to which learners respond. In view of this argument, it can be concluded, about the classes under study, that teachers aid the development of writing by providing input to learners.

Noteworthy though, is that most of this information was not contextualized in stories, texts or communicative activities. According to Byrne (1990), one important way of achieving success in the teaching of writing is to place whatever is taught within the framework of a text, which has a definite communicative goal, so that the learners see the purpose of what they are writing. Perhaps it is time teachers adopted teaching methods and learning activities and resources that ensure the learners see the purpose of what they write, and in turn increase comprehensibility of the input. The question of classroom activities and sources of input and their implication for the provided of input is tackled next.

4.1.3 Classroom Activities, Resources and Materials.
Ellis (1994) argues that the classroom is not an “acquisition rich setting” in that teachers dominate the talk and they ask display questions whose answers are already pre-determined. This is especially so when the teacher uses teacher lecture with questions to students as was the case in the classes observed in the present study. Additionally, Ellis (1994) points out that the input that learners get from their peers is ungrammatical. Despite these shortcomings, Ellis argues that the classroom should be recognized as a primary source of input for the L2 learner. Thus, the activities, materials and resources that are utilized in the classroom have implications for the input in the classrooms. It is with this in mind that the present study sought to find out the activities and resources and materials used in the classes under study, with a view to establishing their implication for the input provided in the classes under study.
4.1.3.1 Classroom Activities

The following were the activities found to be in use in the observed classes.

i. Teacher lecture with teacher questions to students, and questions from students to the teacher. This was the most commonly used classroom activity.

ii. Whole class discussions on features related to writing such as drawing an outline, describing a scene, or brainstorming ideas to develop a story. The teacher guided these discussions.

iii. Reading of sample stories followed by a teacher led discussion on issues such as why a story was good and another weak.

iv. Reading on narrative writing from text book

v. Discussion in groups, for example, on aspects that make a story good, on ideas for writing a story before engaging in individual writing.

The distribution of use of these different activities is shown in Table 4.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom activity</th>
<th>Teacher lecture with questions to students</th>
<th>Whole class discussions</th>
<th>Reading &amp; discussion of sample stories</th>
<th>Group discussions</th>
<th>Reading from text book</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of teachers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers using it (%)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>45.45</td>
<td>27.27</td>
<td>9.09</td>
<td>18.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the summary it appears that most teachers prefer to use classroom activities that they are in full control of. Notice that activities that allow learners a lot more freedom were minimally used. Group discussions were only used by 1 (9.09%) of the teachers while whole class discussions were used by only 5 (45.45%) of the
teachers. On the other hand, teacher lecture was used by 100% of the teachers. It must, however, be pointed out that the different teachers used a combination of activities as shown in table 4.8. This improves the provision of input.

**Table 4. 8: Combinations of classroom activities as used by different teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Activities used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Teacher lecture with questions to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whole class discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Teacher lecture with questions to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading sample story, paragraphs and sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Teacher lecture with questions to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading sample story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whole class discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Teacher lecture with questions to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher lecture with questions to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading sample story, whole class discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Teacher lecture with questions to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading from txt book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Teacher lecture with questions to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whole class discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Teacher lecture with questions to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading from text book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Teacher lecture with questions to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Teacher lecture with questions to students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was observed that the classes where a bigger combination of activities, and especially activities that involved the learners more, were employed (for example, D and F: Table 4.8) were more interactive and lively. Such aspects make learning interesting and consequently improve understanding and acquisition.
4.1.3.2 Implications of the Classroom Activities for the Provided Input

The activities utilized in the writing classrooms have various implications for the input provided in the classrooms. First, classroom activities have an implication for the comprehensibility of the provided input. As noted elsewhere in this chapter (see 4.1.2). The teachers provided input that contained a lot of relevant and necessary information. However, it is our view that the comprehensibility of that input would have been improved by a better exploitation of learner centered classroom activities. It has been argued that learner centered approaches as opposed to teacher centered approaches contribute more towards comprehensibility (Krashen, 1985; Byrne, 1990). Activities such as role-plays, group discussions, pair-work, not only provide contexts useful for comprehension but also are useful for the simplification of input.

Secondly, classroom activities have an implication for negotiation of meaning an aspect useful for language acquisition. Learner centered communicative classroom activities can be used to reduce teacher dominance and enrich the classroom as a source of input. It has been argued that learners are likely to have more opportunity to negotiate for meaning when working together in groups than in teacher-directed activities (Pica & Doughty, 1985; Porter, 1986). Further, it has been argued that allowing learners to negotiate for meaning whenever communication problems arise promotes acquisition (Long, 1983a). Negotiation may push the learner into modifying his/her own interlanguage production (Pica, 1992).

In a group, for example, it is a lot easier for a student to ask for clarification of a point from his peers. Secondly, such clarification is highly likely to be delivered in the language that the students best understands, even if it means the first language. This is what is referred to as negotiation of meaning. (Krashen 1985; Ellis, 1994) In groups, learners engage in what Krashen calls interlanguage talk.
This kind of talk promotes learning according to Krashen. Additionally, Krashen (1985) acknowledges that two-way interactions such as provided by group or pair work is particularly good for providing comprehensible input, because it enables the learner obtain additional contextual information and optimally adjusted input when meaning has to be negotiated because of some communication problem. From another angle, when learners work together they are more likely to share their experiences. This in turn broadens their content schema, a feature necessary for the interpretation, comprehension and acquisition of knowledge (Ellis, 1994).

Classroom activities also have an implication for the conversion of the provided input to intake. Classroom activities that give learners an active role have been shown to help in converting input into stored knowledge (intake) according to Ellis, (1994). This particularly happens in activities where learners are involved in problem solving. Problem solving is seen when learners attempt to induce explicit information about L2 from the input data they are exposed to. Thus activities designed towards problem-solving such as analyzing a story for various important features may help learners internalize these aspects better. When the problem is solved in a context where negotiation and consequently simplification is possible, such as in a group discussion, then comprehensibility is greatly improved. Learners can only acquire, or change into intake the input that they understand.

Classroom activities also have an implication for the integration of the various language skills in the provision of input. Byrne (1990) points out that writing activities should derive naturally from other activities involving other language skills. This makes learners see writing as a real activity. According to Byrne (1990) writing tasks can derive from a prior activity such as a conversation or something read such as an advertisement for a job. Learners then talk about the advertisement, and probably gather relevant information about it from other
people. This would involve speaking and listening. The learners can then apply for the job. By embedding writing in such a real life activity, it motivates learners to learn how to write while at the same time developing the other language skills. Such integration also allows learners to practice and use language naturally, and in effect understanding of input is improved. In addition, it has also been noted that writing development happens by drawing out learners’ potential and providing input to which learners respond (Badger & White, 2000). Drawing out learners can best be done by involving them in activities that allow them to utilize what they have learnt. The minimal use of learner centered communicative activities in the classes observed for the present study means that learners are denied the advantages that come with such activities.

4.1.3.3 Materials and Resources.
The resources and materials used in a classroom can also contribute towards enriching the classroom as a source of input. Therefore, the present study also sought to find out the materials and resources (sources of input) utilized in the classes under study with a view to establishing their implication for the provided input. Data for this was gathered via classroom observations and via student questionnaires. In the questionnaires students were allowed to tick more than one source of input depending on what they observed their teachers to use.

4.1.3.4 Sources of Input Found to be Used.
The following were the sources found to be used.
Teacher notes: these are lesson notes prepared by the teacher. Presumably in preparing such notes the teacher consults various sources of information. This was the most commonly used source. 100% of the teachers had some pre-prepared notes.

English Course book: Covers any of the recommended English course books by KIE for secondary schools. Included here are *Integrated English, Learn with Us,*
Macmillan English. 2 (18.18%) of teachers utilized these, though it was a common sight for the students to have the text with them during the lesson. Sample stories: These were either from other sources such as samples from K.C.S.E marking, stories written by the teacher or stories from those written by the students. 3 (27.27%) of the teachers made use of this source. Out of these only 2 teachers made use of samples from K.C.S.E as well as student compositions. It must be mentioned that these two were examiners with the KNEC. One of the teachers made use of teacher written sample. These samples were read to the class after which a discussion on what makes them good or bad stories followed.

Pictures: these were utilized by only 1 (9.09%) of the teachers. Some pictures of people engaged in winning various competitive activities were used to help learners brainstorm adjectives to build a description of the feelings one gets after winning a competition. The brainstorming was teacher guided and was a preparation for writing on the topic “A win at the national drama festival”

The distribution of the use of the various sources of input is shown in table 4.9

Table 4.9: A distribution of the use of the various sources of input by teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of input</th>
<th>Teacher’s notes</th>
<th>English course book</th>
<th>Sample stories</th>
<th>Pictures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of teachers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Teachers using it.</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>18.18</td>
<td>27.27</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this summary (Table 4.9), it is clear that teachers did not fully exploit the potential of various sources of input, yet these have implications for the input provided in the classrooms. Notice that 100% of the teachers relied on their notes while few teachers employed other sources. Just like with the classroom activities, different teachers used a combination of resources but with teacher’s notes being the most popular. Where a combination of resources was utilized together with
more learner-centered activities such as group work, the lessons were more lively and interactive.

Further, information on the sources of information used was sought from the students through the questionnaires. The course book was the most commonly used source according to students 120 or (79.47%) of the students reported this to be the case. This was contrary to the classroom observation where only 2(18.18%) of the teachers were observed to make use of the English course books in the course of the lesson. Even then, we noticed that the English course books were largely used for the technical details such as parts of a narrative and not for source narratives. The least used sources were diagrams, pictures, charts and photos according to the students. Only 11 (7.28%) of the students reported that their teachers make use of these. The distribution of students’ responses is captured in table 4.10.

Table 4.10: The distribution of students’ responses on the use of different sources of input.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of input</th>
<th>English course book</th>
<th>Newspapers, magazines and Journals</th>
<th>Picture, photos, diagrams and charts</th>
<th>Other resource persons (not the teacher)</th>
<th>Real objects</th>
<th>Other Sources (Sample stories, story books, notes from other books)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of students</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Students reporting its use (N=151)</td>
<td>79.47</td>
<td>19.20</td>
<td>7.28</td>
<td>28.48</td>
<td>13.91</td>
<td>16.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This summary (Table 4.10) reveals that students thought their teachers make use of a variety of sources with the most popular source being the English course
book as indicated by 79.47% of the students. The second most popular resource according to the students was other resource persons other than the teacher. During the course of the present research use of other resource persons was not witnessed. Generally, the numbers of students reporting the use of resources other than the course book are low implying the need to make more use of a wide variety of sources of input. Perhaps the use can be achieved if the classroom activities are redesigned to be more learner-centered and integrative.

4.1.3.5 Implications of the Sources of Input for the Provided Input

The sources of input utilized in a classroom have implications for the comprehensibility of the input (Krashen, 1985. Byrne, 1990, Ellis, 1994). Due to individual learner differences, different learners benefit from different resources. Some may understand more from listening, for example to stories either oral or from tape-recordings and others from observing visual materials such as pictures and charts from which they can derive a story. Therefore, the teacher needs to utilize a variety of resources to help the different learners comprehend the provided input.

Resources also have an implication for the practice and subsequent acquisition of what is learnt. According to Byrne (1990) one way of helping students to write a text is by using the text as a basic format for practice. Within the text framework, Byrne observes that it is possible to teach rhetorical devices—logical, grammatical and lexical which learners need to master. Thus in the case of our study, use of real written narratives would have provided an important framework for teaching narrative writing. Byrne further observes that by using texts as a basic practice format, writing activities are made much more meaningful and realistic for the students, thereby increasing their motivation to write well. He argues that texts provide a setting within which learners can practise aspects such as sentence completion, sentence combination and paragraph construction in relation to longer
stretches of discourse. This way they are able to not only see why they are writing but they also learn to write in a manner appropriate to the communicative goal of the texts. In other words, texts are a good for initiating learners into the writings in a particular discourse community. A similar view is held by Badger & White (2000) in the process genre approach. They argue that texts provide basis for the learners to identify the purpose of a piece of writing, other aspects of the social context and appropriate linguistic features for a particular genre of writing.

The resources utilized in the classroom also serve to bring about variety. This breaks the monotony and creates more interest. For example, when learners know that someone other than the teacher is going to teach them, they are bound to be more eager because of the change. Use of materials other than texts, for example, a visual material can also improve the uptake of the provided input. Byrne (1990) states that visual materials provide a much more open-ended framework for practice than texts. The visual material can be used at different levels and also for different types of writing. They can provide both contexts and stimulation for a variety of activities. They must however be properly used. Byrne advises to do the following to ensure effective use of visual materials.

Identify and define an appropriate writing task which relates to the theme of the visual material

Identify the language, which the learners will need in order to carry out the task.

Decide how to prepare the learners for the writing task.

Perhaps, it is important to note at this point that the Kenyan Secondary School English Syllabus (KIE, 2002) advocates for integration of the four language skills as well as that of language and literature. This provides a very good framework for use of a whole range of classroom activities and sources of input. Unfortunately, this is not what is happening in the classroom. Some of the teachers interviewed revealed that they were not sure what integration was all
about or how they were to go about it. It is no wonder that 100% of the teachers in this study relied on their notes as sources of input, and used the teacher lecture method of teaching. They seemed to limit themselves to the familiar. Though a combination of activities was used in various classes, the dominant ones were teacher centered. Note that all the discussions were teacher guided, and the teacher always had the final word. By making limited use of learner centered activities in the writing lessons, teachers deny learners great opportunities not only for getting input but also for improving its comprehensibility by seeking clarifications from their peers.

According to Byrne (1990) there is need to use a whole range of techniques, each appropriate to the specific goals and needs of the learners and the lesson in the teaching of writing. Perhaps teachers need to be trained on how to use more learner centered activities and various sources of input in order to improve the provision of input. Since part of the input provided in the lesson dwelt on aspects of writing in general we now turn to the steps learners go through in the writing process, which is an indication of the developing writing skills.

4.2 The Writing Process

A polished piece of writing is the result of a process. The writer’s ideas and their expression go through a series of stages that form the writing process. The writing process can be described as a process of discovering ideas, developing and organizing them. The stages in the writing process are prewriting, drafting, revising and proofreading (Hall, 1995; Langan, 2001).

4.2.1 Prewriting

This is the stage where the writer prepares him/herself for the writing. At this stage the writer needs to consider four important aspects: purpose, audience/readers, content or ideas and organization. (Langan, 2001). Purposes or
functions of writing vary. Examples of functions include, persuasion, explanation, invitation, and application for a job. The purpose of writing influences the ideas, organization and language that will go into the piece of writing. A second aspect that the writer considers in the prewriting stage is the audience, or the anticipated readers of his writing. One needs to ask him/herself questions such as: Are my readers young, old, naïve, liberal, or conservative? Are they inclined to agree with my views? Is my audience a group of colleagues, an institution, a well-known individual, an examiner or my teacher? An awareness of the anticipated audience helps a writer select what to say and how to present it in the most appropriate style, such as, formal, friendly or serious.

A third aspect that a writer takes care of at the prewriting stage is the possible ideas or content of his/her writing. The ideas that go into the writing are greatly influenced by the purpose of the writing and the anticipated readers. Various techniques can be employed in developing ideas for whatever kind of topic. Such techniques include, asking questions (who, what, where, when, why, how) about the topic of writing, then figuring out where to look for answers; reading different types of materials such as books, magazines, journals and newspapers; brainstorming; discussing with other people; role-playing; interviewing people and free writing. It is also in the prewriting stage that the writer thinks about the organization of his/her piece of writing. He has to plan his/her writing. Planning can be done in various ways, such as jotting down a set of points, writing down detailed notes and an outline, or drawing a mental outline. It is in planning that the writer determines what forms the introduction, body and conclusion of his/her piece of writing. He/she also decides which points are closely related so that these are presented close together. Planning helps achieve coherence and unity that are two important features of effective writing.
4.2.2 Drafting
This is the second step in the writing process. Drafting involves writing a first draft, which is then read through, reviewed, plans changed or revised, new ideas brought in or even those present re-arranged. Prentice Hall (1995) suggests three possible types of drafts; a quick, loose draft, a slow structured draft, or alternate between quick, loose draft and slow, structured draft. A quick, loose draft is one in which the writer puts down his/her ideas as quickly as possible. He/she just lets one thought flow into another without stopping to evaluate. He/she incorporates new ideas as they emerge. This method or technique may generate a lot of material. The writer then revises the draft, selects the ideas that work best and elaborates on them at the revising stage. A slow, structured draft is one in which, the writer follows a detailed outline as he/she writes. In such a draft, each paragraph is worked on carefully making sure that the main idea is effectively supported by details. Each section is counter-checked against the outline to ensure that the organization is clear and the information is complete. Improvements can still be made on this kind of draft at the revising stage. The third type of draft is one in which, one may, for example, write a slow, structured draft of the body of an essay, following a detailed outline, but write a quick, loose draft of several possible conclusions.

4.2.3 Revising
This is the stage at which the writer re-assesses his/her draft, re-sees his/her writing in its entirety and makes it more effective. While drafting focuses on “what to say” revising focuses on “how to say it effectively.” In revising, the writer assesses what he/she has written to decide, for example, whether, he/she is sharing ideas with readers clearly, he/she has missed out important points of information, the vocabulary is strong enough to deliver what he/she wants to say, the sentences are saying much or some are simply repetitions, and whether the links between sections are clear. In revising, techniques such as elaborating,
cutting and rewording are used. Elaboration is the process of adding details to support an idea, theme or opinion. Cutting involves removing verbal freeloaders that do not contribute to the main idea or evoke the desired feeling. These freeloaders include redundancy (unnecessary repetition) empty words and phrases, several words when one strong word would do, overuse of passive voice, sentences beginning with “there” and “It” (Prentice Hall, 1995). Rewording involves improving diction or choice of words to give ones writing a unique voice. In rewording, the writer aims at eliminating problems such as using the same words too often, using limited or lifeless vocabulary, and using language that does not appeal to the imagination or to the senses.

4.2.4 Editing or proofreading

This is the process of reading for errors in grammar, usage, spelling, and mechanics. At the proofreading stage, the writer makes final readjustments, checks accuracy and makes the text maximally accessible to readers. Among proofreading strategies that a writer can employ are: swapping papers with a friend and reading carefully for grammar, spelling and punctuation mistakes; reading his own work aloud to himself; reading his own work aloud while a friend reads the piece silently along with him; proofreading the work more than once looking for specific kinds of errors each time, and reading the work backwards word for word (Hall, 1995). Editing is the final stage in the writing process. However, it is important to remember that the writing process is recursive. One can go back and forth in the stages as he/she develops a particular piece of writing. The stages are not necessarily followed in a linear manner (Zamel, 1983; Raimes, 1985).

A skilled writer needs to master each of the stages in the writing process. This masterly takes time and practice. Thus in the pedagogic process of writing it is imperative that the apprentice writers are not only made aware of the writing
process, but they also need to be trained on how to go through each of the stages. In relation to the present study it was expected that the sampled learners-form twos- were already familiar with the writing process and would therefore be able to take their writing through the process. It is on the basis of this that the second objective of the current study was to check the stages in the writing process that learners took their writing through, and the strategies they employed in each stage. Data for this objective was obtained via classroom observations, and student questionnaire responses.

4.2.5 Learners’ Writing Process.

As the learners wrote their compositions, the researcher observed and ticked on an observation schedule against the stage that each of the sampled students observed. It must, however, be pointed out here that the findings are presented bearing in mind that some of the stages may have overlapped. What looked like revising could simply have been proofreading and vice versa. All the same, it was found that the learners did some pre-writing, specifically, outlining, as well as revising and editing. All the students drafted but it is only in one school where two students wrote two drafts. They wrote first drafts and later copied them on clean sheets of paper after revising. Generally, the classes under study were found to be single-draft classes, where only one final copy was written and handed in for marking.

Of the other three stages the findings were as follows. The percentages are calculated out of 161 for the first essay and 151 for the second essay. In writing the first essay 61 (37.89%) of the sampled students took time to think of ideas to include in their essays and to do an outline. Of the 61 above, 53 (32.92 %) outlined by jotting down points that would go into their essays. 8(4.97%) did a detailed outline, indicating what would go into the introduction, body and
conclusion of their essays. This number went down during the writing of the second essay where only 28(18.54%) wrote outlines for their essays.

In regard to the revising stage, 128 (79.50%) of the students engaged in some form of revising as they wrote the first essay. They could be observed reading through and making changes on their essays. It was not possible to ascertain the strategies employed in doing the revisions, as only the final, revised and edited drafts were handed in to the teacher. In writing the second essay, those found to have engaged revising were 57(37.75%). Similar trends as those in the prewriting and revising stages were observed with regard to editing. After writing the first essay, 50-or31.06% of the students proofread their essays. In the second essay, only 13 (8.61%) proofread their essays. The editing strategy most commonly employed was to read one’s own essay, and correct any minor errors, the last few minutes before handing in the essay. It is only in school D where the teacher asked learners to swap papers and proofread for one another before handing in the essays. In all the schools observed teachers emphasized the importance of planning, or outlining, revising and editing. However, save from outlining, no clear strategy for doing any of the others was explained or demonstrated in any of the lessons. The findings from classroom observations on the steps in the writing process followed by learners are summarized in table 4.11

Table 4.11: Distribution of students observing the different stages in the writing process as per observation schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Prewriting</th>
<th>Drafting</th>
<th>Revising</th>
<th>Editing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Points Outline</td>
<td>Detailed Outline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition 1</td>
<td>No.of students</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of students</td>
<td>32.92</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>79.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition 2</td>
<td>No. of students</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For composition 1 N=161

For composition 2 N=151

Having noted the stages of the writing process that the learners took their writing through via observations, then learners’ views on what they do during the writing process were sought via questionnaires. A total of 146 learners responded to this section of the questionnaires. The students were to respond to specific questionnaire items targeting the different stages of the writing process (see appendix 5: questions 30-35)

The items on prewriting, sought information on how the learners deal with the issues of purpose of writing, readers and outlining. The findings are presented in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12: Distribution of Learners’ views on their pre-writing stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of writing</th>
<th>Readers</th>
<th>Outlining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Think about it before writing</td>
<td>Think how best to communicate with them</td>
<td>Don’t think about readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think about it after writing</td>
<td>Think how to communicate with teacher</td>
<td>Brief points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t think about it</td>
<td>Don’t think about readers</td>
<td>Detailed outline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mental outline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No outline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>% of students (N=146)</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>% of students (N=146)</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>% of students (N=146)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Think about it before writing</td>
<td>96.58</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>69.18</td>
<td>26.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think about it after writing</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t think about it</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>11.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the first case, learners were to indicate whether they think about the purpose of writing before beginning to write, after they have finished writing or they did not think about the purpose at all. 141 students making up 96.58% of the sampled total indicated that they thought about the purpose of writing before they begin.
writing. 1(0.68%) reported that he thinks about the purpose of writing after he has finished writing, and 4(2.74%) indicated that they do not think about the purpose of writing at all. On thinking about readers and how best to communicate with them, 101(69.18%) reported that the thought about their readers and how best to communicate with them. 39 (26.71%) said they thought how best to communicate with the teacher as he /she is always the reader, while 6(4.11%) said they never think about the readers or how best to communicate with them. With regard to planning 73 students or 50% indicated that they do an outline of brief points to be included in their essays. 17 or 11.64% indicated that they do a detailed outline, 47 or 32.20% said they did a mental outline, while 9 or 6.16% said they do not write an outline at all.

The purpose of a piece of writing is said to have implications for the subject matter, the writer/audience relationship, the organization, channel and mode (Martin, 1993; Hedge, 1998). A story whose purpose is to show that a competition was won and the events that followed the win needs to be convincing that the win was deserved. To effectively achieve this purpose the writer needs to think about who are his potential readers, what sort of information might convince them and what language are they likely to understand. To successfully produce a convincing piece of writing for the anticipated readers with the envisioned purpose, the writer thus needs to plan for his writing (Badger &White, 2000, Langan, 2001). This underscores the need for pre-writing activities in the teaching of writing.

Though learners in the classes under study were observed to do an outline of their pieces of writing, and they reported themselves as engaging in important aspects of pre-writing such as considering the purpose of writing, the audience and planning their writing, it is our view that they would have produced even better pieces if they had been engaged in clear pre-writing activities such as
brainstorming, role plays, discussions or even interviews. Such activities are useful for clarifying the purpose, the audience the content and organization of writing as well as for making instruction more communicative oriented. It is only in school D where learners were allowed to discuss the topic in groups before writing the first essay. Thus, teacher input should include pre-writing strategies, to better aid the learners’ development of writing skills. Pre-writing would be especially useful in the Kenyan case because the classes are single-draft classes. The learners only write one draft that is handed in for marking. They therefore need to be very clear on the content and organization of their writing before they begin writing, as they may not have time to do a lot of revisions.

In relation to drafting learners were to indicate whether they write a first draft of their compositions or simply write one final copy. 79 students or 54.11% said they did write a first draft, while 67(45.89%) said they go straight to the final draft. This is contrary to our observation, where only two students were observed to write two drafts. The findings are presented in Table 4.13

Table 4.13: Distribution of Learners’ views on their drafting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Drafting</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writes a first draft</td>
<td>Doesn’t write a first draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of students (N=146)</td>
<td>54.11</td>
<td>45.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These findings could, however, imply that learners are aware of the importance of drafting ad redrafting but are unable to do so because of time limitations, and perhaps lack of training.
In relation to the revising stage, 26 or 17.81% of the students indicated that they check and correct grammar, spelling and punctuation errors, 3 (2.05%) indicated that they revise aspects of content, 24 (16.44%) check and revise aspects of coherence and organization, 93 (63.70%) indicated that they revise all aspects listed above. No one indicated that they did not engage in any form of revision at all. The findings are shown in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14: Distribution of Learners views on their revising stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revising</th>
<th>Grammar, spelling and punctuation</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Coherence and organization</th>
<th>All the above</th>
<th>None of the above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No. of students</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% of students (N=146)</strong></td>
<td>17.81</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>16.44</td>
<td>63.70</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These responses seem to be in tandem with the classroom observations, where a majority of the students were noted to engage in some form of revision. It is however, possible that what learners may consider revising may actually be proofreading since they were observed to make minor changes in grammar and spelling. Noteworthy also is that no clear strategies for revision were provided in the teacher input. Given the importance of revising in the writing process, learners need to be made aware of and trained in revision strategies such as elaboration, cutting and rewording (cf 4.2.3) Studies have shown that skilled writers revise their writing more than unskilled writers. The skilled writers concern themselves with ideas first, revise at the discourse level, exhibit recursiveness in their writing process and save editing until the end of the process (Jones, 1982, Zamel, 1982, 1983; Raimes, 1985). These studies found that unskilled writers do less revising,
focus on small bits of the essay and edit from the beginning to the end. These studies underline the need to equip learners with clear revising strategies.

The final section of the questionnaire on the writing process aimed to identify the proofreading practices of the learners under observation. Learners were to indicate whether they proofread the whole of their written essays, parts of the essays or did not proofread at all. 104 (71.23%) indicated that they do proofread their whole essays. 38(26.03%) reported that they proofread parts, while 4(2.74%) indicated that they do not proofread at all. This information is summarized in Table 4.15

**Table 4.15: Distribution of Learners’ Views on their Editing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Editing</th>
<th>All essay</th>
<th>Parts of the essay</th>
<th>Don’t edit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of students (N=146)</td>
<td>71.23</td>
<td>26.03</td>
<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the classroom observations, it was noted that after finishing their writing, majority of students took time to read through and make minor corrections. But unlike, with the drafting and revising stages in the writing process, teachers reminded learners to read through and make corrections in the written essays before handing them in. No clear strategies were given for proofreading though. It
was only Teacher D, who asked learners to exchange papers and proofread for each other.

The findings from the classroom observations and the questionnaire responses indicate that learners are familiar with the writing process, and they do try to take their writing through the various stages. Perhaps what they need is training on the various strategies they could employ in each of the stages. In our view, the learners may particularly require strategies for pre-writing and revising. At the pre-writing stage decisions on purpose, audience and content are made. At the revising stage the writing is made maximally accessible, and all the four important aspects of writing; namely, unity, support, coherence and sentence skills are given a lot of attention. Generally, there is need for learners to be given input on and trained in the writing process, as studies have shown that competence in the writing process is more important than linguistic competence in both English as L1 and L2 (Jones, 1982; Zamel, 1982, 1983; Raimes, 1985).

When doing the training, three important points should be borne in mind. The first is that learners need to be made aware of the fact that the writing process is non-linear (instead it is recursive), exploratory and generative. The writer is allowed to employ strategies to discover his ideas and reformulate them as he approximates the meaning he wishes to communicate (Zamel, 1983) secondly, the teacher should remember that any aspect is best learnt when it is contextualized (Krashen, 1985; Ellis, 1994; Badger & White, 2000; Byrne, 1990). Learning of writing in particular is greatly aided by being contextualized in texts. Sample texts are very important as they allow for realistic modeling. Samples enable learners to identify the purpose, social contexts and linguistic features most appropriate for a particular genre of writing (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Badger & White, 2000). Thirdly, the teacher should bear in mind that his greatest role is to draw out the learners’ potential and to provide input to which the learner responds. As such, classroom activities that allow learners to exercise their knowledge should be
made use of. The activities should be realistic, bearing a relevance to the learners’ real life in order for them to be motivating. The studies concluded that competence in the writing process is more important than linguistic competence in both English as L1 and L2.

4.3 Summary
This chapter focused on the input provided by teachers in the writing lesson and the steps in the writing process that learners go through. It emerged that the most prevalent type of instruction in the classes was code-oriented instruction. This had a direct bearing on the type of input provided. It was found that the input gave salience to aspects of writing in general and narrative writing in specific. Additionally, teachers relayed explicit information on important aspects of writing. This is in accordance with code-oriented instruction. Communicative oriented instruction was in limited use.

In terms of content, the input focused on relevant and important information relating to the four features of effective writing namely, unity, support, coherence and sentence skills. Furthermore, important features of a narrative such as plot, conflict, characters and setting formed part of the gist of the input. This information was however not contextualized in real life situations perhaps due to the classroom activities and sources of input used.

A third aspect considered was classroom activities, materials and resources utilized in the writing lesson and their implications for the provided input. Classroom activities, especially those allowing two-way interaction such as group and pair work, and are more learner-centered, are said to aid comprehension of input more. It was however; found that the activities mostly employed in the writing classes were those in which the teacher had more control. It was also found that the sources of input used were limited. Teachers largely relied on their notes, perhaps due to the great use of the lecture method. Learners reported that
the source of input most commonly used is the English course book. This is despite the fact that the syllabus allows for integration of the four language skills as well as of language and literature, in effect opening the door for the use of a wide range of classroom activities and sources of input. On the whole, with regard to input provided in the writing lesson, it was evident that it (input) contained important information on important features of writing generally, and on narrative writing in specific. It was however, felt that more communicative and learner centered activities and a wide variety of resources and materials need to be employed in the writing lessons. On the question of the stages of the writing process that learners take their writing through, it emerged that learners are familiar with the stages and do actually try to take their writing through them, especially outlining and editing. The learners, however, in our view, may need training in different strategies to be used in the various stages of the writing process. Such information was not a major part of the provided input. The strategies should be contextualized in written texts used within authentic classroom activities.
CHAPTER FIVE
PROVISION OF FEEDBACK

5.0 Introduction
The previous chapter presented findings on the first and second objectives of the present study. The chapter gave a detailed analysis of the input provided in the writing lesson and the steps in the writing process that learners follow. The third objective of the present study focused on teacher feedback provision practices in the secondary school classes. The present chapter, therefore, presents the findings and discussions related to the objective. Specifically, the chapter presents findings on the methods used to provide feedback and the characteristics of the feedback in terms of general focus, the form (for written feedback), the suggestions or guidelines for revision provided and the important areas of writing in general and narrative writing in specific, addressed by the feedback.

5.1 Defining Feedback
Keh (1990) defines feedback as input from a reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision. It is the comments, questions and suggestions a reader gives a writer to produce “reader-based” prose as opposed to “writer-based” prose. Through feedback the writer learns where he has misled or confused the reader by not supplying enough information, illogical organization, lack of development of ideas or something like inappropriate word choice or tense. This is the definition adopted for this study.

Ferris, (2003) points out that the time spent responding to learners’ writing is a great investment on the part of the teacher. On the part of the learner, the feedback provided could be the final arbiter as to whether he/she continues to develop writing skills (Kroll, 2003). Thus provision of feedback is an important and integral part of the pedagogic process of writing, and hence its investigation in the study reported in this thesis. The study limited itself to verbal and written feedback. Non-verbal feedback was difficult to measure. The teachers of writing in the present study had been asked to mark students’ compositions and prepare a
feedback lesson. The marked compositions and the feedback lessons provided the data for the discussion of feedback provision practices. The investigation sought to answer the following questions.

i. What are the main methods used to provide verbal and written feedback?

ii. What are the characteristics of the verbal and written feedback in terms of:
   a) General focus
   b) Form (written feedback)
   c) Suggestions or guidelines for revision provided
   d) Important areas of writing in general and narrative writing in specific, addressed.

Findings and discussions related to these questions make up the rest of the present chapter.

5.2 Methods of Providing Feedback
According to Keh (1990), there are three major methods of providing feedback for revision in the teaching of writing. These are: peer feedback, teacher-student conferencing and error feedback plus teacher comments. Peer feedback involves students critiquing and providing feedback on one another’s writing in small groups. Teacher-students conferences, on the other hand, involve a face-to-face interaction between the student writer(s) and the teacher. Conferences can be individual or group lasting for 10 to 30 minutes (Keh, 1990). Error feedback involves giving feedback on the actual grammatical and lexical choices that student writers make in their compositions when such choices violate conventions or rules. It can be accompanied by comments pointing out positive aspects of a piece of writing as well as weaknesses that the learner needs to address. Each of the three methods has its advantages as well as challenges (cf 2.3.2).
5.2.1 Error Feedback and Teacher Comments
An analysis of the learners’ marked essays and the tape-recorded feedback lessons showed that the major method of feedback provision employed in the classes under study was error feedback and teacher comments. First of all, it was found that in the marked essays, teachers highlighted learners’ errors using various conventions. The most common method was underlining the problem area without providing corrections for the highlighted error, although in some insignificant instances, teachers provided the correct spellings of words. Underlining was used by 100% of the teachers under study. In some instances teachers combined underlining and circling. In some other cases, the underlining was used along with correction symbols categorizing the underlined error. Below are the symbols noted in the marked essays.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>^^</td>
<td>Omissions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>//</td>
<td>An error is present in a long sentence or paragraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>√</td>
<td>to indicate something well done e.g. impressive use of a certain word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sp</td>
<td>spelling error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>??</td>
<td>Something is not clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WW</td>
<td>wrong word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Const// or C//</td>
<td>construction error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC//</td>
<td>sentence construction error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>repetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vag//</td>
<td>vague</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The highlighting conventions used can be seen in the sample marked compositions in Appendix 4. Notice that in all these samples there is use of underlining. Different errors are highlighted by underlining as illustrated in the following extract of the first paragraph of composition 4G.
Extract 5.1: Illustration of teachers’ highlighting conventions.

It was a misty morning when that was cold and shivery. The sun’s rays penetrating the earth’s valley and above the mountain tops. It just looked like an ordinary day in which I would get out of my bed takeabirth ^\^brush my teeth and do my dairy choores then prepare to go for a trip at my grandmother’s house. Neither did I now what was going to happen that very day I was simply clueless. (Extracted from appendix 4G)

A combination of different systems of highlighting errors is exemplified in composition 4I and 4F, in which the teachers use a combination of underlining, circling, symbols of omission (^^) and symbols of vagueness (vag//). Notice that corrections are not provided for the highlighted errors. The learner is left to diagnose the error and make the necessary corrections.

From these findings it was concluded that the teachers in the classes under study use indirect uncoded error feedback. Indirect feedback involves indicating the presence of an error by underlining, circling or use of a system of symbols that represent categories of common grammatical errors. The teacher does not however provide a correction, but leaves the student to diagnose the error and correct it (Frodesen & Holten, 2003). Indirect feedback is further subdivided into coded and uncoded feedback. Coded feedback points the exact location of an error and the type of error involved is indicated with a code e.g. SP (spelling) Tn (tense). Uncoded feedback involves the teacher underlining or circling an error, or placing an error tally on the margin but in each case leaves the student to diagnose and correct the error (Frodesen & Holten, 2003). This is what the teachers in the classes under study did. In most instances, the teachers underlined the learner errors without providing corrections or even indicating the type of error (see sample marked compositions: Appendix 4).

In addition to highlighting the errors, teachers also made comments on the learners’ essays. However, not all teachers commented on all learners’ essays. For example, Teacher F and Teacher J did not make any comments at all in the second
essay although they gave overall scores. Teacher F and Teacher C made comments on some of the essays but did not write any comments in others in the first and second essay respectively. The comments made by all the teachers were either on the margin (margin comments) or at the end (summative comments). The most common comments were the summative comments Margin comments are made on the margin beside the sentence or paragraph that has an error. Below are examples of margin comments extracted from the data.

**Example 1: Margin comments:** You have to write more boldly and clearly *(Extracted from S5’s essay 2 School B)*

**Example 2: Margin comments:** Presentation of what? *(Extracted from S11’s essay 1 School C)*.

End comments or summative comments give a summary or overall view of the whole essay. Below are examples of summative comments extracted from different essays.

**Example 3: Summative comments:** *(extracted from S1’s essay1, School C)*

No such word as “screamt.”

Differentiate “practice” from “practise.”

Do not use slang e.g. “puke.”

A good attempt.

**Example 4: Summative comments:** *(Extracted from S8’s essay1 School A)*

You’ve a fair grasp of grammar but mind about punctuating your essay appropriately.

Use the vocabulary accurately to communicate effectively.

Write an outline for logical order of ideas.

Avoid repetition.
Correct grammatical mistakes.

**Example 5: Summative Comments: (Extracted from S 12’s essay 2 School H)**

Express your ideas clearly.
Avoid too many errors in your composition e.g. direct translation from your mother-tongue into English.

In addition to giving error feedback and comments, the teachers gave an overall score out of 20 or a grade such as C. 9 out of the 11 teachers awarded a score. Teacher C awarded a score and a grade while Teacher D awarded grades only. The grade or mark gave the teacher’s overall evaluation of the learner’s essay. The higher the score the better the essay was deemed to be and the lower the score the weaker the essay was deemed to be. For instance, an essay, which scored 16/20, was better than one that scored 5/20. It was not clear the assessment criteria used in awarding the scores or grades. On the whole, written feedback would thus constitute highlighting of errors, comments plus a score. Table 5.1 and Table 5.2 present comments and scores given by Teacher E in Composition 1 and Teacher K in composition 2.
Table 5.1: Sample written feedback: Composition 1: School E

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Margin and in-text comments</th>
<th>Summative comments</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Be tidy</td>
<td>Spelling check</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Title?</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Spelling?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Creativity?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tense?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Write clearly</td>
<td>Check on spelling</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improve on your creativity</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Better the sequencing of events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improve on your creativity</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You should have captured your title in a better way</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Use prepositions appropriately</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Punctuate appropriately</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Check on your word order and spellings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>To long a sentence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Too long a sentence</td>
<td>Spelling check</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Check on the spelling</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Right use of vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>Check on spelling</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improve on your sequencing of events</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improve on your creativity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Your title is not well brought out in the essay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Use relative pronouns appropriately</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Too long a sentence</td>
<td>Check on your spelling</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You didn’t have to start another paragraph</td>
<td>Organize your ideas such that one idea should be in the same paragraph</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improve on the use of articles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improve on creativity</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Write clearly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Check on your spellings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Check on the spelling mistakes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Check on the use of prepositions</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice that this teacher gave margin comments, summative comments and a score. She did not, however, give margin comments to all the students.
Table 5.2: Sample written feedback Composition 2: School K

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Margin/in-text comments</th>
<th>End/summative comments</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Illogical (beside sentences)</td>
<td>Review when to use capital letters Revise prepositions Try to improve on spellings and tenses</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vague (beside sentences)</td>
<td>Beatrice your handwriting has improved but still try to make it better</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Peter your English is so broken. Make an effort to write better. Your handwriting must improve</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Good introduction Concluding paragraph</td>
<td>Nancy this is quite encouraging. Keep on practicing more</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Improve your capital letters and spelling</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Vague (besides sentences)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>(No comment)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>(No comment)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Illogical (beside sentences/ paragraphs) Vague (Beside sentences/paragraphs)</td>
<td>Please note your mistakes and learn to write simpler and clearer sentences Correct your punctuation and spelling</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Vague (besides sentence/paragraphs)</td>
<td>Revise when to use capital letters Work also on your punctuation, tenses and sentence structure</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Vague (beside sentence/ paragraph)</td>
<td>Avoid joining “I s” to words that follow them Pronoun “I” is always written as a capital letter Work on sentence construction and punctuation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>(No comment)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Vague (beside sentence/paragraphs)</td>
<td>Work on spelling, punctuation and sentence construction</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Work on how you should construct sentences Word order</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This teacher varies in giving comments. She gives some students only summative comments and to others she gives no comments at all. Each student is, however, given a score for his/her essay.

Further evidence of the prevalence of error feedback and teacher comments was got from analyzing the feedback lessons. Two sample feedback lessons are summarized in Feedback Lessons 5 and 6(Tables 5.3 & 5.4).
Table 5.3: Summary Feedback Lesson 5: School E

| Introduction | I will give you your marked papers. We will talk about them generally then we’ll write another essay. Look at the underlined places. |
| Body | ● The writing was average. Meaning it was not perfect but it was good.  
● The essays needed to have a title. One or two of you did not write a title  
● There was a problem with spellings, probably out of carelessness. E.g. practice vs. practise.  
● Use of tense. Maintain the same tense throughout the story.  
● Prepositions were used wrongly e.g. writing in the table instead of on the table.  
● Punctuation problems. For example, you opened direct speech but forgot to close.  
● Choice of words or vocabulary. Use appropriate vocabulary in order to communicate your meaning clearly.  
● Frequency of events was good so stories were easy to follow.  
● Your story should be relevant to the title.  
● Cross out mistakes neatly without making your work untidy |
| Conclusion | Check your papers and make the necessary corrections. We will write another essay. |

Table 5.4: Summary of Feedback Lesson 6: School K

| Introduction | We look at some of the things you need to avoid in the next composition you write |
| Body | ● Something positive is that you seem to have understood the topic but you didn’t develop it. Try to be more imaginative.  
● Check your handwriting. Shape your letters such as P and R properly  
● Avoid joining words that should be separated  
● Avoid a lot of repetition. You keep using the same words.  
● Mother-tongue interference is a problem. You think in your mother-tongue then write in English  
● Spelling mistakes  
● You only use simple sentences e.g. I woke up early and went to school. I found everyone was there at the gate. Our matatu came  
● Make use of connectors  
● Put a vocabulary here and there  
● Misuse of capital letters. Some use capital letters in the middle of a word.  
● Use of clichés (very old over-used expressions such as “I ran as fast as my feeble legs could carry me.”) |
| Conclusion | Check on these areas as you write your next composition. |

From these feedback lessons, it is evident that teachers took time to give comments on weaknesses found to be common to the majority of the students in the class. Individual students were asked to check specific issues highlighted in their own compositions. The pointing out of issues that had emerged from marking the essays can be seen as the equivalent to the underlining in the marked essays. Teacher E actually tells the students to look at the underlined places. The verbal comments given in the lesson sought to clarify and reinforce what had been highlighted on the marked essays. The feedback lessons were also used to provide an overall evaluation of the students’ writing. For example, Teacher E commented:

“The writing was average, meaning it was not perfect but was good. The essays needed to have a title. One or two of you did not write a
title. There was a problem with spellings, probably out of carelessness” (See Appendix 3: Feedback Lesson 5).

Teacher K commented:

“Something positive is that you seem to have understood the topic but you did not develop it. Try to be more imaginative. Avoid a lot of repetition. You keep using the same words. Mother-tongue interference is a problem. You think in your mother-tongue then write in English.”(See Appendix 3: Feedback Lesson 6)

Notice that both teachers begin with an overall evaluation of the students’ writing in general, then go on to highlight general weaknesses found in the marked essays. The issues raised touch on various important features of writing such as content, grammar and mechanics of spelling, which learners needed to attend to. The teachers do not provide ways of dealing with the problems. Teacher E advises the students to check their papers and make the necessary corrections, while Teacher K tells the students to check on the highlighted areas as they wrote the next composition. This aspect of highlighting errors and leaving the learner to diagnose and correct them is a characteristic of indirect uncoded error feedback.

5.2.1.1 Advantages of Error Feedback

The use of error feedback and written comments has advantages and disadvantages that have an implication for the teaching and learning of writing. To start with, use of error feedback and written comments, though controversial, with some researchers arguing that it does not help learners improve their writing (Kepner 1991, Semke, 1994, Asheppard 1992; Truscott 1996), and others arguing that it is useful (Fathman & Whalley 1990; Ferris, 1999; Ashwell 2000; Ferris & Roberts 2001), it cannot be ignored especially in the context of the study reported in this thesis. It should be noted that English is a second language in Kenya. As such, learning to use it is a big challenge for learners, whose first exposure to English is in school, especially in rural Kenya. According to Frodesen & Holten (2003), error feedback serves several important functions for the ESL writers. It
makes them aware of where their written texts do not follow conventions of standard written English. It also helps them develop self-editing skills by focusing their attention on the patterned nature of their errors. Frodesen & Holten (2003) contend that when careful feedback on language features is provided, it sends a powerful message that clarity and appropriateness of language form is a key to effective written communication. Learners in the present study indicated that the feedback they received helped them improve their writing (see chapter 6). It is believed that the improvement included the use of clear and appropriate language.

Further, error feedback allows for the integration of grammar in writing. Thus, the teacher can achieve two goals at the same time. That is, teach grammar and writing. Therefore, when properly exploited, error feedback is very useful as a means for providing knowledge about language and skills in using language, two important aspects that a writing class should recognize according to Badger & White (2000) in the process-genre approach.

With regard to direct versus indirect error feedback, research evidence has suggested that indirect error feedback brings more benefits to students’ long-term writing development than direct error feedback (Ferris, 2003, Frantzen, 1995, Lalande 1982). Indirect error feedback, for example, helps learners improve their self-correction and editing skills, in effect helping learners improve the accuracy of their writing (Bitchener et al., 2005). Learners in the present study could, therefore, reap similar benefits from the indirect error feedback provided to them.

The question of the usefulness of coded or uncoded feedback has had mixed findings. Raimes (1991) argues that error identification is meaningful and useful. Raimes sees this as a useful starting point for a discussion on errors with learners. Ferris, (2002) is of the opinion that identifying errors can be cumbersome for the
teacher and confusing to the students. Ferris & Roberts (2001) in their study found no significant difference in self-editing performance between students who received coded error feedback and those who received uncoded error feedback. Research findings on the effects of coded and uncoded error feedback are inconclusive. The present study did not test the effect of the method of provision of feedback.

Despite the stated advantages of error feedback, researchers are in agreement that there is no need to mark all student’s errors. That is, there is no need to become “composition slaves” (Hairston, 1986). Instead teachers should concentrate on specific error patterns (Zamel, 1982, 1985, Ferris, 2003, Lee, 2004) In relation to this argument; it was found that teachers in the present study did not actually highlight all the errors in the learner’s essay. This is illustrated in Extracts 5.2a and 5.2b below (Extracted from S 12’s Essay 2: School B. See Appendix 4J). Extract 5.2a shows the areas highlighted by the teacher, while Extract 5.2b shows other possible areas that would have been, but were not.

**Extract 5.2a**: *Areas highlighted by the teacher when marking the essay.*

When we arrived at kiambu a lorry which was behind’ came and hit our matatu, the *two collided*, our matatu rolled down the nearby forest, *my self* I couldn’t see anything everything seemed dark and dim to me.

After few minutes I saw we had an accident the driver was dead, the tout was seriously injured, some of the passangers were bleeding so much, my cousin was un conscious. Some *of the* good Samaritans came to help me to separate the injured one’s, I could not even utter a single word, thousands questions were thumping on my mind. May people were hurting, The goods were scartted all over,*and* the blood was flowing like a river.
. Extract 5.2b: Other possible areas that could have been highlighted.

When we arrived at (i) Kiambu a lorry (ii)\(^\wedge\) which was behind, came and hit our matatu, the two collided, our matatu rolled down the nearby forest, (iii) myself I couldn’t see anything everything seemed dark and dim to me.

After few minutes I (iv) saw we had an accident the driver was dead, the tout was seriously injured, some of the (v) passengers were bleeding so much, my cousin was (vi) unconscious. Some of the good Samaritans came to help me to (vii) separate the injured (viii) one’s. I could not even utter a single word, thousands questions were thumping on my mind. May people were hurting, (ix) The goods were (x) scattered all over, and the blood was flowing like a river.

Key to the highlighted areas in extract 5.2b

i) Failure to capitalize the beginning of a proper name, “Kiambu”
ii) Missing comma.
iii) Misuse of comma
iv) Poor choice of word. She could have used a stronger word or expression, for example, ‘realized”, “it dawned on me” or she could have left out this part of the sentence altogether.
v) Misspelling of the word “passenger.”
vi) Separating a single word and misspelling “unconscious.”
vii) Wrong choice of word. She could have used words like, “rescue” or ‘help.”
viii) Wrong use of the possessive form. Should have been the pronoun form “ones”
ix) Wrong use of definite article
x) Misspelling of “scattered”
Other problems that would have been highlighted include:

- The tendency for this student to write run-on sentences punctuated only by use of commas, such as that in the first paragraph and the first sentence in the second paragraph of the extract.

- The general lack of cohesive devices in the writing. The student seems to only put sentences together without showing any connection between them as seen in the last part of the second paragraph. Beginning from, “Some of the good Samaritans came to help separate the injured ones…

It must however be noted that despite these obvious grammatical weaknesses, the essay from which the extract above was obtained, was among the best rated in terms of communicative purpose. The essay scored 12/20 and the teacher commented: “Good story line well put. Revise use of pronouns and prepositions to get even better in composition writing.” This is a demonstration of a teacher responding to writing as a concerned reader and not as a grammarian (Keh, 1990).

By not highlighting all learner errors, the teacher gives the students an opportunity to also evaluate their own work, using the knowledge they have acquired, although, this may not be useful for learners with low linguistic proficiency. From a different perspective, the reduced number of red marks on the student’s paper may be encouraging to the learner. Keh (1990) advises that the teacher limits the feedback and comments according to fundamental areas, bearing in mind that the student cannot pay attention to everything at once. Keh goes on to argue that for the teacher to be able to limit him/herself to fundamental problems he/she needs to distinguish clearly between HOCs and LOCs.

This last point is related to the argument that teachers concentrate on specific error patterns instead of marking all learner errors (Zamel, 1982, 1985, Ferris,
2003, Lee, 2004). In relation to this, teachers in the present study did not appear to concentrate on any specific patterns of errors. Different kinds of errors, including grammatical, spelling, content, and organizational errors were highlighted and commented on, although the major concentration seemed to be with grammatical errors. For example, Teacher E in Feedback Lesson 1 makes comments as follows:

*Content:* The essays needed to have a title. One or two of you did not write a title. Your story should be relevant to your title.

*Organization:* Frequency of events was good so stories were easy to follow.

*Grammar:* There was a problem with the use of tenses. Maintain the same tense throughout the story. Prepositions were used wrongly. Use appropriate vocabulary in order to communicate your meaning clearly.

*Mechanics:* There was a problem with spellings, probably out of carelessness, for example, “practice” versus “practise”. There were punctuation problems. For example, you opened direct speech but forgot to close. Cross out mistakes neatly without making your work untidy.

It was, therefore, concluded that teachers in the present study could improve their error feedback provision by deciding the errors to focus on in any given writing task. Referring to a list of HOCs, and keeping in mind lesson objectives, is a good way of identifying the errors on which to focus according to Keh, (1990).

### 5.2.1.2 Disadvantages of Error Feedback and Teacher Comments

One major disadvantage of using error feedback and written commentary, according to Truscott (1996) is the fact that teachers may lack the training, ability, consistency or time to notice errors and even if they do, they may not be able to explain what is wrong. Secondly, the students may not always understand the teachers’ marks. The marks may also be demoralizing. This latter point was
demonstrated in School A. Upon receiving their first marked essays, and going through the feedback lesson, the students were not happy. A check on their marked papers revealed that majority of them had a lot of underlinings and comments. In the feedback lesson, the teacher reinforced the weaknesses in the students’ writing and this seemed to discourage them a lot, especially because it was happening in the presence of the researcher. As a result, the students were not willing to write the second essay, and the teacher had to convince them that the underlinings and comment were meant to help them improve their writing.

On the question of understanding the teachers’ marks, it emerged that some students do not usually understand. One of the suggestions made by students on improving provision of feedback was that teachers should not always just underline, but also they should indicate what the problem is. One student wrote, “Sometimes I do not see what is wrong with the underlined part.”

An additional disadvantage of using error feedback is the risk of students concentrating on language and grammar problems in their writing and forgetting that content is also very important. In other words, the students may focus on sentence-level problems ignoring the other aspects of the discourse. It is therefore advisable not to overuse error feedback and written comments as a method of provision of feedback. Ferris (2004) suggests that error feedback be used in conjunction with other strategies to help learners treat their own errors. One such strategy according to Ferris could be error logs that help learners monitor and assess their own progress. Error logs involve a learner keeping a record of the most frequent errors in his/her writing. The learner marks on this record when he/she has developed the skill and strategy to deal with specific errors.

5.2.2 Peer Feedback and Teacher-Student Conferences
The other two methods of providing feedback that is, peer feedback and teacher-student conferencing, were hardly used in the classes under study. For instance, it was only in School D that the teacher asked students to exchange their essays,
read and correct each others’ work before handing it in for marking. However, we feel that what these learners did was only edit lower order concerns (LOCs), such as spelling and simple grammatical errors, in their friends’ work. Secondly, It was only in two cases in School D and School K where the teacher had indicated in the marked essay that the student in question see the teacher for a discussion of the marked essay. This was then taken as an indication of a possible teacher-student conference. In the interviews though, some of the teachers reported that they sometimes call individual students to discuss their (students’) writing.

The minimal use of peer feedback and teacher-student conferences as ways of providing feedback has several implications in the pedagogic process of writing and in the present study in particular. First of all, it may be an indication that the teachers are not aware of such methods. Secondly, it may imply that teachers do not think learners would have much to contribute in the learning process, yet learners are active thinkers in the learning process. In the current study, teachers seemed to be aware that one could use peer feedback, but they were not clear on how to go about it, in the light of a wide syllabus to be covered within a limited time. In addition, the limited use of the two methods denies both the teacher and learners the advantages that come with each method.

Peer feedback, for a start, is said to save the teacher’s time, as learners are able to identify and deal with some of the errors. This frees the teacher to deal with the more complex errors relating to higher order concerns (HOCs,) such as proper support of arguments, and coherence in essays (Ferris, 2003). As such, use of peer feedback would help in dealing with the question of lack of time, which is one issue that all the interviewed teachers raised. It should be noted, however, that learners need to be trained in providing peer feedback, especially with regard to HOCs (Keh, 1990).
Peer feedback also provides important learning opportunities to the learner. According to Ellis (1994) the kind of learning opportunities provided in the classroom are very important in determining the learning outcomes. Peer feedback, for a start, is a good method for providing communicative oriented instruction, whose aim is to provide learners with opportunities to communicate naturally. Secondly, since peer feedback is done in small groups or in pairs, it can provide a good chance for the learners to not only learn writing but also to practice their oral and listening skills. This particular aspect is very important for the context of the present study, given that the English syllabus encourages integration of language and literature as well as all the language skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing (KIE, 2002).

Another positive point about peer feedback is that it is considered to be more at the learner’s own level of development. Additionally, it gives the learner a sense of audience other than the teacher. Through critically reading other people’s papers the learner acquires more about writing. Peer feedback makes it possible to receive feedback from multiple sources, and the learner can ask for clarifications without fear (Zhu 2001). As such, peer feedback contributes a lot to the provision of comprehensible input necessary for acquisition (Krashen, 1985). Thus the teacher can exploit the advantages of peer feedback to help provide comprehensible input. Additionally, in peer feedback, seeing own peer’s strengths and weaknesses helps build the learners’ confidence in their own writing. This confidence acts as a motivation in the learning process, in turn lowering the affective filter. When the affective filter is lowered then more input is allowed in and more of the received input is turned into intake (Krashen, 1985).

Ellis (1994) also emphasizes the place of auto-input in acquisition. He says that the learners’ output constitute a kind of auto-input. This means what the learners produce can be used to provide input into the system that can be acted upon to
enrich learners’ intake. Thus, the teacher can use the learners’ written work and the contributions of their peers as a source of input.

Teacher-student conferencing, on its part provides an opportunity for the teachers to clarify their written comments, and to show appreciation for a student work. Conferences allow more feedback and more accurate feedback to be given (Keh, 1990). Thus, teacher-student conferences not only contribute to provision of comprehensible input, but also in motivating the learners, factors that are very significant in the learning process.

Both peer feedback and conferences provide a more relaxed atmosphere for sharing experiences, not only related to the task at hand but also on other related issues. This sharing of experiences expands the learner’s world knowledge. According to Ellis (1994) world knowledge is very important as it helps in the interpretation of messages. In the present study, one observation made by teachers, especially in relation to the first topic of writing, “A win at the national drama festivals” was that learners who had taken part in this event seemed to come up with more convincing stories compared to those who had not. The role of world knowledge was also demonstrated in the second story, “A road accident”. Since this is something that most Kenyans have some experience about, the students generally found it easier to write on this topic. This then underscores the importance of experience and knowledge and peers could be a good source of such experiences and knowledge.

An analysis of the student questionnaires revealed that they would like peer feedback and student-teacher conference methods applied as ways of improving provision of feedback. Among the suggestions that learners made on ways of improving provision of feedback, was that students be allowed to correct each other’s work, and that students should be put in groups to discuss both the writing
and the feedback. Teacher-student conferencing was suggested a total of eleven times in the questionnaire responses. These eleven students suggested that the teacher should call the individual student, especially weak students, for a face-to-face discussion (cf 6.3.5).

The foregoing discussion has shown that the main method of providing feedback in the classes under study is error feedback and teacher comments. The discussion has also indicated that while the method has advantages, especially for learners in the context of the present study, use of only one method to provide feedback denies both the teachers and the learners the advantages of peer feedback and teacher-student conferences. Literature on the teaching of writing advocates for a multi-faceted approach to the provision of feedback (Byrne, 1990; Keh, 1990; Zhu, 2000; Ferris, 2003). The various methods can be applied at various stages in the writing process. Ferris (2003) observes that while teacher-student conferences and peer feedback are appealing alternatives to written teacher feedback on student writing, they should not completely replace written teacher commentary. Ferris further points out there is no evidence, or any compelling argument advanced, to show that one of these should completely replace the other(s). She reckons that the three methods are qualitatively and practically different from one another and that all three have their legitimate roles within L2 writing instruction. In the next section, we turn our attention to the characteristics of the feedback provided in the classes under study.

5.3 Characteristics of the Feedback

As indicated in 5.1, in addressing the characteristics of the feedback four features were investigated. These were the general focus of the feedback, the suggestions and guidelines for revision provided in the feedback, the form of the written feedback and the important areas of writing in general and narratives in specific, addressed in the feedback. In the following sections, findings on these questions are presented.
The characteristics were addressed in relation to verbal feedback; provided in the feedback lesson, and written feedback; provided in the marked essays. Teachers conducted the feedback lesson after marking the first essay. In relation to written feedback, teachers marked two essays, Composition 1 and 2 (cf 3.4) respectively. The comments made in these two essays provided the data for the analysis of written feedback. It must be pointed out here that in some cases there was embedding of different features of writing within a single comment. For example, “your composition is full of errors e.g. ideas that are not clear, tenses, spellings, wrong choice of words e.t.c. Check on that in order to improve next time.” (Made by Teacher H). This comment touches on content (ideas that are not clear), grammar (tenses, wrong choice of words) and mechanics (spellings). In the analysis however, it was counted as one comment. A total of 379 comments and 227 comments were counted in Composition 1 and 2 respectively.

5.3.1 General Focus of the Feedback
The first feature of the feedback analysed was its general focus both in the verbal and written feedback. An analysis of the feedback lessons and the marked essays revealed that all the teachers concentrated on pointing out the weaknesses in the students’ marked essays both in the feedback lesson and in the marked essays. Feedback Lessons 1, 2 & 3 (Tables 5.3-5.5) are summaries of sample feedback lessons from the collected data. From the lessons, it is clear that teachers took time to highlight the weaknesses they had observed in the students’ essays that had been marked.
Notice that Teacher K (Table 5.4) begins the lesson by pointing out that they (teacher and students) were going to look at the things the learners needed to avoid in the next composition they write. Teacher H (Table 5.5) begins by indicating that she would talk about the errors the learners had made. Teacher E (Table 5.3), is not as explicit, but asks the learners to look at the underlined places. Each of the teachers then goes on to enumerate various points of weakness encountered as he/she marked the student’ essays. For example, teacher K comments, “mother-tongue interference is a problem. You think in your mother-tongue then you write in English. Avoid joining words that should be separated.” Teacher H comments, “There were spelling mistakes, which were double underlined in the essays, and there was repetition. You kept repeating words or statements. These are marked R.” Teacher E observes,” prepositions were used wrongly, for example, writing “in the table” instead of “on the table.” Notice that majority of the summary points (bulleted in the summaries) in each lesson either directly or indirectly focus on weaknesses. In Feedback lesson 1(School E), eight out of the ten summary points pointed out a weakness. In Feedback Lesson 2 (School K: Appendix 3) the eleven summary points all focus on weaknesses and in Feedback Lesson 3(School H: Appendix 3) all ten summary points are on weaknesses. Teacher E makes two comments that can be characterized as pointing out strengths. She observes, “the writing was average. Meaning it was not perfect but it was good.” She also comments later on in the lesson that the frequency of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.5: Summary Feedback Lesson 7: School H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are going to look at the essays you wrote and which have been marked. Your work has marks ranging from 5 to 12 out of 20 depending on what you wrote. I will talk about the very common errors I encountered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Spelling mistakes. These are double underlined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Repetition. You kept repeating words or statements. These are marked R.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use of wrong words such as “there” for “their”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Omission of punctuation such as commas. Omission of articles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Mother-tongue influence e.g. So as not to be another student” “who was looking me through the eye”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Tenses. For example some wrote the past tense of come as comed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Misuse of capital letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Illogical sentence s and arguments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Some of you need to be more creative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Make your writing credible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I indicated the mistakes that were made and what should be done about them. We are going to write another essay.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
events in the stories was good, therefore the stories were easy to follow. The pattern of generally focusing on the weaknesses in the learners’ essays was evident among all the teachers in the classes under study.

An analysis of the written feedback, that is, the comments made in the marked essays also showed a great concentration on the weaknesses in the learners’ essays, as opposed to strengths. The findings are summarized in Table 5.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of comment</th>
<th>Composition 1 (N=379)</th>
<th>Composition 2 (N=227)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total number of comments</td>
<td>% of comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pointing out weakness</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>73.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pointing out strength</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pointing out neither</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>20.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A cumulative total of 379 comments were made in Composition 1 and 227 in Composition 2. It was found that 73.61% of the comments in Composition1 and 72.68% in Composition 2 were highlighting areas of weaknesses in the learners’ essays. On the other hand, 5.54% and 10.57% of the comments in composition 1 and 2 respectively focused on the strengths in the students’ writing. 20.84% and 16.74% in composition 1 and 2 respectively could not be categorized as pointing out weaknesses or strengths. Below are examples of the different categories of comments extracted from the data.

**Example 6: Pointing out weaknesses** *(Extracted from S 13’s Composition 1 School H)*
Check on your paragraphing
Use a variety of sentence structure
Avoid gross errors of wrong choice of words, omissions and repetitions

Example 7: Pointing out weaknesses (Extracted from S9’s Composition 2 School E)
Wrong use of the relative pronouns
Numerous spelling errors
The storyline is not convincing
Word order

Example 8: Pointing out strengths (Extracted from S4’s Composition 2 School E)
Good storyline
Good sentence patterns.

Example 9: Pointing out neither strength nor weakness (made by Teacher G in different learners’ essays-Composition 1)
Celebrate at home.
Hold a party for the club at school.
Act for others to give you money so as to improve the club.
Frame the certificate for the school.
Enroll to a college to improve your talent/skills.

The comments in example 9 were made in response to the question, ‘what would you have done if you had won the drama festival?’ They were simply suggestions relating to the content of the first essay, “A win at the National Drama Festivals.”
The concentration on the weaknesses in the learners’ essays could be born out of the belief that by pointing out the weaknesses, learners would be able to correct them and in turn improve their writing skills. It could also be seen as revealing the role the teachers see themselves as playing in the writing classroom. They seem to see themselves as judges of the students’ work. They are the authorities pointing out areas of weakness. It seems they view provision of feedback as only pointing out errors in the learners’ work. It has, however, been shown that a balance between criticism and praise may be the best for encouraging quality writing. In as much as students want to know what is wrong with their writing they are also anxious to receive at least some feedback on what they are doing right (Ferris, 2003, Keh, 1990). It was, therefore, concluded that, the teachers in the classes under study need to balance between the weaknesses and the strengths that they point out in the feedback they provide. The focus of the feedback on important features of writing in general and of narratives is discussed next.

5.3.2 Focus on Important Features of Writing and of Narratives
Having established that the feedback generally focused on the weaknesses in the learners’ essays, the present study also sought to find out what features of writing in general and of narratives (cf 4.1.2.1) did teachers focus on in the provision of feedback. This was assessed via two parameters.

i. Number of teachers commenting on a specific aspect, such as grammar or content in the feedback lesson.

ii. Number of comments, relating to each aspect of writing, given in the marked compositions.

An analysis of the feedback lessons revealed that majority of the important aspects received attention in the feedback lesson, albeit in varying degrees. Different teachers commented on different features of writing. For example, Teacher E (see table 5.3: Feedback lesson 1) commented on four important areas as shown in table 5.7
Table 5.7: Sample Summary of Comments made on different important features of writing in the feedback lesson (Teacher E)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of writing</th>
<th>Points made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Your story should be relevant to the title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The essays needed to have a title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization and development of narratives</td>
<td>The frequency of events was good so the stories were easy to follow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>You should maintain the same tense throughout the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use appropriate vocabulary in order to communicate your meaning clearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prepositions were used wrongly e.g. in the table instead of on the table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>There was a problem with spellings, may be out of carelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cross out mistakes neatly without making your work untidy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This summary (Table 5.7) shows that Teacher E commented on the areas of content, organization and development of narratives, grammar and mechanics. Out of the four features, she made most comments on grammar. This tendency to give more comments on grammar was replicated in all the other classes under study. Table 5.8 shows the distribution of teachers commenting on the different features in the feedback lessons.

Table 5.8 Distribution of teachers commenting on each area of writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of narratives</th>
<th>No. of teachers commenting on it (N=11)</th>
<th>% Teachers Commenting on it (N=11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>54.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Organization</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization and development of narration</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspects of style</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherence</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspects of grammar</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>72.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>63.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.8 shows that the area of grammar received most attention with 72.72% of the teachers touching on it. The aspect of mechanics with 63.63% followed this. Third in receiving attention was the aspect of content with 54.54%. It is interesting to note that organization and development of narrative, aspects of style...
and creativity received less attention with 36.36%, 9.09%, and 9.09%) respectively yet this was a lesson on narrative writing and these are key aspects of narrative writing. The aspect of coherence did not receive any attention in the feedback lesson. This is also interesting, as the same area had largely been ignored in the input lesson, yet coherence is one of the important features of effective writing (cf 4.1.2.1). It would have been expected that more teachers would focus on the important features of a narrative, since this was a lesson on narrative writing. But probably, this deficiency can be explained by the fact that features like aspects of style, coherence and organization are HOCs, which could be much harder to teach and comment on compared to aspects of grammar, and mechanics. Further analysis of the feedback lessons was done and a summary of the most recurrent points relating to each of the important features of writing extracted. These are summarized in table 5.9.
### Table 5.9: Summary of points raised in the feedback lessons per each important feature of writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature of writing</th>
<th>Summary of points raised</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>● You went out of topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● You need knowledge in a topic before writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Needed to write a title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General organization</strong></td>
<td>● Not written an outline leading to disorganization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Introduction not well written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● No logical conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization and development of narrative</strong></td>
<td>● A good plot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Poor timing of events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aspects of style</strong></td>
<td>● Good descriptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grammar</strong></td>
<td>● Violated subject-verb agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Using too many words to explain and repetitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Poor choice of words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Wrong use of tenses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Wrong use of prepositions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Omissions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Illogical sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Joining words not supposed to be joined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Direct translations from mother-tongue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mechanics</strong></td>
<td>● Punctuation marks not well used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Wrong spellings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Misuse of capital letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creativity</strong></td>
<td>● Improve creativity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice from this summary (Table 5.9) that the area of grammar has the most points, but all of them focusing on what was wrong. In fact, the area of grammar, has more points compared to creativity, aspects of style and organization and development of narrative, the three put together. As noted above, these three features are HOCs and could be harder to comment on. It has been argued that learners tend to pay attention to those features that teachers give prominence in the lesson and in the marking (Ellis, 1994; Keh, 1990; Ferris, 2003). Thus, learners in the classes under study are likely to pay more attention to grammar issues due to the prominence given it in the teachers’ feedback. This was found to
be the case when learners indicated that they would prefer more feedback on aspects of grammar and vocabulary usage (cf 6.3.3).

Turning to the learners’ marked essays, it was noted that the number of comments given were fewer in the second composition. However, in both compositions, the comments raised were analysed in terms of the important features of writing they addressed. Some of the comments like “vague” “repetition” and those general suggestions such as “read widely and diversely in order to improve” were not categorized as touching on any specific feature. An analysis of the written comments in relation to focus on important features of writing showed that just like in the feedback lesson, the areas of grammar and mechanics received the highest number of comments in both compositions. Grammar had 34.04% and 47.14% in the first and second compositions respectively. Mechanics had 22.96% and 20.70% in the first and second compositions respectively. Table 5.10 summarizes the distribution of comments extracted from the marked essays per each important feature of writing.

Table 5.10: Distribution of written comments per each feature of writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature of writing</th>
<th>Composition 1 (N=379)</th>
<th>Composition 2 (N=227)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. comments</td>
<td>Of %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General organization</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization and development of narrative</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspects of style</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>34.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>22.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specific to any feature</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>19.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.10 shows that all features of writing except aspects of style and cohesion were commented on in different essays by different teachers. Unlike in the feedback lesson where content received attention from 54.54% of the teachers, it seems that when it came to making written comments, the attention on this area reduced drastically. It received 10.55% and 7.49% of the total comments in the first and second compositions respectively. The areas of aspects of style and cohesion did not get any written comments at all in the first composition and in the second composition; aspects of style received only one comment in composition 2. While being able to comment on all features of writing is important, researchers agree that teachers cannot focus on all learner errors (Byrne, 1990; Keh, 199; Ferris, 2003). The teacher therefore must, prioritize specific areas for feedback. Keh (1990) advises that the teacher identify and limit comments to fundamental problems, bearing in mind that students cannot pay attention to everything at once.

Ferris, (2007) gives four possible sources that the teacher could consult before deciding the areas to address in his/her feedback. The first of these is the course rubric or grading criteria where such an instrument exists Ferris, reckons that where there is an external (departmental or institutional) set of standards by which students’ progress is eventually judged, the teacher should make learners aware of this criteria and provide feedback that will enable the students progress towards meting the standards. In the context of the present study, teachers would do well to make students aware of the KNEC’s expectations (as illustrated in the marking guide appendix 9) and guide learners appropriately, since these are the standards by which their progress is ultimately judged. However, only Teacher C and Teacher F, who indicated that they were examiners with KNEC, marking the composition writing paper, were found to give the KNEC expectations to the learners.
The second source that the teacher can consult for guidance on the areas to concentrate on in the provision of feedback according to Ferris (2007) is the specifications of the particular task or text type on which students are working. For example, where learners are asked to describe a personal experience, as was the case in the two compositions written for the present study, the teacher might want to comment on how well the story was told. The issues that the teacher might address in feedback should change as the task changes.

Thirdly, the teacher might provide feedback tailored to the needs and progress of the individual learner. For example, where it had been observed that a particular learner had a problem with use of tenses, the teacher might want to touch on the issue again on a subsequent paper, either to encourage the learner to improve or to remind the learner that it is still a problem. Lastly, the teacher could be guided by issues recently taught such as effective use of connectors, or developing ideas for support (Ferris, 2007).

From the two parameters above, (number of teachers commenting on a feature and number of written comments focusing on a specific feature), it is clear that the areas of grammar and mechanics received most attention. (See tables 5.8 and 5.10). Grammar and mechanics form LOCs (Keh 1990). LOCs, Keh argues are easy to notice and correct since they are guided by certain rules. On their part, HOCs such as support of arguments and organization are much harder to deal with. This concentration on LOCs as opposed to HOCs could be a result of the code- oriented type of instruction found to be prevalent in the classes under study in the research reported in this thesis. It could also be a direct consequence of the feeling that composition writing tests language use, which can boil down to grammar and mechanics such as choice of vocabulary, sentence structure, spellings and punctuation. It may also be due to the wash back effect of the feedback practices at the national examination, K.C.S.E. A look at the marking guide for writing from K.C.S.E showed that a lot of weight is given to matters of
language and or grammar (see Appendix 9) as shown in the following extract of the rubric for a class D essay from the marking guide:

The candidate does not communicate at all. His/her language ability is so minimal that the examiner practically has to guess what the candidate wants to say. The candidate fails to fit English words he/she knows into meaningful sentences. The subject is glanced at or distorted. Practically no punctuation. All kinds of errors. “Broken English” is evident.

Notice in this extract that a lot of emphasis is laid on language ability, sentences and punctuation. Reference to content is limited to” the subject is glanced at or distorted.’

Paying more attention to LOCs has an implication for the pedagogic process of writing. It may make the learners also concentrate on LOCs rather than on HOCs, because as Keh (1990) observes, the teacher’s management of HOCs and LOCs is crucial to the feedback process. Additionally, Keh notes that LOCs may disappear as the writer changes content. She thus advises teachers to deal more with HOCs.

Ferris (2003) reports that studies have shown that students value feedback on all aspects of their writing (Ferris, 1995, Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994). Teachers are therefore advised to give feedback about a variety of writing issues, including ideas, organization, grammar, mechanics, vocabulary and style depending upon the needs of the individual student, the developmental stage of the text, the specifications of the particular assignment and the overall expectations of the writing course. The form of the written comments given by teachers is discussed in the next section.

5.3.3 Form of the Written Feedback
Another characteristic of the feedback investigated was the form in which the written comments were given. This was investigated in light of the fact that the form is instrumental in the provision of clear and effective commentary. A
number of observations were made in regard to the form of comments. Firstly, it was noted that the comments were delivered largely in the form of directives telling the learner to do something, for example, ‘check your tenses,’ “improve your sentence construction,” and “correct your punctuation and spelling’ Directives formed the majority of the written comments with 49.08% and 47.14% in Composition 1 and Composition 2 respectively taking this form. The comments also took the form of statements, mostly pointing out a weakness such as “you did not write an outline leading to disorganization” and “Your composition is incomplete. You should have a better conclusion.” Statements made up 23.48% and 17.62% of the total comments in Composition 1 and 2 respectively. Teachers were also found to have given comments in the form of phrases. These were mostly noun phrases such as “direct translations” ‘wrong tenses’ and ‘weak sentences.” 13.98% and 13.66% of comments in Composition 1 and 2 respectively were in the form of phrases. The comments also took the form of single words, for example,“vague”,“repetition’ and “spelling” These made up 8.44% and 14.10% respectively. The final form that the written comments were found to take was as questions. These were both single word questions such as “spelling?” and “creativity?” as well as sentence questions such as “what is the meaning here?” and “how is this connected to drama?” These made up 5.01% and 7.49% of the comments in Composition 1 and 2 respectively. Table 5.11 gives the summary of distribution of the different forms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.11: Distribution of comments in terms of form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Form of comments</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This summary (Table 5.11) shows that teachers give their written comments in various forms but largely in the form of directives on what the learners needed to improve. The form in which comments are given has an implication for their usefulness as feedback to the learner. By focusing largely on the learners, essays’ weaknesses and giving comments in the form of directives, these teachers can be accused of “appropriation.” Appropriation means the “taking over” of students’ texts by being too authoritative and direct in their feedback (Ferris, 2003). Ferris, (2003) contends that the tendency of teachers to cross out portions of students’ texts and substitute other words or ideas, to make directive suggestions or use the imperative mood, communicates to the student writers that the teacher’s priorities are more important than what the writer wants to say in his text. Such appropriative behaviour, Ferris notes, can frustrate, disempower and demotivate the student writer. It was concluded that teachers in the classes under study could be demotivating the learners by giving so many directives.

Ferris (2003) is, however, quick to point out that an element of prescription appears necessary in L2 response because L2 student writers have less experience with English grammar and rhetorical structure compared to native speakers. Therefore, the teacher must struggle to find a balance between intervention (helpful) and appropriation (harmful). To avoid such appropriative behaviour teachers are advised to ask questions rather than to use statements or imperatives, to avoid use of “I” and “you” as in “You should have written an outline to avoid disorganization”, to use hedges (such as “may be you could...”) to soften criticism or suggestions, and to communicate that any revisions are left solely to the discretion of the text’s author (Ferris, 2003).

The form of comments also contributes to their clarity and in effect usefulness to the learner. A comment like” repetition” especially made at the bottom or top of the essay may not be very clear to the learner. Keh (1990) reports that students
indicated that one-word comments were very confusing. The students reported that it was not clear to them what a comment like “good” was complimenting. Was it content, writing style or grammar? Similarly, in the case of the present study, a comment like “repetitions” may leave the learner confused as to what they have repeated; is it words, sentences or ideas? Teachers would do well to minimize the use of word and phrasal comments, as they tend not to be clear.

Additionally, it is said that comments in the form of questions asking specific information or giving concrete suggestions, force the writer to think about the answers and lead to more effective revision than more general and abstract feedback (Ferris, 2001, 1997; Keh, 1990). These questions must, however, be clear and comprehensive. Ferris (2007) argues that questions can be a useful tool in teacher feedback, but their use, especially with novice L2 writers, can be tricky. For a start, the writer may fail to recognize a question as an indirect speech act and therefore ignore the suggestion. Secondly, the student may understand the question but fail to know how to incorporate the desired information into his/her text. Thirdly, if the teacher question is roundabout, abstract or irrelevant to the student’s purpose then it may not be of much help to the learner. Therefore the teacher must be very careful when using questions for feedback.

Teachers in the current study, for example, Teacher E were found to use one word questions such as “tenses?” “spellings?” These cannot be said to be clear and comprehensive, though they may set the learner thinking around the specified areas. One of the suggestions that students made for the improvement of provision of feedback in the present study was that teachers should give clear comments pointing out the specific problem that the learner should be addressing (cf 6.3.5). One way of achieving this could be through use of comments in the form of clear sentential questions addressing specific issues.
The form of written feedback was also looked at in relation to how specific or general the comment was. The specificity was judged on whether the comment touched on one of the important areas of writing (cf 4.1.2.1) or it did not. Examples of specific comments from the data include, “check your vocabulary usage,” “check your tenses,” and “you need to improve your handwriting.” From these comments, the learner can clearly see the issue he/she needs to address and can therefore find strategies for dealing with them. General comments include, “you need to read widely in order to improve”, “good” and “write clearly.” A comment like “write clearly” is general because it is not clear whether it is the handwriting that is not clear or the ideas in the essay. An analysis of the comments from this angle showed that 82.11% and 70.93% of the comments in composition 1 and 2 respectively were specific, while 17.94% and 29.07% were general comments (see Table 5.12).

**Table 5.12: Distribution of comments in terms of being specific or general.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of comment</th>
<th>Composition 1 (N=379)</th>
<th>Composition 2 (N=227)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>82.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>17.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this summary it is clear that the teachers’ comments were largely specific showing clearly the issues the learners needed to address, although as noted in 5.1, the specific errors were not indicated for the learners. The learner would have to check the highlighted areas in the marked essay to decide which error was on spelling, or tense for, example.

Just like with the broad question of the methods of feedback provision, a combination of the different forms of comments tailored to the needs of individual learners and writing tasks could be the best way to go for teachers. The ultimate goal should be clarity in order for the commentary to help the learner. Ferris,
(2007) advises that in making comments, grammatical terminology and rhetorical terms, such as “introduction” should be used carefully, especially with L2 writers, because these terms may not be readily understandable to them, unless the teacher has ascertained that the learners have prior knowledge of such terms.

5.3.4 Suggestions for Improvement
A further issue investigated in relation to feedback was whether it provided the learners with suggestions or guidelines for revision and future improvement of their work. On the whole, all the feedback provided could be looked at as suggestions for improvement, but on this particular question the concern was with the general advice given to help learners improve their writing as well as specific guidelines given to learners to help them address the weaknesses pointed out in their essays. Keh (1990) notes that feedback includes the suggestions that a reader gives a writer to help him produce reader-based prose as opposed to writer based prose (cf 5.1). Such guidelines and suggestions can be given in the form of explicit statements, or by illustrations and exemplifications. Thus, we sought to find out, for example, where a teacher had noted that learners had a problem with particular aspects such as sentence construction, spellings or even organization of ideas, what suggestions did the teacher make to the learners in order to solve the problem?

Analysis of the feedback lessons revealed that the ultimate advice to the learners was to look at what had been highlighted in their papers and attend to it. This was the general advice given by all the teachers in the classes under study. For example, Teacher E (Table 5.3: Feedback Lesson 5) advised learners to check their papers and make the necessary corrections. Teacher K (Table 5.4: Feedback Lesson 6) advised the students to check on the highlighted areas as they wrote the next essay. Teacher H (Table 5.5: Feedback Lesson 7) pointed out that she had indicated the students’ mistakes and what should be done about them. While this kind of general advice may be useful, it is important to realize that sometimes the
learners may not understand the comments made by teachers, and even if they do, they may not know how to deal with the problem. For example, for a comment like “you need to be more creative” the learner may or may not exactly understand what is being creative. Thus, it would benefit learners a lot if suggestions on how to be creative are made.

Teacher J and Teacher C were the only ones found to give practical suggestions for improvement in the feedback lessons. For example, Teacher J advised that to correct the many spelling mistakes, students should always read through after writing their essays, to check out any spelling mistakes. This, she told learners was a useful way of dealing with straightforward spelling mistakes, such as those borne out of carelessness or a slip of the pen. On spelling mistakes that the learner could not easily notice, and which were therefore underlined during the marking, the teacher advised the students to check for their spellings in the dictionary. Students added that practicing to write the words repeatedly as well as reading could also address the problem.

Teacher C on the other hand, noted that her students’ compositions had introductions that were weak in flow and coherence. She attributed this problem to lack of a proper outline. She then went on to illustrate how to come up with a good outline. She suggested that the first step was to brainstorm on the topic even before writing an outline. She advised that at this point, the learner should not be concerned with the organization but rather put down ideas as they came to mind. To do this, the learner should ask herself questions such as, what do I want to write on? What is my departure point and what is my destination? Who is going with me? What did I see on the way? (Write down your impressions in point form), what preparations did I make? The teacher then pointed out that after the ideas have been put down, then the learner could organize them into introduction, body and conclusion. This teacher went on to specify that in the introduction the
writer should introduce characters, theme, and setting of the story. The teacher then went on to read and discuss samples of poorly written introductions and samples of well-written introductions. For each of the samples, she explained what made it poor or good. The teacher then went on to explain how to craft the body and the conclusion of a story. Note that the samples used in this class were drawn from the learners’ marked essays. Such practical, contextualized suggestions are more useful to the learners than when they (learners) are simply told, ‘your story was disorganized because you did not write an outline.’

It should be noted that the comments and suggestions made in the feedback lesson, were largely to clarify and reinforce what had been highlighted in the marked essays. Nevertheless, an analysis of the comments made in the essays was also done to establish how many of these could be characterized as suggestions for improvement. It was found that only 22 (5.80%) and 8 (3.52%) of the comments in Composition 1 and 2 respectively, could be characterized as providing some practical guidance to addressing the identified weaknesses in the learner essays. Some examples of such suggestions extracted from the data follow.

**Example 10: Suggestion for improvement: (Extracted from S3’s Essay 2 School A)**

Read widely and diversely in order to write and communicate effectively

**Example 11: Suggestion for improvement (Extracted from S12’s Essay 1 School B)**

You need to read widely to improve your spelling and vocabulary

**Example 12: Suggestion for improvement (Extracted from S4’s Essay 2 School D)**

Study the errors I have marked and see if you can correct them.
The analysis of the comments showed that the same suggestion was given to a few students in different versions. For example, Teacher A gave the suggestion to read widely and diversely to 4 students, and Teacher D suggested the need to study the marked parts and to try and correct them to 3 students. Secondly, a look at the suggestions given, though providing some guidelines for improvement, they are quite general. Some, like the need to read widely could only have long-term benefits if taken by the learner. Notice that teachers did not give any suggestions that could be useful for the immediate revision of the essay. After all, revision was not required. These were single-draft classes.

From the foregoing findings in relation to suggestions for improvement provided in the feedback, it was concluded that teachers in the classes under study need to give and demonstrate more practical ways of addressing some of the problems they (teachers) identify in students’ writing, instead of simply asking the learners to look at the highlighted problems and to correct them. Ferris (2007) advises that teachers can give suggestions for revision using hedged statements, but give the student permission to disagree or not to use the suggestion, provided the student can explain why.

A different but related feature of feedback observed from the data of the present study was that teachers tended to give almost the same comments to all the learners, with only slight variations. For example, in Composition 1 teacher H comments that learners should check their errors on spellings, wrong words, omissions, and direct translation from mother-tongue. This is repeated in 11 out of the 15 sampled compositions (see summary of comments per student in tables 5.13 & 5.14)
Table 5.13: Sample comments given to different students; Composition 1: School H

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Score out of 20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Be more creative</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Express your ideas clearly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Check on the errors made e.g. spelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Check on the errors made e.g. repetition, use of wrong words, tenses and</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>spelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Check on the errors made of repetition, spelling, tenses and use of wrong</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Check on your errors of capitalization, use of wrong words, omissions</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and spellings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Your composition is full of errors e.g. ideas that are not clear, tenses,</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>spellings, wrong choice of words e.t.c. Check on that in order to improve</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>next time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Check on your use of words, spellings and avoid unnecessary repetitions</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Avoid gross mistakes of spelling, omissions and use of wrong words.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More creativity is required.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Express your ideas clearly</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Express yourself more clearly</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Check on the errors made e.g. spellings, wrong words, omissions, and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>direct translations from mother tongue.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Write clearly by being more creative</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoid using words which you are not sure of their meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Check on errors made</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Aim at communicating your ideas clearly e.g. by constructing sentences</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>correctly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoid errors of omissions, spellings, tenses and repetition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Punctuate your work correctly</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be more creative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rectify on errors of use of wrong words, omissions, repetition and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tenses.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Check on your paragraphing</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use a variety of sentence structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoid gross errors of wrong choice of words, omissions and repetitions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Should have a better conclusion</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Check on the errors made and try to rectify them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Use words and prepositions correctly</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice in this summary Teacher H gives three main points of feedback. These are: “check on your errors of capitalization, use of wrong words, omissions and spellings.” This comment is given to eleven students, with slight variations. “Express your ideas clearly.” This was given to four students. “Be more creative.” This point was given to four students.
Table 5.14: Sample comments given to different students: Composition 2: School H.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Score out of 20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Avoid too many omissions and other errors e.g. repetitions, wrong words and tenses</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Check on the errors made and rectify them</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Express your ideas clearly</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoid too many errors in your composition e.g. direct translation from your mother-tongue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Poor construction (beside a paragraph)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Express your ideas clearly and fully</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Check the errors made and rectify them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Title? Check on errors made and rectify them</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Avoid too much repetition and check on the other errors made</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>(No comment made)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Poor construction (besides a paragraph)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Write clearly by expressing your ideas fully</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoid direct translation from your mother-tongue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Check on the errors made</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Avoid direct translation from your mother-tongue plus other errors</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Express yourself clearly</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoid translation from your mother-tongue directly into English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Check on the errors made e.g. choice of words, tenses, vagueness, and spellings e.t.c.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Title? Avoid joining words unnecessarily</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Express yourself clearly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Too many errors of omissions, tense and poor construction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Check on errors made and try to rectify them</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Your composition is incomplete. Should have a better conclusion</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Check on the errors made</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Avoid direct translation from your mother-tongue</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.14 shows that in the second composition Teacher H also gave three main points of feedback. The first is, “check on the errors made and rectify them”. This was given to seven students. The second is, “express your ideas clearly.” This appeared in seven essays. The third point of feedback is “Avoid too many errors in direct translations from your mother-tongue. This comment was found in six essays out of the 15 sampled essays. Generally, the feedback given for
Composition 1 and Composition 2 is similar, though this could be accounted for by the fact that both were narrative.

As noted above, teachers in this study tended to give similar comments to all the students in the class. It is important for teachers to realize that when it comes to feedback “one size does not fit all.” Different students may require different types of feedback. Teachers need to be aware that students are not identical in their experience, knowledge and motivations. The teacher, therefore needs to assess his/her students’ prior experiences, knowledge and expectations at the beginning of a writing course and to explain his/her own responding strategies to their students, for more effective provision of feedback (Ferris, 2003, Reid, 1998, Leki, 1992)

Further, teachers need to be aware that different types of assignments may lend themselves to diverse forms of feedback (Ferris, et.al, 1997). For instance, Ferris (2003) notes that a teacher’s suggestion to “add more details” might be helpful if the task is on narrative writing, but counterproductive in a persuasive text, in which extraneous detail could distract the reader and weaken the point.

Teachers are also reminded that the effect of their feedback is constrained by the institutions and courses within which the teaching and learning is taking place. For instance, Ferris (2003) observes that similar feedback on different tasks will have different effects depending on the goals of the task. Ferris notes that extensive feedback and corrections on a task designed to build students fluency and reflective thinking abilities, such as student journal entries, may not have much effect. The same kind of feedback in an in-class graded mid-term writing task might help the student know how to approach such a task the next time. On the other hand, such feedback will be most effective if given in response to an intermediate draft of an essay to be revised for a grade or to be submitted in a
portfolio. Ferris thus advises that teachers should consciously vary their feedback to match the goals of the writing task. They should respond as readers to the content of journal entries, give test-taking strategy tips in feedback on in-class essay exams and give specific text-based suggestions on papers that students will revise again. The question on the provision of feedback cannot be complete without addressing the teachers’ views on the same. This is the issue addressed in the next section.

5.4 Teachers’ Views on Provision of Feedback
After establishing various features of teacher feedback provision practices from the analysis of feedback lessons and marked learners’ essays, teachers’ views on the same were also sought through interviews. The first question raised was how many compositions teachers are able to give and mark per term. Teachers gave different answers. For example, Teacher A said four, Teacher D said four, Teacher E said two, and Teacher J said two that constitute the mid-term and end-term exams, while Teacher B said not many. It was concluded that on average teachers are able to give and mark two compositions in a term. One major reason given for this minimal practice in giving composition writing was the workload and large classes.

Teacher C for example said writing is not taught regularly, yet the syllabus has a lot of content on writing to be taught. All the teachers said that marking was tedious, so it is not always possible to give and mark compositions. Similar views have been found among other writing teachers (Truscott, 1996, Ferris, 2003, Byrne, 1990).

Another question raised in the interviews sought to find out how teachers provided feedback in case they were unable to mark a composition. It emerged that different teachers used different approaches. For example, Teacher F said that even when she was unable to read and mark the compositions, she would simply
write “seen,” “checked,” or “good work” on the compositions just to give the student the satisfaction that she had read the work and to encourage them to continue writing. It was felt that while such general comments may seem like they are encouraging, they do not give the learner anything to help him improve his writing in future.

On the same question above, Teacher B said that she simply selected the best and the worst compositions and read them out in the class, and encouraged the class to read and emulate the good ones. We are of the opinion that since the teacher already knows the weak and the strong students in the class based on performance in previous similar tasks, it is easy to select the good and the worst compositions even without reading through them. This may have both a negative and a positive impact. It encourages those whose writing is chosen as the best but at the same time it may make them complacent, since they feel they are above reproach. Not to add that, since no specific issues are pointed out for improvement, they may not advance beyond a certain point. On the other hand, those whose writings are always termed the worst may get discouraged. It is important to bear in mind that even the weakest of writers need to be encouraged. Teachers A and H revealed that they do not give any feedback at all for compositions not mark, while others said they try to mark all the compositions they gave. Only Teacher C reported that because of time constraints she encourages students to write compositions and mark for one another, then once in a month they submit to the teacher to mark. Some teachers revealed that they sometimes asked students to write in groups especially when it came to functional writing. This made it easy to read and mark the work, hence helping cope with the challenges of large numbers of students and time constraints. Notice that from all these views only one teacher seems to be aware that peer feedback can be utilized as a method of feedback provision. It was concluded that teachers need to incorporate other methods of
providing feedback, such as peer feedback, teacher-student conferences and learners’ self evaluation.

A third question posed to the teachers sought to establish the important features of writing they emphasized both in the writing lessons and in the provision of feedback. All the teachers indicated that they largely focused on aspects of grammar, mechanics of spelling and handwriting and vocabulary usage. Teacher K, for example said that the composition tests language and therefore she feels the need to concentrate on features such as spelling and sentence structure. Only Teacher F concerned herself with creativity in addition to the features of grammar. These findings are congruent with those from the input lesson and the feedback lessons, where it was found that more teachers tended to give more attention to LOCs as compared to HOCs. It was concluded that a balance is needed between the LOCs and the HOCs.

A final question sought teachers’ views on the role(s) the teachers saw themselves as playing both in the writing lesson and when marking the students’ essays. All the teachers reported that in the lesson, they see themselves as guides and motivators. They needed to inspire the students, give them ideas on what to write, and on the interpretation of the topics as well as encourage learners to know that they can be good writers. This was contrary to what they did in the feedback lesson, where they largely pointed out weaknesses, which was hardly motivating.

In relation to the marking of the essays the teachers in the writing classes under observation indicated that they had more than one role. These included judging or evaluating the students’ written essays, motivating or encouraging the learners and being interested readers out to enjoy what the students wrote. Seven (7) teachers indicated that, in addition to being judges, they were also motivators. In marking and giving comments they hoped to encourage the learners to become
better at writing. Four (4) of the teachers indicated that in addition to motivating and judging the students’ writing they were also interested readers.

From the above views it is clear that the most popular role is that of being a judge since all the teachers indicated that they see it as one of the most important roles they play in providing feedback. Perhaps this explains the concentration on the weaknesses in the students’ essays both in the verbal and written comments. May be the reason why the role of judge is popular is because of the feeling that one needs to adequately prepare the candidates for the final exam. One teacher commented that the concern for teachers and students is their performance in K.C.S.E and not beyond. Generally, the whole system is exam oriented and the usefulness, beyond the examination, of what is learnt is not always envisaged. It is no wonder that communicative type of instruction that seeks to give learners a realistic view of what they learn is minimally used in the classes.

This dominance of the role of being a judge leading to high concentration on the weaknesses in the learners’ essays has another implication for the pedagogic process of writing. Learners also seem to have come to the conclusion that the teacher is only out to look for their errors. Writing therefore becomes very boring and a sort of punishment instead of a learning experience. A writing task is looked at as another reason for the teacher to remind them their weaknesses with no other useful end to it. This clearly came to the fore in one of the observed classes. After receiving their first marked essays and going through the feedback lesson, the learners were not willing to write the second essay. It was observed that there was a lot of underlining and circling – a lot of red marks on the students’ papers. The teacher’s verbal feedback further emphasized the students’ weak points, and all this did not go down well with them, especially so because it was happening in the presence of a visitor (the researcher). In relation to the concern with learner errors, Byrne (1990) notes that there is always a great
temptation, perhaps a natural inclination, to concentrate on what is wrong in a piece of writing. But if we are to be truly readers rather than judges, we should look not so much on what the learners have failed to achieve but rather at what they have succeeded in doing. This would be good advice for teachers in the context of this study.

5.5 Summary
This chapter focused on the provision of feedback for writing. Data for this objective was gathered from the feedback lesson and the marked essays. For a start, the findings indicate that the classes under study do not use multiple drafting and revision. Instead, learners write only one final draft, on which feedback is provided. The learners are not required to write a revision. It has, however, been shown that feedback is most effective when it is delivered at intermediate stages of the writing process, when students can respond to feedback in subsequent revisions and may thus be motivated to attend to teacher suggestions (Ferris, 1995, Krashen, 1984, Leki, 1990a, Zamel, 1985). Thus teachers are advised to focus their feedback efforts on intermediate drafts of students’ texts. They (teachers) should perhaps limit final draft feedback to some affirmation of what the writer has done well and to a summative suggestion or two about problems or issues the writer should consider for future assignments (Ferris, 2003).

With regard to the methods of provision of feedback, it was found that the most prevalent method was indirect uncoded error feedback. The teachers were found to underline or circle errors in the learners’ essays without specifying the errors. The learners are expected to diagnose and address the error. The underlining and/or circling are sometimes accompanied by symbols such as ^ (omissions) and Sp (spelling errors). In addition, it was found that majority of the teachers included comments on the essays. These comments formed the gist of the feedback lesson. The feedback lesson was mainly used to clarify and reinforce the general observations made from the marked essays. Peer feedback and teacher-student
conferences as methods of provision of feedback were found to be hardly used. A multi-faceted approach to the provision of feedback, where the three methods are used together is the most recommended.

A further finding in relation to provision of feedback was that the comments provided, generally focused on the weaknesses in the learner essays. Positive comments focusing on strengths of the essays were minimal, only 5.54% in composition 1 and 10.57% in composition 2. The comments mostly took the form of statements and directives, while questions were minimal. The comments were however, quite specific on the issues that learners needed to address, for example, “check your sentence construction,” “avoid mother-tongue translation.” General comments were minimal. In addition, it was observed that teachers rarely made suggestions for revision. The overall suggestion was that learners should check what had been highlighted in their essays and make the necessary corrections. Chances are this was never done, since no revisions were required.

Turning to the focus on important aspects of writing, it emerged that the areas of grammar and mechanics received most attention both in the feedback lesson and in the written comments. In the lesson 72.72% and 63.63% of teachers touched on these respective areas, while in the written comments grammar had 34.04% and 47.14% of the comments in Composition 1 and Composition 2 respectively. Mechanics had 22.96% and 20.70% in composition 1 and composition 2 respectively. These percentages are high compared to the other areas (See table 5.10). This concentration on grammar and mechanics was attributed to the fact that they are LOCs, easy to notice and deal with, since they are governed by certain rules. The other areas, which form HOCs, did not receive much attention, yet they are very critical when it comes to writing. As Keh (1990) observes, more attention need to be paid to HOCs, as errors relating to LOCs may disappear as the writer revises the content of his writing.
From these findings, it was concluded that there is need to adopt a multiple-drafting and revising approach to the teaching of writing, in order to make provision of feedback more effective. Such an approach will also allow, for a multi-faceted approach to feedback, with the different methods, namely, peer feedback, student-teacher conferences and error feedback plus teacher comments being applied at different stages of the writing process.

With regard to the focus and form of comments, teachers are reminded that in as much as learners need to know what is wrong with their writing; they also need to know what is right. Therefore feedback should not solely focus on the weaknesses in the writing. In addition, criticism should be framed in a way that it does not discourage the apprentice writer. Thus, positive comments and hedged suggestions are in order. Most importantly, teacher comments should be clear and concise. The teacher should also limit the comments to a few pertinent issues, as the learner cannot address everything. Due to this, the teacher needs to be consciously aware of the goals of a certain writing task, and the experiences, knowledge and motivations of his or her learners in order to decide which are the pertinent issues that need to be dealt with in a particular writing task. Furthermore, the teacher should provide feedback for all the important aspects of writing only varying the weight depending on the needs of individual learners and specific tasks. It should be borne in mind that ESL writers have a limited repertoire of English and therefore teacher feedback is not only expected, but it is also valued. It has been shown that ESL writers attend to teacher feedback and attempt to utilize it in their revisions.

Ultimately, in the provision of feedback, teachers are advised to respond as concerned readers to a writer-as person and not as grammarians or grade-givers (Keh, 1990). Teachers are urged to communicate in a “… distinctly human voice, with a sincere respect for the writer as a person and a sincere interest in his improvement as a writer” (Kehl, 1970: 76)
CHAPTER SIX
LEARNERS’ REACTIONS TO WRITING LESSONS AND TO TEACHER FEEDBACK

6.0 Introduction
In chapters four and five findings and discussions relating to input in the writing lessons and provision of feedback for writing were discussed. The present chapter shifts focus from the teacher to the learner. The chapter presents findings on the last objective of the present study. This objective was to find out and describe learners’ reactions to the writing lessons and to the teacher feedback. Among questions addressed here is how learners view the explanations given in the writing lessons, and how they feel the teaching of writing could be improved. In relation to feedback, learners’ views on their utilization of the feedback and how the provision of feedback could be made more efficient and effective are presented.

6.1. Learners’ Reactions: Preliminary Comments
Students are central participants in the pedagogic process. They are the “raw materials” that go into the process. The success of the learning process is determined by the knowledge and skills the learners acquire after going through the process. This acquisition is demonstrated by the learners’ performance in tasks requiring the knowledge and skills. Thus the success of the pedagogic process of writing, for example, will be demonstrated when learners can produce comprehensible pieces of writing at their level or higher. The views and attitudes of learners on what goes on in the process are therefore important. It is argued that learners should be active and proactive agents in the feedback process (Hyland & Hyland, 2006a). Lee (2008) observes that a failure to understand how students feel and respond to teacher feedback, exposes teachers to the risk of continually using strategies that are counter-productive. It is therefore crucial for student responses to feedback to be fed back to teachers as a heuristics to enable teachers develop reflective and effective feedback practices. It is with this in mind, that the fourth objective of this study was to assess the reaction of the apprentice
writers to the writing lessons and the feedback to writing provided by the teachers in the classes under study.

Hyland (1998) points out that learner reactions can be looked at in terms of affective factors or in terms of their writing development. Thus the findings on this objective are discussed in relation to affective factors and how this may relate to the learners’ development of writing. Krashen’s (1987) Affective Filter Hypothesis forms the basis for the discussion of the affective factors.

In the present study teachers conducted an input writing lesson, a feedback lesson and also marked two essays for the learners. On average it was found that each of the teachers involved in the study had taught the particular class for at least one year, that is, three terms or more. It was actually noted that all the teachers had previously taught various aspects relating to writing and were therefore building on that knowledge in the lessons observed for the study reported in this thesis. It is with reference to these lessons and learners’ prior experiences in writing lessons and teacher feedback that the current study sought to assess and describe their (learners’) reactions. This was achieved by use of questionnaire items targeting specific aspects of the lessons and of feedback. A total of 151 students filled in the questionnaire (see appendix 5) -that provided data for the objective on students’ reactions.

In exploring the objective the following four questions were raised.

i. What are the students’ views on the teaching of writing in relation to:

- vocabulary used?
- explanations given in the lessons?
- the learners’ participation in the lessons?
- how interesting the lessons are?
Things that the teacher does in teaching writing that help the student to become a better writer?

ii. How do learners feel the teaching of writing can be improved?

iii. What are the students’ views on the feedback in relation to:
   - the average number of compositions written and marked per term?
   - areas of the writing commented on?
   - areas they would like comments on?
   - the fairness and objectivity of the comments and grades or marks given by the teacher?
   - what they do when they receive their marked essays?
   - their understanding of the comments?
   - their utilization of the comments and suggestions given.
   - Things that the teacher does in marking and giving corrections to help learners become better writers.

iv. How do learners feel the provision of feedback can be improved?

In this chapter we present our findings and discussions on the questions above.

6.2 Learners’ Feedback on the Writing Lessons
As noted above, teachers had been asked to prepare an input lesson and a feedback lesson. Learners’ views on various aspects of the writing lessons were gathered and analysed.

6.2.1 Explanations Given in the Writing Lessons.
The first question addressed was the explanations given in the writing lessons. For a start, we sought to know from learners whether the teachers did or did not explain what they expected of learners in writing tasks given in class. Majority of the learners indicated that teachers explained their expectations for each writing task. A related question sought information on how detailed the learners felt teacher explanations were. Many students indicated that the explanations were
quite detailed. They indicated that teachers spent a lot of time explaining important points about the topic and how to write. The distribution of views relating to explanations is captured in Table 6.1

Table 6.1: Distribution of Students’ views on explanations in the writing lessons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanations on what is expected</th>
<th>How detailed the explanations are</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Given</td>
<td>Not given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of students</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of students</td>
<td>93.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1 shows that 93.34% of the learners indicated that the teacher did give their expectations for different writing tasks. Only 6.62% said expectations were not explained. 54.95% of the students said teachers give detailed explanations.44.35% indicated that the teachers only give brief details while 0.66% reported that the teachers simply asks them to write. Without giving any explanations of what is expected of them. These findings are congruent with the observations made in the writing lessons. The teachers were found to take time to explain to learners how to go about the writing of a composition.

Being told what is expected of them, and receiving detailed explanations is very important for the learners because, as apprentices, learners need all the guidance they can get, before, during and even after they have written an essay. This is especially so, because writing is a skill that develops over a period of time and some important information has to be repeated over and over again. The explanations and expectations form part of the input in the writing lesson. The input serves to start the learners off in the writing tasks. Knowing what is expected of one in a task reduces anxiety. According to Krashen (1987), anxiety is one affective factor that raises the affective filter. Learners with high affective
filters seek less input, and convert even less of the accessible input into intake or stored knowledge

A second question sought students’ perceptions of the teachers’ focus on the important aspects of writing, namely: grammar, punctuation and spelling, content, general organization, and organization of a specific form of writing; were sought. Majority of the students, 106 or 70.20% indicated that teachers paid attention to all the areas. With regard to the specific features, the students indicated that the teachers seemed to focus more on grammar, spelling and punctuation compared to organization, content and features of specific forms of writing. The distribution of students’ views on the explanations received in the different important areas of writing is captured in Table 6.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of students</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Grammar &amp; Punctuation</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of students</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=151</td>
<td>6.62</td>
<td>10.60</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>7.95</td>
<td>70.20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table shows that 70.20% of the learners indicated that teachers focused on all the important features of writing in the explanations given in class. On the different features, 10.60% of the learners indicated that teachers paid attention to the areas of grammar, spelling and punctuation. An interesting observation is that in the interviews with teachers, 7 out the 11 teachers or 63.63% also reported themselves as paying more attention to grammar and mechanics in their input. These aspects make good writing in the teachers’ views. Thus students’ views seem to agree with their teachers’ views.

Further, Table 6.2 shows that 7.95% of the students reported that explanations were given on how to organize ideas, sentences and paragraphs (general
organization) in writing. 6.62% reported that the teacher explains some points that can be included in writing (content), and 4.64% indicated that explanations on the format of specific forms of writing such as the lay out of a business letter are given. It seems, according to learners, teachers pay more attention to LOCs as compared to HOCs. All in all, the fact that teacher explanations touch on all important areas of writing, gives the learners confidence. Confidence, according to Krashen (1985), lowers the learners’ affective filters. Learners with low affective filters seek more input and convert even more of it into intake.

The learners’ views here are congruent with the observations made in both the input and feedback lessons, where teachers were found to provide details on all aspects relevant to writing, albeit to varying degrees (cf 4.1.2.2). The findings are also in tandem with those from other studies that have shown that teachers provided input and feedback that responded to students’ ideas and organization as well as their errors in grammar and mechanics (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Dessner, 1991; Lam, 1992; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Ferris, 1995, 1997; Ferris et al., 1997). According to Badger & White (2000) writing development happens by drawing out the learners’ potential and providing input to which learners respond. It is evident from observations and the students’ views that teachers do provide the necessary and relevant input for development of writing skills.

These findings are important because it has been shown that ESL writers appreciate information on the important features of their writing (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Ferris, 1995). Information helps learners to be consciously aware of what to pay attention to in their writing. In turn, the risk of concentrating on only one aspect such as grammar while ignoring others such as content or coherence is reduced. The four important pillars of writing, namely, unity,
support, coherence and sentence skills are all put into consideration by the learner as he goes through the writing process.

A third question related to teacher explanations in the writing lessons sought students’ views on the vocabulary used in the writing lesson. Learners were required to indicate whether they thought the vocabulary the teacher used in the lesson was easy, fairly easy or difficult. The findings are summarized in Table 6.3.

**Table 6.3: Distribution of students’ views on the level of vocabulary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of vocabulary</th>
<th>No. of students</th>
<th>% (N= 151)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>25.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly easy</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>65.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This summary (Table 6.3) shows that 25.82 % of the students reported the vocabulary to be easy, 65.54% said the vocabulary was fairly easy and 7.28% said the vocabulary was difficult.

The level of difficulty of vocabulary is very significant for the provision of input. Krashen (1985) argues that one can only acquire what he understands, hence the need for provision of comprehensible input. Ellis (1994) also argues for comprehensible input and adds that one way of achieving this is by simplifications such as shorter utterances and use of less complex syntax and lexis or vocabulary. The fact that the majority of the students in the study; 65.54%, feel that the vocabulary used in their writing lessons is fairly easy means that majority understand a great deal of the lesson. This in turn, reduces anxiety and builds confidence, resulting in a positive impact on their learning of writing.
6.2.2 Learners’ Participation in the Writing Lessons

Having established that majority of learners were satisfied with the explanations and vocabulary used in the writing lessons, the question of their participation was addressed. Learners were asked to indicate whether the teacher: gives them enough opportunities to participate in the writing lesson, rarely gives them an opportunity to participate in the writing lesson or does not give them an opportunity to participate. The learners’ responses indicated that most of the learners were satisfied with the level of participation they are allowed in the writing lessons. Table 6.4 shows the findings on the question of participation in the writing lessons.

Table 6.4: Distribution of students’ views on participation in the writing lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities for participation</th>
<th>Given</th>
<th>Rarely given</th>
<th>Not given</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of students</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% (N=151)</td>
<td>80.10</td>
<td>19.20</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that 80.10% of the students reported that they are given enough opportunities for participation. 19.20% said they are rarely given opportunities to participate, while 0.66% reported that they are not given an opportunity to participate.

Further, it was observed, in all the classes under study, that participation was open to all. Questions and or instructions were directed to the whole class and not to individuals. However, not all the students got an opportunity to answer questions, for example, although some did not indicate the desire to by raising their hands. The feeling that they are free to participate actively in the lesson is a source of motivation for the learners. According to Krashen (1985) high motivation lowers the affective filter and therefore the learner seeks more input
and allows even more to become intake or acquired knowledge. Additionally, allowing students to participate is a good way of drawing out the learners’ potential as advocated by Badger & White (2000).

Various reasons were given for the views on participation in the lesson. Among the reasons given by those who indicated that they are given enough opportunities to participate in the lessons were:
- The teacher allows us to answer questions and corrects us if we are wrong.
- The teacher allows us to ask questions.
- The teacher is open to our suggestions, comments and corrections.
- The teacher frequently asks whether everyone has understood or has a question.

Notice that all these reasons seem to underscore the feeling that the teacher values the students’ contributions. This is an important motivation for the student especially because the teacher is often seen as a figure of authority, and his or her acceptance of a students’ contribution is an indication that the student is making positive strides. This in turn fosters a positive attitude towards the teacher as well as what is being learnt. In effect, the affective filters are lowered allowing for better learning.

Among the reasons given by those who felt that they are rarely given opportunities to participate were:
- The teacher spends most of the time teaching so there is no time to ask questions.
- Only a few people are given a chance because of limited time.
- I am not given an opportunity because I am not a good writer.
- I am not noticed because of my sitting position.
There seems to be an underlying negative attitude that raises the affective filter in the reasons given by this last group of students. A raised affective filter means that the learners seek very little input and allows even less of it to become intake (Krashen, 1985).

Learners’ participation in a lesson can be determined by how interesting they consider the lesson to be. Thus, a related question sought to find out how interesting learners thought their writing lessons are. The findings are captured in Table 6.5.

**Table 6.5: Distribution of students’ views on how interesting their writing lessons are**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How interesting the writing lessons are</th>
<th>Very interesting</th>
<th>Fairly interesting</th>
<th>Not interesting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No. of students</strong></td>
<td>96</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% (N=151)</strong></td>
<td>63.57</td>
<td>33.76</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.5 shows that 63.57% reported the lessons to be interesting. 33.76% said the lessons are fairly interesting and 2.65% reported the writing lessons not to be interesting. Various reasons were given for the varied views on how interesting the writing lessons are. Among the reasons given by those who held the view that the lessons are very interesting were:

- The teacher makes the class lively by use of humour and cracking jokes.
- We learn something new.
- I enjoy writing.
- The teacher gives interesting examples.
- The teacher reads interesting sample compositions.
- The teacher connects teaching with current issues happening in the world.
- Interesting arguments arise in groups.

Those who felt that the lessons were fairly interesting had the following reasons.
We do not write many compositions.
I do not understand some of the things the teacher talks about.
The teacher repeats the same thing many times.
Writing is tiresome.
Sometimes the teacher explains too fast and does not make the lesson lively.
Some of the topics are boring.
I do not enjoy writing. I only write because the teacher needs the books.
Time for participation is mostly given to those who are good writers (experts).

Among the reasons given by those who held that the writing lessons are not interesting are:
I am not used to writing.
I don’t enjoy writing. I do it for the sake of exams.
Writing requires one to think too fast.

The views of the learners on how interesting the writing lessons are have significance for the pedagogic process. It seems the judgement of how interesting the lessons are, is based on different criteria, such as how the teacher presents the information, materials and activities used and the general students’ attitude to writing. Lessons where teachers crack jokes use relevant samples and a variety of examples and link the lesson content to current happenings in the world are considered interesting. The students who hold this view also seem to have a positive attitude to writing, a factor necessary in lowering the affective filter. They indicate, for example, that they enjoy writing. Those who hold that the lessons are not interesting also indicate that they do not enjoy writing. Notice that one student indicates that he not only does not enjoy writing but he also writes for the sake of exams. Again, just like in the case of participation, the reasons given by the group that reports the lessons not to be interesting seem to have an underlying negative attitude that may need to be addressed by both teachers and learners.
From the foregoing findings it is evident that majority of learners hold a positive attitude towards the writing lesson. For a start, majority of the students, 93.34% compared to 6.62% indicated that expectations for any given task are given in class. 54.95% went on to say that the explanations given are detailed, while 44.35% indicated that brief explanations are given as opposed to 0.66% who indicated that no details are given. 70.20% indicated that explanations are given on all important aspects of writing, while no one reported that explanations are not given on any of the important areas. 65.54% and 25.82% indicated that the vocabulary used in the lesson is fairly easy and easy respectively compared to 7.28% and 0.66% who considered the vocabulary difficult and very difficult respectively. 80.10% indicated that they are given opportunities to participate in the writing lesson, as opposed to 0.66% that indicated they are not given opportunities to participate. On the question of how interesting the lessons are, 63.57% and 33.76% indicated that the lessons are very interesting and fairly interesting respectively compared to 2.65% that reported the lessons are not interesting. This positive attitude in effect has a positive effect on the pedagogic process. A positive attitude raises motivation and in turn lowers the learners’ affective filter. According to Krashen (1987) learners with lowered or weak affective factors seek and obtain more input and turn more of that input into intake. Thus they acquire more. If properly exploited then, the positive attitude can contribute greatly to the pedagogic process of writing.

6.2.3 Improving the Teaching of Writing: Learners’ Suggestions.

After establishing that learners are generally satisfied with various aspects of the writing lessons as shown in the preceding sections, the present study went on to find out the specific features of the writing lessons that the learners really appreciate. In addition, learners’ views on how the teaching of writing can be improved were sought.
In relation to the first question, learners were asked to give at least two things that they felt the teachers do in teaching writing to help them (learners) to become better writers. A number of interesting responses were given. The most relevant and frequent of these responses are presented in Table 6.6
Table 6.6: Points about the writing lesson appreciated by the students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things that teacher does to help learners become better writers</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching on all important areas of writing including organization, vocabulary and spelling</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading sample compositions in class and discussing their weak and strong points</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging students to read widely and diversely</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telling students what is expected of them in different pieces of writing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pointing out common mistakes and how to avoid them</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowing students to discuss in groups hence giving them a sense of audience</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advising and motivating students</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging students to talk in English as opposed to mother-tongue</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering student questions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explaining points clearly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 37

From this summary (Table 6.6) it is clear that students appreciate a number of features in the writing lessons. One of the points most appreciated by learners is the fact that teachers take time to teach on all important areas of writing, including organization, vocabulary, and spelling. This observation appeared 11 times making 29.72% of the total points of the appreciated factors. A second highly appreciated aspect is reading of sample compositions in class and discussing their strong and weak points. This was stated 9 (24.32%) times. A third point that had a frequency of 6 (16.22%) was the fact that teachers encourage learners to read widely and diversely. The fact that there are features of the writing lessons that learners appreciate should be a motivating factor for the teachers.
The final question in relation to the writing lesson sought learners’ ideas on how to improve the teaching of writing. Table 6.7 presents a summary of the views given by the learners.

**Table 6.7: Students’ suggestions on improvement of the teaching of writing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion for improvement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write more regularly</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>42.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read other written materials including books, magazines and newspapers</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>29.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give more samples of well written compositions in class</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase number of composition writing lessons</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use resource persons other than the teacher</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use real objects to teach</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing in groups</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage students to mark each other’s compositions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students do corrections when receive marked essays</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher to know and help students individually</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition textbooks and guide books be provided</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward those who write good compositions. This encourages them</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage students to talk in English</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition writing be a subject on its own</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask students’ views on how to improve the teaching and learning of writing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers improve their knowledge of writing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 152

The Table 6.7 shows that the most frequent suggestion was the need to write more regularly. This point had a frequency of 64 or 42.11% of the total suggestions made. The second most frequent point was to read other written materials including books, magazines, newspapers, with a frequency of 45or 29.61%. This point was followed by the suggestion that more samples of well-written compositions be provided in class, which appeared 9(5.92%) times.
From the views on what learners appreciate about their writing lessons and their suggestions for improvement a number of points emerge. Firstly, it is clear that learners in the classes under study, like other ESL students appreciate teacher input on all important aspects of writing. Thus teachers should strive to give any information they consider relevant to the learners. As noted above (cf 6.2.1), having the requisite knowledge for performing a task reduces anxiety, in turn, lowering the affective filters of learners.

Secondly, it is clear that learners also appreciate teacher motivation as well as teacher guidance, as shown when they indicate that they appreciate: when they are told what is expected of them in different pieces of writing, when teachers point out common mistakes and how to avoid them, when teachers answer student questions and explain points clearly. The point on motivation is also seen in the suggestions they make for improvements. For instance, they suggest that those who write good compositions be rewarded as a way of encouraging them. It also seems that asking their (learners’) views on how to better things in the writing lesson would be a motivating factor for learners.

A third point that comes to the fore is that learners value the use various samples of written compositions and exposure to a variety of written texts. That is why they indicate that they appreciate when teachers read samples and discuss them in class as well as when teachers encourage learners to read widely and diversely. Notice also in their suggestions for improvement (Table 6.7), reading other written materials is made a total of 45 times, while giving more samples of well written compositions is given 9 times. Learners also suggest that composition textbooks and guidebooks be provided. Written texts are very useful in the learning of writing because as Byrne (1990: 14) notes:

“Some explicit examination of how we communicate through writing is an indispensable part of the teaching of writing. In particular, it serves to make the students aware that any piece of writing is an attempt to communicate something:
that the writer has a goal or purpose in mind; that he has to establish and maintain contact with his reader; that he has to organize his material and that he does this through the use of certain logical and grammatical devices.”

Noteworthy, the three lessons in schools C, D and F where sample compositions were used were among those considered very interesting by students. Therefore teachers in the context of this study would be encouraged to use more sample texts in their teaching of writing. A variety of sample texts would provide learners with more exposure to written communication. This is necessary for building their knowledge and in turn their confidence.

Another point that learners seem to appreciate is more practice in writing. They suggest that there is need to write more regularly. This suggestion is made 64(42.11%) times. Another pointer to the need for practice is in the suggestion that composition writing be made a subject on its own, and the number of composition writing lessons be increased. All this would lead to more time dedicated to composition writing. Practice is very important, especially for the writing skill. It actually, requires time and practice to develop writing skills. Ellis (1994) argues that knowledge becomes intake through practice, especially one that provides “real operating conditions” and is continual. “Real operating conditions,” means opportunities for using the language in natural communicative situations (Ellis, 1994). Badger and White, (2000) hold a similar view. They argue that the teacher in the writing classroom should try to replicate a real social context as much as possible, provide sufficient support for learners to identify the purpose and other aspects of the social context as well as provide support in using appropriate language skills. As such, teachers should design writing tasks that are realistic and on a regular basis. Learners should be able to see the communicative value of what they write.

It was shown elsewhere (cf4.1.3.4) that the most commonly used source of input was the English course book. Learners however, seem to hold the view that other
sources of input be utilized in the writing lessons. They suggest the use of other resource persons, the use of realia in teaching in addition to samples of well-written compositions. A variety of sources of input are useful in aiding comprehensibility of input (Ellis, 1994). When, learners understand what they learn then they are more confident in applying that knowledge. Additionally, learners seem to feel that more learner centered activities or rather learner participation be broadened. Thus they suggest that they be allowed to discuss questions on writing in groups, and be encouraged to mark each other’s compositions. This last point is very useful as it provides an alternative source of feedback namely, peer feedback If properly utilized, peer feedback can go a long way in reducing the burden of provision of feedback from the teacher. In addition, interacting amongst themselves, aids in drawing out students, especially those who may be afraid to participate in the presence of the teacher. Positive reinforcement and encouragement from peers is also motivating.

A last point that emerges from the students’ suggestions is the need to incorporate revision in the writing process. It was noted that the classes under study do not follow a multiple drafting process, and revision of essays, after they are marked, is not required. Students suggest that they should do corrections when they receive their marked essays. Such revisions and multiple drafting would probably provide the learners with an indication of their progress. As they see their developing essays, then they would build more confidence in their writing skills. More confidence is good for the learning process. Additionally, it has been argued that the best way to provide feedback and guidance is not an explanation but an actual re-trial of the expected behaviour based on the feedback provided by the teacher. Teacher feedback acts as input for further re-trial by the learner (Johnson, 1988). Thus, the assistance of feedback should not be confined to the last stage of the writing process. Marking of products should open more opportunities for redrafting. Giving learners the chance to redraft and reassess
their work helps them correct the wrong behavior and re-practise the correct behaviour.

6.2.4 Improving the Teaching of Writing: Teachers’ Suggestions.
Though largely concerned with learner reactions, teachers’ views were also sought, through interviews, on factors affecting efficient teaching of composition writing and on how the teaching can be improved. Teachers cited the following problems.

i. A poor reading culture among teachers and students.

ii. Lack of motivation and a negative attitude towards writing among teachers and learners. For learners because they find it hard to come up with points and organize them into comprehensible paragraphs. For teachers because of marking. They say that it is tedious.

iii. A wide syllabus. Writing has a lot to be covered but it is not given enough time. Sometimes it is not taken seriously. It may be done once in a long time.

iv. Poor language skills in English. Writing exposes this weakness, so students do not want to write. The teachers attributed the poor language skills to mother-tongue interference, influence of sheng and use of slang.

v. Teachers are not adequately trained in the teaching of writing.

vi. There isn’t enough information on writing in the available books.

These are very pertinent issues as they touch on affective factors, materials and teacher preparation. They therefore have implications for pedagogy.

The teachers made the following suggestions on how to improve the teaching of writing
i. Create a reading culture on the part of teachers and learners. Learners especially need to read widely and diversely in order to bolster their language skills and exposure.

ii. Learners be encouraged to speak in English and listen to good English.

iii. A book on composition writing be provided because the information in the English course books is very limited. This reduces the struggle by teachers to get materials from different sources.

iv. Encourage competitive writing where someone else other than the regular teacher does the marking.

v. Teachers to change their attitude at a personal level and be willing to work hard. More writing and more feedback provision be done. Teachers and students should put more effort.

vi. Encourage learners to write and mark for each other.

From these suggestions and those by learners (cf 6.2.3) it is clear that teachers and learners agree on three things to help improve teaching and learning of writing.

i. The need for more reading, meaning more exposure to written communication.

ii. The need for comprehensive guides to composition writing for secondary schools.

iii. The need for a more positive attitude towards composition writing and a willingness to work hard at it.

Generally, both teachers and students seem to hold the view that more needs to be done to better the teaching and learning of writing. It is however evident that each group, feels that the problem lies in others. Perhaps if each acknowledged their
part and did what is required then teaching and learning of writing would greatly improve.

6.3 Learners’ Reactions to Teachers’ Feedback

In addition to seeking learners’ views on the writing lesson, this study also sought to assess and describe the learners’ reactions to the feedback provided by the teacher, both in the feedback lesson and in the marked essays. A few preliminary issues relating to writing and provision of feedback were first addressed before investigating the learners’ reactions.

6.3.1 Compositions Written and Marked

The first preliminary question raised was on the number of compositions written per term. 12.58% of the students indicated that they had written six or more compositions. 35.75% indicated they wrote 3-5 compositions, 49.65% indicated they wrote 1-3 compositions and 1.99% indicated that they wrote none. From this data, it is clear that on average students write 1-3 compositions per term. Similar findings were got from teacher interviews, where teachers indicated that they gave learners an average of two compositions per term. This cannot be said to give learners enough practice for writing. No wonder when asked how they thought teaching and marking of compositions could be improved, a major point that the students raised was the need to write more. This is in line with what Ellis (1994) says about automatizing knowledge. He says that for knowledge to become intake the learners need continued free practice. Free practice is practice in real language situations that correspond to the type of language use the learner is trying to master such as writing a job application.

A second preliminary issue raised was whether the compositions written were all teacher given assignments or there were some that were the students’ own initiative. The findings are presented in Table 6.8.
Table 6.8: Reported distributions of assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher given assignments</th>
<th>No. of students</th>
<th>% (N=151)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>50.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>42.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that 50.99% of the students reported that all the compositions they wrote were teacher given assignments. 42.38% indicated that some of the compositions were teacher given assignments and 6.62% reported that none of the compositions they wrote was a teacher given assignment.

From this data it was concluded that there is little or no initiative for writing on the part of learners as the majority indicated that most of the writing tasks they do are teacher given assignments. To adequately develop the writing skill one needs a lot of practice. This practice cannot be got by relying only on teacher given assignments. The individual needs to have some self-drive towards writing. This is evidently lacking in the secondary school students. Self-drive is a good pointer to the development of learner autonomy. Learner autonomy is the hallmark of good language learners. Such learners do not solely depend on teacher input and feedback but seek these from elsewhere, such as from peers, and reading materials. This kind of learners are motivated hence have low affective factors, and therefore seek more input and convert more of it into intake or acquired knowledge.

The lack of self-drive on the part of learners in this study could be explained by some contextual factors. Firstly, English is a second language in Kenya, and it seems the motivation for learning it is in most cases extrinsic. For example, people learn English in order to be able to pass exams and get jobs. The motivation for learning writing skills is even more restricted especially among secondary school students, who see it as necessary for passing exams. As such,
they could view the assignments given by the teachers as sufficient for the goal of passing exams.

Another factor that could explain the lack of self-drive towards writing is the fact that the pedagogic approach used in its teaching does not link it to real communicative situations—what Ellis (1994) calls “real operating conditions.” More often than not learners do not see the connection between what they write in class and the real world. They see writing assignments as only meant for teacher marking, with no other purpose to them. Perhaps, if learners saw writing as an expression of their own thoughts, ideas and feelings, as a skill that can be used to serve a higher purpose then their motivation for writing would increase.

As noted, elsewhere (cf 5.1.1), teachers in this study relied mostly on error feedback and teacher commentary as methods of providing feedback. Additionally, the commentary concentrated mostly on the weaknesses of the students’ essays. This is very demotivating, and therefore learners may avoid writing more as they see it as another opportunity for the teacher to point out their weaknesses and fill their papers with red markings. This then gives an additional reason as to why most learners rely only on teacher given assignments for their writing practice.

Another question sought to establish whether or not the teachers marked both the compositions they gave as assignments and those written on learner’s own initiative. The distribution of students’ responses to this question is shown in Table 6.9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher given assignments marked</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of students</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% (N=151)</td>
<td>87.38</td>
<td>12.58</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.9 shows that on teacher given assignments, 87.38% of the students indicated that all of the compositions are marked. 12.58% indicated that some are marked. No one indicated that the teacher marks none of the compositions. This is evidence that the teachers try to provide feedback to learners by marking their essays.

With regard to compositions written on learners’ own initiative 84.11% of the learners reported that these too are marked while 15.89% said teachers did not mark compositions written on the learners’ own initiative.

From the foregoing findings and those in chapter five it was clearly evident that teachers work hard to provide learners with feedback on their writing. Thus, the current study went on to focus more closely on the students and their reactions to the feedback.

6.3.2 Utilization of Feedback
The first question with regard to the provided feedback sought to find out whether learners understand the feedback. 93.38% of the students indicated they did, while 6.62% said they did not. This led to the conclusion that majority of the students understand the provided feedback. The present study, however, could not assess this understanding, as it did not focus on revisions, for example, to see how the feedback was incorporated.

A second question sought to establish what the learners do with their marked scripts once they receive them. The findings are shown in Table 6.10.
Table 6.10: Distribution of responses on what learners do with marked scripts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When you receive your marked essay you….</th>
<th>No. of students</th>
<th>% (N=151)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Look at the score or grade only</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look at the score and the comments and do nothing more</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look at the score and comments then keep the essay for follow-up later</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>25.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look at the score and the comments and make corrections immediately</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>61.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.10 shows that 1.99% of the students reported that they look at the score or grade only and do nothing else with the essay. 17.22% indicated that they look at the score and the comments and do nothing more with the essay. 25.83% said they check the score and comments then keep the essay for follow-up later 61.59% indicated they look at the grade and the comments and do corrections immediately.

This summary, contrary to observations made in the classrooms indicates that majority of the learners (61.59 %) do revisions of their essays. In the classrooms, it was noted that once an essay was marked and returned learners did not go back to it, neither did we notice anyone doing corrections or revising his or her essay immediately. This could be explained by the fact that the classes under study were single-draft classrooms where revisions were not required. Ferris (2003) observes that when comments are given to single or terminal drafts, students may not utilize them as much as in multiple drafts classrooms. Perhaps, if the students in the classes under study were taken through the process of planning, drafting, redrafting, and editing of the same essay, then they would appreciate the feedback more as they see their essays developing. In addition, the knowledge acquired from several multiple-drafting cycles can be applied to other writing tasks, not only in the classroom, but also in real world written communication. It was concluded that indication by the majority of the students that they revise their essays could indicate the learners’ desire for a process approach with multiple-
drafting in the classes. Incorporating an aspect of revision in the teaching of writing was one of the suggestions for the improvement of teaching of writing made by the learners (see Table 6.7).

Following from the indication by majority of the students that they understand teacher feedback, a third question relating to learners’ reactions sought to establish how they utilized it (the feedback). For this item the students were asked to choose from a list of eight to show how they dealt with the highlighted errors and the given comments. The choices were as follows.

a)  Note them down in your mind.

b)  Write down the points and questions raised by the teacher so you can remember them in future.

c)  Ask for teacher explanation.

d)  Consult a friend to explain those you may not understand.

e)  Refer back to previous compositions to see how you dealt with similar problems.

f)  Consult an English textbook, dictionary or other reading materials

g)  Rewrite taking care to make the corrections pointed out by the teacher.

h)  Do nothing.

Since utilization of feedback can take more than one strategy, students were allowed to make more than one choice from the list. Thus the weight of every strategy was worked out on the basis of the cumulative number of students who chose it. (See table .6.11.)
Table 6.11: Distribution of students’ choice of feedback utilization strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy for utilizing feedback</th>
<th>Cumulative number of students who chose it</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note down in mind</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write down the points and questions raised</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>19.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask for teacher explanation</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult a friend to help with corrections</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refer back to previous compositions</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult English textbook, dictionary or other reading materials</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>17.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewrite taking care to make corrections</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do nothing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**N=248**

From the summary in Table 6.11, it appears that writing down the points and questions raised was the most popular strategy employed by learners. This strategy was ticked by a total of 48 students or 19.35% of the students. From the classroom observations it was noted that many learners actually wrote down points as the teacher gave the verbal feedback lesson. The second most popular strategy was consulting some reading materials such as English course book or dictionary in order to be able to make corrections. This way of utilizing feedback was chosen by 44 (17.74 %) learners. This strategy is also positive and useful, especially because there are students who learn better from reading, while others acquire more from listening.

The third most popular strategy was rewriting taking care to make corrections (revision) with a total of 41 students ticking it. Though indicated as a popular strategy by the students, it was observed that revision is not part of the pedagogic process of writing in the classes under study. These were single-draft classes. As such, the popularity of this strategy could be out of the students’ feeling that it is a
useful way of utilizing feedback. And in fact, it has been shown to be the case (Hedgecock & Lefkowitz (1994).

The fact that students indicate clear strategies they employ in utilization of feedback goes to show that they value the feedback and are willing to make use of it. This is in line with findings in other studies that have consistently shown that students treasure teacher feedback (Leki, 1991; Saito, 1994; Yang, Badger & Yu, 2006; Zhang, 1995). From a different angle, learners’ utilization of feedback is a motivating factor for the teacher. Responding to students’ writing is a very demanding task and one of the concerns of the teachers is whether the feedback they provide will be appreciated and utilized by the learners. Thus, teachers should feel encouraged to continue providing the feedback. Ferris, (1997, 2001) notes that since ESL writers are likely to take teacher feedback very seriously, teachers need to be thoughtful in providing feedback, helpful in showing students how to revise their texts successfully, and determined to hold students accountable for at least considering feedback they have received.

It is important to note that each of the strategies above has a positive contribution to make in the development of writing skills. As such, it is best to employ a combination of strategies in order to reap maximum benefits from the provided feedback. For, example, instead of only noting down points and questions raised, students could also seek teacher clarifications in teacher-student conferences (individual or group). This way students can enjoy the advantages of conferences such as better clarifications, and motivation from peers and the teacher. This in addition to being able to refer back to the points they note down.

6.3.3 Focus of the Feedback on Important Features of Writing
Another issue on which students’ views were sought, was on which important areas of writing, namely grammar, punctuation, vocabulary usage, organization and content the learners felt the teacher paid a lot of attention to in terms of the
scale of comments made. The scale ranged from many, some, few, to none. The findings are summarized in the table 6.12.

Table 6.12: Distribution of students’ views on the scale of comments given on different areas of writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area/Scale of Comments</th>
<th>No. of students</th>
<th>% of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Many</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary Usage</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this Table 6.12 it is evident that in the students’ view teachers give more comments on the area of grammar as indicated by 72.19% of the learners. These students reported that grammar receives many comments. It is followed by punctuation with 49.01% reporting many comments in this area while vocabulary usage was reported by 35.10% as receiving many comments.

The students’ views corroborate the findings from the marked compositions where it was found that grammar and mechanics received the highest number of comments. Grammar had 34.04% and 47.14% in the first and second compositions respectively. Mechanics received 22.967% and 20.70% of the comments in the first and second compositions respectively (Table. 5.10). These findings and those from the students’ views thus reinforce the conclusion that teachers in the classes under observation pay more attention to LOCs such as grammar and punctuation than HOCs, such as organization and content.
A further question sought to find out on which of the important features of writing students would prefer to be provided with feedback. The listed areas were grammar and punctuation, organization, vocabulary usage and content. The distribution of preference for each area is shown in Table 6.13.

**Table 6.13: Distribution of students’ preference for areas of comments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area for comments</th>
<th>Frequency distribution per school</th>
<th>Total number of students</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A B C D E F G H I J K</td>
<td>N=250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar and punctuation</td>
<td>5 8 4 4 3 6 11 8 5 7 8 69</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>27.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>4 4 5 4 2 4 5 5 3 4 1 41</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary usage</td>
<td>11 5 9 8 11 6 7 10 7 5 6 85</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>7 5 7 4 6 9 5 6 4 2 0 55</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.13 shows that the area of vocabulary usage had the highest frequency of preference with a total of 85 (34%) learners indicating that they would prefer comments in it. It was followed by grammar and punctuation with 69 (27.60%). The third most preferred area for comments was content with 55 (22%) and the last was organization with 41 (16.40%). These findings just go to show the high concern for LOCs as opposed to HOCs so consistently evident in the classes under study.

As a follow-up to the findings summarized in Table 6.13 learners were required to give reasons for their preferences. Tables 6.14a – 6.14d present the most frequent and relevant reasons given for preferring feedback on the different features.
Table 6.14: Distribution of students’ reasons for preferring comments in:

**Table 6.14a: Vocabulary Usage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary helps to clearly express myself</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve use of correct words and stop using wrong words</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am weak in that area</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary is essential to make compositions enticing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To beat the use of sheng</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=18

**Table 6.14b: Grammar and punctuation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helps improve my language and writing</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many students have problems in this area</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These form the core of language so they need to be taken care of</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps both in composition writing and in other exams</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To avoid the same mistakes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get more marks</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can do the others on my own if I know these</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=35

**Table 6.14c: Organization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization is important</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a problem organizing thoughts and being consistent</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher is not happy with my organization though I think it is perfect</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=6

**Table 6.14d: Content**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helps improve</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other mistakes are easily rectified</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content requires a lot of thinking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tend to be irrelevant. I don’t know the points to include or leave out</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content is the most important</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=7

Notice from Tables 6.14 a-d the most frequently cited reason for preferring feedback on vocabulary usage was that vocabulary helps one to express
him/herself clearly. This reason had a frequency of 6 (33.33%). It was followed by the reason that “I am weak in that area,” with a frequency of 5 (27.77%) (Table 6.14a). With regard to grammar and punctuation, the most frequent reason given for preferring feedback in the area was that it would help improve learners’ language and writing. This reason had a frequency of 14 (40%). The second major reason was that students are weak in the area, which had a frequency of 11 (31.42%) (Table 6.14b). One issue that emerges from these reasons is the admission on the part of the students that they are weak in both grammar and vocabulary usage, though they also recognize the importance of these two areas for clear expression. It is important for ways of addressing these weaknesses to be looked into.

Notice also that reasons given for preferring feedback on organization and content have a relatively lower frequency. The most frequent reason given for preferring feedback on organization is that students have a problem with organizing thoughts and being consistent (Table 6.14c). This reason had a frequency of 3 (50%). As for content, there were two reasons for preference with a frequency of 2 (28.75%). One is that content helps to improve, and second is that other mistakes in other areas are easily rectified (Table 6.14d). Many of the students who indicated preferences in these areas did not actually give reasons why. Maybe learners are not very clear on what organization and content are all about or if they do they may not understand clearly the problems associated with these particular areas, hence the general reasons given such as “organization is important” and “content is the most important” (Tables 6.14c & 6.14d).

From the reasons given in Tables 6.14a – 6.14d, it was concluded that the students seem to hold the view that composition writing is about language usage, which to a large extent centers on grammar, punctuation and vocabulary. This then may explain the higher preference for feedback in the areas of grammar and
vocabulary usage. Secondly, the trend of preferences could be a consequence of the emphasis put by the teachers on LOCs and HOCS. It was found that teachers tended to pay more attention to LOCs (grammar, mechanics, vocabulary) as compared to HOCS (organization, content) especially in the provision of feedback (cf 5.3.2).

Thirdly, the preferences could be as a result of the backwash effect of the trends in the marking of the national examination. A lot of emphasis is laid on language usage as evidenced in the marking guide (see appendix 9). The guide shows that high scoring essays are those where learners are able to use language to clearly express themselves. It is therefore not a surprise that learners prefer more comments in those areas they feel have a great impact on their expression and subsequent performance in the examinations. The concern with the exam is evident in the learners’ reasons for feedback preferences. Two reasons given for preferring comments on grammar and punctuation are that they help both in composition writing and in other exams, and the comments would help learners get more marks (able 6.14.b)

Generally, however, the fact that learners indicate preference for comments across the various important features of writing goes to reinforce the view that they value teacher feedback not only on language but also on other issues like content and organization, that is, feedback focusing both on form and content (Ferris, 1991; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994). The findings here also seem to agree with those of other studies that found students value feedback on all aspects of their writing although they feel most strongly about receiving feedback on their grammar problems (Cohen & Cavalcant, 1990; Leki, 1991; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Ferris, 1995).
This far a number of important points relating to learners’ reactions to feedback have been discussed. Among these are:

Learners’ indication that they understand the provided feedback and employ various strategies to utilize it.

Learners’ views that teacher feedback does focus on all the important features of writing.

Learners indication that they value feedback focusing both on form and content but have a higher preference for feedback on the areas of grammar and vocabulary usage.

These points relate to more practical reactions to the feedback. In the next section findings related to students’ affective reactions to the feedback are presented.

6.3.4 Affective Reactions to Feedback
The present study also sought to establish the learners’ affective feelings towards the feedback provided by their teachers. To this end, students were asked to indicate what they felt about the grades and or scores and comments given by their teachers in terms of usefulness and fairness. The findings are summarized in Table 6.15.

Table 6.15: Distribution of students’ views on the usefulness and fairness of scores and comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of students</th>
<th>Usefulness of grades and comments</th>
<th>Fairness of grades and comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very useful</td>
<td>Fairly useful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% (N=151)</td>
<td>87.42</td>
<td>11.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of students</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.15 indicates that in terms of usefulness, 87.42% of the students said the feedback was very useful. 11.92% indicated that it was fairly useful while 0.66% reported the feedback not to be useful. On the question of fairness, 48.34% said
the teachers’ comments were very fair. 50.99% said the feedback was fair and 0.66% said that the comments and scores were not fair.

From this summary (Table 6.15), it is evident that learners find teacher feedback useful and even fair. This is contrary to findings of earlier studies where students were found to resent teachers’ comments and suggestion that the content of their papers was weak, immature or superficial. These studies reported that the students were angry at the idea that someone else had the right to put a grade on their thoughts (Lynch & Klemans 1978; Burkland & Grimm, 1986; Sparling & Freedman, 1987). Positive attitudes such as those expressed by the majority of the students in the present study, are instrumental to the lowering of the affective filter according to Krashen, (1985). Low affective filters allow learners to seek more input and to turn more of the available input into intake. This means learners with a positive attitude learn better. Consequently, with the indicated positive attitude, learners in the present study stood to benefit more from the feedbacks provided by the teachers.

The learners in the current study gave various reasons for their views on the usefulness and fairness of teacher comments. In relation to usefulness, learners felt that the feedback helps them to avoid the same mistakes, do corrections and improve their writing. Thus the feedback is very useful (see table 6.16)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helps improve</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>56.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps avoid the same mistakes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps in doing corrections</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows one’s weaknesses</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good comments encourage</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=96
From Table 6.16 the most frequent reason for viewing feedback as useful is that it helps the learners improve their writing. This reason had a frequency of 54 times or 56.25%. The feeling that the feedback helps the learners to avoid the same mistakes with a frequency of 22 (22.92) followed it. These findings further reinforce the fact that learners value teacher feedback and are willing to use it to improve their writing.

The 11.92% of learners who felt that the comments were only fairly useful also had their reasons. An interesting reason given for this view was that the comments and grades in a students’ paper are always the same in all his writing even though he corrects previous mistakes. There seems an underlying frustration on the part of this learner that is very demotivating. Teachers need to remember that feedback should be varied depending on the task at hand, if it is to be useful to the learner (Keh, 1990; Ferris, 2007).

On the question of fairness, the 48.34 % of students who felt that the comments were very fair had reasons such as: the comments are meant to help them see their mistakes and to correct them so they can do well in exams. This reason had a frequency of 6. Another reason was that the comments are true as they touch on areas where the learners have problems. This reason appeared 5 times. A third reason was that the teacher is not biased and that the teachers are only doing their duty. The reasons given by this group of students are summarized in table 6.17a.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The comments are meant to help us see our mistakes and to correct them, so we can do well in exams</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The comments are true. They touch on areas I have problems with</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
N =16

Table 6.17b summarizes the reasons given by the 50.99% of the learners who held the view that teacher feedback was fair, Table 6.17b: Reasons why teacher comments are “Fair.”

Table 6.17b: Distribution of reasons why learners feel that teacher feedback is fair.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher fairly points out one’s mistakes and does not favour anyone</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The comments are given according to the piece of writing and not according to personality</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes I do not see the problem with the underlined areas and the teacher does not explain</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am given low marks despite having written my best</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes the comments may be irrelevant considering what one wanted to say in their essay</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N =7

This table shows that this group too had positive reasons for their opinion. For instance they felt that the comments are given according to the piece of writing and not according to personality, and that the teacher does not favour anyone. This group of learners, however, seemed not to be very clear about the problem highlighted by the teacher. For instance one indicated that he does not see the problem with the underlined areas in his work, and the teacher does not explain. Another learner indicated that he is given low marks despite having written his best, while yet another felt that sometimes the teachers comments may be irrelevant, considering what she had intended to say in her essay. This seems to imply, that the teacher looks at the essay from a perspective that is different from that of the writer, resulting in a conflict.
One student felt that the teachers’ comments were not fair. The reason for this view was that a poorly performing student is always given a low mark and many points to improve on. It seems this is a weak learner who may need a lot of encouragement. On the other hand, this learner seems to have a negative attitude towards teacher feedback. This in effect raises his affective filter leading to poor acquisition.

A follow-up question to the views on the usefulness and fairness of teacher feedback sought to know the things that the teacher does in marking that the students felt helped them to become better writers. That is, the things the learners appreciate most about teacher feedback. The responses to this question are summarized in Table 6.18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice appreciated</th>
<th>Freq</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pointing out and explaining our mistakes</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>82.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explaining mistakes to individual students</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commenting positively when we write something good</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving clear, and understandable comments</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not laugh at or scold me for my mistakes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives fair grades and comments</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives marks for proper use of expressions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows good writers to read their compositions in class</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 88

Table 6.18 shows that the most appreciated point is pointing out and explaining the learners’ mistakes in the view of 73 (82.95%) learners. This view shows learners do not mind their mistakes pointed out for them. The findings are similar to those of Leki, (1991) who found that learners wished to have their errors corrected by their teachers since they (learners) wanted their writing to be error free.

The views given in table 6.18 also reinforce the fact that learners value teacher feedback and are also consistent with findings from other studies that have shown
L2 learners value clear and concise feedback, they appreciate positive comments and are wary of ridicule (Leki, 1991; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Ferris, 1995).

6.3.5 Improving Feedback Provision: Learner Suggestions.
Having established the students’ views on various aspects of teacher feedback, their views on how provision of feedback, for composition writing could be improved were sought. The relevant and or frequent suggestions made to this question are summarized in Table 6.19.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion for improvement</th>
<th>Freq</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicate mistake and suggest a solution, e.g. indicate proper usage of vocabulary or correct spelling.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advise students, especially weak ones, individually, e.g. on how they can improve their grades</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be fair and not to favour some students</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use words or expressions and correction symbols such as Sp when indicating errors instead of underlining and circling so much</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark as many compositions as possible</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put students in groups to discuss mistakes and do corrections</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give both positive and negative comments and not only point out mistakes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a marking scheme for compositions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use easy language when giving comments</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment on repeated mistakes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students to correct each other’s work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice rewriting compositions with corrections.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compositions be marked by many teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 60

From these suggestions (Table 6.19) several important points emerge. To start with, it appears that some learners would appreciate direct coded error feedback where the teacher indicates an error and gives the correction as opposed to the
indirect uncoded error feedback found to be the most common in the classes under study. This comes out in suggestion that the teacher should indicate the mistakes and suggest a solution, as well as the suggestion that the teacher should use words or expressions and correction symbols such as SP when indicating errors instead of underlining and circling so much.

It also appears that these students would appreciate student-teacher conferencing, especially with the weak students, as a method of providing feedback. At the same time, learners would also benefit from peer feedback hence the suggestions that students be put in groups to discuss mistakes and do corrections and students to correct each other’s work. These two types of feedback, that is student-teacher conferencing and peer feedback, were not observed in the classes under study.

A third point that emerges is that learners would appreciate more and varied feedback from teachers. They suggest that teachers should mark as many compositions as possible, comment on repeated mistakes, provide marking schemes for compositions and that compositions be marked by many teachers. This last point would help to overcome a sense of bias that learners seem to feel their teachers have, probably because they (teachers) know each individual learner.

The suggestion that learners practise rewriting compositions with corrections points to the need to include a revision aspect in the feedback process. This point also emerges as a suggestion for improving the teaching of writing skills. Further, it emerges that learners would value simple and clear comments. Learners also seem to be calling for a balance in the teacher feedback, so that the teacher does not only concentrate on only weak points in the learners writing. It had emerged that teachers in the classes under study do actually focus a lot on the weaknesses in students’ writing.
6.4 Summary
This chapter focuses broadly on learner reactions to the writing lessons and to the feedback provided by the teachers. The reactions were based on the lessons and feedback provided for this study as well as learners’ prior experiences.

In relation to the writing lessons majority of the sampled students, that is, 93.34 % indicated that teachers explain what is expected for each writing task given. Learners’ views, however, vary with regard to how detailed the explanations are. Slightly over half of the students-54.93% indicated that detailed explanations were given, while 44.35% indicated that teachers only give brief details. Thus it was concluded that teachers offer guidance for writing to learners, an aspect that is necessary for reducing anxiety in dealing with a task.

A second concern with the writing lesson was on the focus of the explanations on important aspects of writing, namely, grammar, punctuation and spelling content and general organization and organization of a specific form of writing. Majority of students, 70.20% indicated that all the areas received attention in the teacher input. These findings corroborate the observations in the input lesson where it was noted that teachers generally touched on all important aspects of writing (cf 4.1.2.2).

With regard to the specific important aspects of writing, 10.60 %of the learners indicated that the areas of grammar, spelling and punctuation combined received most attention. This was followed by general organization (7.95%). Content received minimal attention in learners’ opinion. Only 4.64% indicated that the teacher explained some points they can include in writing. These findings tally with those made in the provision of teacher, where the areas of grammar and mechanics were found to be given more attention by teachers in their feedback. The findings are however contrary to the observations made in the input lesson where organization and development of narratives received attention from 90.91
% of the teachers. The aspects of grammar and mechanics received relatively lower attention in these lessons with only 63.64% and 27.27% of the teachers explaining something on each of the respective areas.

Another important question raised was on the level of difficulty in the vocabulary used by teachers in the writing lesson. 65.54% of the students indicated that the vocabulary was fairly easy, and 25.82% reported it to be easy. It was therefore concluded that majority of the students understand the teachers’ language to some good measure. A further question on the writing lesson touched on learner participation in the lessons. 80.10% of the learners reported that they are given an opportunity to participate compared to 0.66% who said they are not given an opportunity to participate. The learners’ major reasons for the view that they are allowed to participate is that they are allowed to ask and answer questions as well as make suggestions and comments to the teacher. It was also observed in the lessons that questions were directed to the whole class.

63.57% of the learners indicated that their writing lessons are interesting. It emerged that learners who viewed the lessons as interesting also had a positive attitude to writing. They reported that they enjoy writing. Most significantly, how interesting the lesson was considered to be was based on aspects such as teacher presentation of information, materials and activities used. Lessons where jokes are cracked, relevant samples and a variety of examples are used were viewed as interesting. Learners who viewed writing as tiresome, and who reported that they do not enjoy writing viewed the lessons as fairly interesting or not interesting.

Further, it emerged that learners appreciate a number of factors relating to writing lessons. Among these are being given information on all important areas of writing, reading and discussing samples of compositions and being encouraged to read widely and diversely. Generally, it was concluded that learners have a positive attitude towards their writing lessons. They feel that enough details are
given in a language that they understand and therefore the lessons are interesting. In the learners’ views, however, the teaching of writing can also be improved. This can be achieved through continued provision of information on all important aspects of writing, more teacher motivation and encouragement to the learners, use of more samples of written texts, more practice in writing, use of a variety of sources of input and incorporation of revision as part of the writing process.

The second part of this chapter focused on learner reactions to teacher feedback. It was first of all established that teachers mark assignments whether teacher given or written on learners’ own initiative. The feedback comes largely in the form of error feedback and teacher commentary (written and verbal). Majority of the learners said they understand the teacher feedback. Additionally, learners indicated that they utilize the feedback in various ways. The most commonly reported method of feedback use was to write down the points and questions raised by the teacher. This point had a cumulative frequency of 48 times. Many other strategies of utilizing feedback were reported by students (see table 6.11) It was therefore concluded that learners value teacher feedback and are willing to utilize it. Teachers should therefore feel encouraged to continue providing feedback.

On the question of focus of teacher feedback on important aspects of writing 72.19% of the learners indicated that grammar receives many comments. Second was punctuation with 49.01%, followed by vocabulary usage with 35.10% reporting that it receives many comments in the teacher feedback. The findings corroborate those from the marked essays, leading to the conclusion that more attention seems to be paid to LOCs as compared to HOCs. Generally, however, all the important areas of writing receive attention even if to varying degrees.
On areas where the learners would prefer more feedback, the area of vocabulary usage came first with a total of 85 (34%) students indicating they would prefer feedback on it. It was followed by grammar and punctuation with 69 (27.60%) and content with 55 (22%) (see Table 6.13). This high preference for feedback on LOCs was thought to be due to the marking of the composition writing where language aspects seem to carry more weight.

Additional learner views showed that they find the teacher feedback useful and fair. 87.42% of the learners reported that the feedback is very useful, 11.92% fairly useful. 48.34% said the feedback (comments and scores) was very fair and 50.99% said the feedback was fair (see table 6.15). These views are due to the feeling that the feedback is to help them improve, the comments are true and in giving them the teacher is only doing his or her duty.

On how the provision of feedback could be improved learners came up with a number of suggestions. The most frequent of them being the use of direct coded error feedback as opposed to indirect uncoded error feedback that was found prevalent in these classes. It also appears that in addition to receiving more feedback from teachers, the learner would appreciate other techniques of feedback provision such as peer feedback and teacher-student conferences. Once more the learners pointed to the need for revision to be part of the writing process.

On the whole, then it was concluded that learners appreciate teacher feedback and are willing to utilize it. Teachers should therefore continue providing feedback, but may need to use different techniques in order to help the learners better.
CHAPTER SEVEN
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.0 Introduction
This study focused on the pedagogic process of ESL writing in secondary school classrooms in Kenya. Four broad objectives were explored in relation to the pedagogic process. First the study sought to describe the kind of input for writing provided to learners by their teachers. Secondly, the steps in the writing process followed by learners in their writing were analyzed. Thirdly, the question of how teachers provide feedback to learners on writing was investigated. Finally, an exploration of the learners’ reactions to the writing lessons and to the feedback provided by their teachers was done. This chapter summarizes the findings of the study; outlines general conclusions arrived at, provides possible implications of the findings and gives areas for further research. These listed areas form the rest of the chapter.

7.1 Summary of Findings

7.1.1 Input in the ESL Writing Lessons
The first objective of this study was to describe the input provided by teachers in the ESL writing classrooms. Two important aspects of the input were looked at. These are: the input’s focus on important aspects of writing and the implications for the provided input of the classroom activities and resources utilized in the writing lessons. First, it was discovered that the type of instruction prevalent in the classrooms was code-oriented as opposed to communicative-oriented. The type of instruction prevalent determines the focus of the input and influences the activities and materials used. The activities and materials, in turn, have a bearing on the comprehensibility of the input.

In the input lessons, it was found that emphasis was given to narrative writing (the concern of the lesson) and explicit rules relating to narrative writing were given.
For instance, important aspects of a narrative such as plot, characters, conflict and aspects of style formed part of the gist of the input lesson. The importance of planning and how to draw outlines was also emphasized. This was in line with the code-oriented instruction found to be prevalent in the classes under study (cf 4.1.1).

The provision of explicit rules relating to writing to students was thought to be useful to learners in the Kenyan context. This is because English is a second language in Kenya and the subjects of study—Form twos—are still developing the necessary building blocks of language such as grammar, vocabulary and the basics of writing.

Communicative oriented instruction, which aims at providing learners with opportunities to communicate naturally without manipulation of input to focus on specific items, and which involves activities such as role-plays and simulations was found to be minimally used in the classes under study. This minimal use of communicative oriented instruction seems to deny learners “real operating conditions”-Opportunities for using language in natural communicative situations. Such real operating conditions are useful for automatizing the provided knowledge (Ellis, 1994).

One aspect related to input that was explored was its (input’s) focus on important aspects of writing and of narratives. The important aspects are content, general organization, organization and development of a narrative, aspects of style, coherence, creativity, grammar and mechanic (cf 4.1.2.1). These form the four bases of effective writing, namely unity, support, coherence and sentence skills (Prentice Hall, 1995). These aspects were related to what Keh (1990) calls HOCs and LOCs. HOCs according to Keh (1990) are aspects like development of ideas for support and unity, organization and creativity. These are more difficult to deal
with in writing. LOCs include spelling, punctuation, handwriting, paragraphing and some aspects of grammar. LOCs are easy to notice and deal with since they are largely guided by rules (Keh, 1990).

With regard to focus of input on these important aspects, it was found that 90.91% of the teachers discussed the area of organization and development of a narrative in the input lesson. This area was followed by general organization (outlining, paragraph development) and aspects of style, both getting attention from 72.73% of the teachers. The areas of coherence and mechanics were only discussed by 27.27% of the teachers. It was, however, noted that each important aspect received attention. In the input lesson, contrary to the findings in the feedback lesson and marked essays HOCs received more attention than LOCs. This higher concentration on HOCs was attributed to the fact that teachers had been asked to prepare a lesson on narrative writing.

From these findings it was concluded that teachers are aware of the important features of writing and they make an effort to provide learners with input on them. However, it was observed that this information was not contextualized in written texts or realistic activities that aid its comprehensibility. This then reinforced the conclusion that learning activities need to be diversified and to be made more learner- and not teacher-centered.

A second aspect investigated was the learning activities used in the writing lessons. Learning activities have various implications for the provided input. Classroom activities are instrumental in facilitating negotiation of meaning, which is critical for the comprehensibility of the input. Learning activities such as role-plays and group work provide avenues for the exploitation of context; an important means for achieving comprehensibility of input. According to Krashen (1985) and Ellis (1994) three aspects of context help the learner achieve
comprehensibility of input. These are extra-linguistic information such as gestures and facial expressions, knowledge of the world (schema in the mind that helps us understand how certain things should be) and learners’ previous linguistic competence in L1 and L2.

Additionally, classroom activities can aid the conversion of the input to intake. More so, classroom activities can provide for the integration of writing skills with other language skills of speaking, listening and reading. Further, participating in various learner-centered activities helps draw out learners’ potential something that Badger & White (2000) argue is necessary in the development of writing skills.

Learning activities can also provide “real operating conditions” necessary for automatizing knowledge, that is, changing input into stored knowledge. For instance, asking learners to tell a story to their friends about an adventure they had during the holiday before writing the narrative down makes the writing more realistic, in turn improving comprehensibility of aspects of a narrative. In addition, learning activities such as role-plays can be good pre-writing activities providing for the integration of the writing skill with the other language skills of listening, speaking and reading. At the same time it allows learners to practice structures they have learnt. Integration also contributes to making learning more enjoyable and realistic and in effect aiding comprehensibility of input.

In the classes under study a number of learning activities were found to be in use. These included teacher lectures with questions to students and questions from students to the teacher. This was used by 100% of the teachers. Other activities were whole class discussions on an aspect related to writing (36.36%), reading and discussing sample stories (27.27%), group discussions (9.09%) and reading from textbook 18.18%). It was therefore concluded that teachers in these classes
prefer activities that they are mostly in control of. Learners-centered activities such as pair work and group discussions role-plays and simulations are minimally used. The teacher lecture that was used by 100% of the teachers is a one-way interaction which may aid simplification but is more beneficial to more advanced learners (Ellis, 1990). Krashen, (1985) argues that two-way interactions such as conversations are particularly good for providing comprehensible input. The teachers therefore need to diversify the classroom activities and go for those activities that are more learner-centered in order to make learning of writing more enjoyable and more interactive and in turn increase comprehensibility of input.

Another aspect with implications for the provided input is the materials and resources used in its provision (Krashen, 1985; Byrne, 1990; Ellis, 1994). It was found that the manner of presentation especially in the lesson was oral with a few points noted down on the blackboard. Various sources of input were also found to be in use. Among them were teachers’ notes (used by 100% of the teachers), English course book (18.18%) sample stories (27.27%), pictures (9.09%) (see table 4.9). Further, students reported that the most commonly used source of input is the English course book- 79.47% of learners reported this to be the case. Other sources reported to be used by the students are newspapers, magazines and journals (19.20%), pictures, photos, diagrams and charts (7.28%), resource persons (28.28%) and real object (13.91%) (see table 4.10).

It was concluded that there is need to widen the scope of sources of input used in the writing lessons and avoid over reliance on the teachers’ notes and English course book. Diversification of resources can help diversify learning activities, make them more learners centered and improve comprehensibility of input, and provide contexts for practice of realistic written communication. Teachers may need to be trained or guided in the use of more learner-centered activities. They
also need to be more imaginative in planning writing lessons. The syllabus advises that writing tasks be made interesting and manageable according to learners’ interests.

7.1.2 Steps in the Writing Process Followed by Learners
After establishing that learners receive input on important aspects of writing, the present study then sought to establish the steps in the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising and editing) followed by learners in their composition writing. It was first of all noted that the classes were single-draft classes where learners wrote only one draft of their essay. This is the final draft that was handed in for marking.

In relation to the steps in the writing process, classroom observations revealed that 40.40% and 18.45% planned their first and second essays respectively. 84.77% and 37.75% did some form of revising in the first and second essay respectively, while 33.11% and 8.61% proofread their essays. Drafting was only done by two students (see table 4.11).

Additional information on the stages in the writing process that learners observe was sought through student questionnaires. There were questionnaire items targeting activities in the various stages of the writing process. An analysis of the questionnaires produced the following results. For the pre-writing activities 96.58% of the learners indicated that they think about the purpose of writing before they begin writing, 0.68% after they begin writing and 2.74% does not think about the purpose of writing at all. 69.18% think about their readers and how best to communicate with them, 26.71% think how best to communicate with the teacher, while 4.11% do not think about the reader. With regard to planning for writing, 50% does outlines of brief points, 11.64% does detailed outlines and 32.20% do a mental outline. 6.16% said they do not outline, though we contend that they must do some mental outline of their writing. For the drafting stage
54.11% indicated they write a first draft, contrary to observations made in the classrooms. 45.89% said they go straight to the final draft. For revising, 17.81% check and correct grammar and mechanic errors, 2.05% revise content, 63.70% revise all aspects of the writing (grammar, mechanics, content, coherence and organization). In relation to proofreading 71.23% proofread the whole essay while 26.03% reported that they proofread parts of their essays (see tables 4.8-4.11). The areas of pre-writing, drafting, revising and proofreading plus their important considerations are very important stages in the writing process (Zamel, 1985; Hall, 1995; Tribble, 1996; Langan, 2001) (cf 4.2.1-4.2.4).

It was therefore concluded that learners are familiar with the writing process and they try to take their writing through it. They may, however, need to be trained on various strategies that can be employed in various stages especially when writing within a specific time constraint. Particularly, learners need to be trained on pre-writing and revising strategies because this is where decisions on the content of the essay and how effectively to put it across are made.

### 7.1.3 Provision of Feedback

The third objective of this study was to investigate teacher feedback practices in the ESL secondary classrooms. Two pertinent issues were investigated in this respect. These are: the methods used to provide feedback and the characteristics of the feedback in relation to general focus, form (for written feedback), suggestions or guidelines for revision and important areas of writing in general and narrative writing in specific addressed in the feedback.

Data for this objective was obtained from marked essays and the feedback lessons conducted after marking the first essay. It was discovered, for a start, that all the classes under study are single-draft classes as opposed to multiple-drafts. Learners only write one final draft on a topic and this is the draft that is handed in for marking at the end of the lesson. There is no follow-up to find out if the feedback
provided has been utilized, as no revisions are required. The fact that the classes are single-draft classes has an implication for both the provision and utilization of feedback because as Ferris (2003) observes, feedback in a single-draft class seems to be product oriented showing more concern for accuracy and ignoring other aspects of the writing. This was found to be the case in the marked compositions where teachers relied heavily on error feedback and made most comments on aspects of grammar and mechanics (cf 5.3.2). Additionally, the feedback provided may not be well utilized because learners in single-draft classes are said to be under less pressure to use the feedback (Ferris, 2003).

On the methods of providing feedback, it was found that all the teachers underlined and or circled problem areas in the students’ compositions without providing corrections. In a few instances the underlining was accompanied by correction symbols such as sp (spelling) and ww (wrong word). These are conventions of indirect error feedback. The teachers also wrote comments on learners’ essays pointing out questions that learners needed to correct, such as check tenses. It was thus concluded that the most prevalent method of feedback provision was indirect uncoded error feedback plus teacher commentary.

Indirect error feedback has been shown to improve learners’ self-correction and editing skills, in turn improving their accuracy in writing (Lalande, 1982; Frantzen, 1995; Ferrs, 2003; Bitchener, et.al, 2005). It was therefore concluded that learners in the context of the present study could reap similar benefits from the use of indirect error feedback method.

Generally, use of error feedback as a method of feedback provision has both advantages and disadvantages. Among the advantages is that it shows learners where their texts break from conventions of standard written English and allows for integration of grammar in writing (Frodesen & Holten, 2003) (cf 5.2.1.1).
Disadvantages include demotivating learners, lack of understanding of the feedback and the risk of learners focusing only on grammar problems and ignoring other aspects of the discourse (cf 5.2.1.2)

Following from the disadvantages, it was therefore concluded that due to the high use of error feedback and teacher commentary found prevalent in the classes under study, there is need for teachers to raise their awareness of linguistic or grammar issues in order to be able to offer proper guidance. Secondly, the teachers may need to experiment with different error feedback strategies to suit the varying needs of individual learners. Among possible strategies are: underline/circle errors, underline/circle errors and provide corrections, underline/circle errors and categorize them, underline/circle errors, categorize the and provide corrections, give a hint about the errors by putting a mark on the margin and give a hint about errors by categorizing them in the margin (Lee, 2004). In addition, the error feedback should be limited to a few pertinent issues. Keh, (1990) advises teachers to refer to a list of HOCs and to keep lesson objectives in mind when making comments. The criteria used to select the areas addressed in the feedback plus the areas themselves should be made known to learners to help them in their uptake of the feedback. The issues addressed in error feedback need to be followed up by being part of what is taught in class to raise learners’ conscious awareness of them (Ferris, 2004).

Another finding in relation to method of provision of feedback was that peer feedback and teacher-student conferences were not in use save for a hint of conferences from two of the marked scripts where the teachers wrote, “see me.” It was concluded that teachers are either not familiar with these as methods of providing feedback or are not willing to use them. The methods, however, could have enormous benefits for the students especially in relation to comprehension of feedback. These two methods allow for negotiation of meaning and seeking of
clarifications since they are conducted face-to-face. It was noted that teachers were not able to mark many essays, something they attributed to lack of time. It was felt that incorporating peer feedback and teacher-student conferences, as methods of providing feedback would ease the burden from the teacher. However, it must be remembered that learners need to be trained especially in peer feedback to avert the risk of them giving unhelpful feedback, or feedback that focuses on LOCs only. Keh (1990) observes that training students to give peer feedback is a difficult task but is worth every effort. Noteworthy among the suggestions made by learners on ways of improving provision of feedback was that students be allowed to correct each other’s work and they be put in groups to discuss both the writing and feedback. They also suggested the need for teachers to call students individually for a face-to-face discussion of their (students’) writing.

On the whole it was concluded that teachers need to adopt a multifaceted approach to feedback where different methods are employed. This would be particularly appropriate if a multiple-drafting system was also adopted.

Another feature of feedback provision investigated was the characteristics of the provided feedback. It was established that, generally, teachers paid tremendous attention to the weaknesses in the students’ essays both in the verbal feedback and the written commentary. In the marked essays, for example, it was found that 73.61% and 72.68% of comments in composition 1 and 2 respectively highlighted areas of weaknesses, those comments pointing out strengths were 5.54% and 10.57% in compositions one and two respectively. From these findings it was concluded that teachers need to balance between criticism and praise because learners also want to know what they are doing right (Keh, 1990; Ferris, 2003).

In relation to focus on important features of writing and of narratives, different teachers made comments touching on the different areas in the feedback lesson.
All except the area of cohesion were commented on. Grammar was the most frequently commented with 72.72% of the teachers commenting on it. Mechanics was second, being commented on by 63.63% of the teachers (see. table 5.8). From the marked essays, it emerged that the area of grammar had the highest percentage of comments with 34.04% ad 47.14% of the comments in the first and second compositions respectively (see table 5.10). From the findings it was evident that teachers do give feedback on all important areas but with a bias for LOCs. It was concluded that teachers should pay more attention to HOCs because as Keh, (1990) observes these are more difficult to deal with and may be more challenging to the learners. Additionally/ LOCs may disappear in the process of revision. Further, since teachers cannot focus on all learner errors they need to prioritize the areas to comment on considering that students cannot pay attention to everything at once. Ferris, (2007) advises teachers to consult course rubric or grading criteria, specifications of the particular task or text type, individual learner progress needs, and recently taught features when deciding the fundamental areas to focus on in the provision of feedback. Generally, teachers should give feedback about a variety of writing issues depending on the needs of the individual learner, the developmental stage of the text, the requirements of specific tasks and the overall expectations of the writing course (cf 5.3.2).

The written feedback (comments) extracted from the marked essays was found to take various forms; directives, statements, phrases, single words and questions. Of these, directives were the most common form with 49.08% and 47.14% of the comments in composition one and two respectively, taking the form of directives, for example, ‘check your tenses” “correct your punctuation.” The second most popular form of comments was statements like “you did not draw an outline leading to disorganization.” Statements made up 23.48% and 17.62% of the comments in composition one and two respectively. The least used form was questions with 5.01% and 7.45% respectively (see table 5.11).
These findings show that teachers give comments in different forms, but largely in form of directives. Ferris, (2003) argues that the tendency of teachers to give directive suggestions or to use the imperative mood communicates to the student writer that the teacher’s arguments are more important than what the writer wanted to say. This amounts to appropriation or “taking over” of the student’s writing and it may demotivate and disempower the apprentice writer. To avoid this, teachers are advised to hedge their suggestions or use questions, although questions should be used with care especially with novice L2 writers as they might not interpret them as speech acts or may fail to understand and respond to them appropriately (Ferris, 2007). It was thus concluded that teachers in the context of the present study may use a variety of forms, but the ultimate goal should be clarity and conciseness of the intended feedback. And while pursuing clarity Ferris, (2007) warns that grammatical and rhetorical terms such as “conclusion” should be used with care, because learners may not understand them (cf 5.3.3).

The feedback provided in the classes under study was also found to contain minimal and general suggestions for revision and improvement of writing. Suggestions such as “read widely in order to write and communicate effectively” were found to make up 5.80% and 3.52% of the comments in composition 1 and 2 respectively. It was concluded that there is need for teachers to give some explicit and practical guidelines to help learners address some of the problems identified in their essays. Such suggestions would especially be useful if revisions of essays were made part of the teaching of writing, that is, introducing multiple-drafting (cf 5.3.4).

A tendency to give similar comments with only slight variations to different learners was also noted from the analysis of the comments given by the teachers
(see table 5.12 and table 5.13). These findings led to the conclusion that the teachers seem to assume that “one size fits all” when it comes to feedback. This has been shown not to be true because learners are not identical in their experiences, knowledge and motivations. Feedback should be individualized as far as possible (Leki, 1992; Reid, 1998; Ferris, 2003).

Generally, with regard to provision of feedback, teachers revealed that they are only able to give an average of two compositions per term. When marking teachers revealed that they pay close attention to aspects of grammar, mechanics of spelling and handwriting and vocabulary usage. These sentiments were commensurate with the findings from the marked essays and feedback lessons, where the aspect of grammar was found to receive a lot of focus. On the role they see themselves as playing when they mark learners’ essays teachers indicated that they see their most important role as judges or evaluators of students’ essays, charged with the responsibility of preparing learners for the exam. Teachers are however advised to embrace more than one role. They should be judges, motivators and interested readers at the same time in order to maximize effectiveness of feedback provision (cf 5.4).

7.1.4 Learner Reactions to the Writing Lessons.
Having established that teachers do provide input and feedback for writing to learners, the present study shifted focus from the teacher to learners, as they too are major participants in the pedagogic process. Learner feedback can be an important heuristics to enable teachers improve the pedagogic process (Keh, 1990; Lee, 2008). Thus the last objective of the current study was to assess and describe learners’ reactions to the writing lessons and to the feedback provided by the teachers. Data for this objective was from students’ questionnaires.

In regard to the lessons, learners’ views on the explanations given, the vocabulary used, their participation and how interesting the learners find their writing lessons
to be were sought. In addition, learners’ suggestions on how the teaching of writing could improve were also gathered.

93.34% of the learners indicated that teachers give explanations of what is expected in each writing task (table 6.1). These explanations were said to be detailed, touching on important features of writing such as grammar, content and organization. This was indicated to be the case by 70.20% of the students (see table 6.2). In addition, the explanations are delivered in a fairly easy language. 65.54% of learners indicated that the vocabulary used by the teachers is fairly easy (see table 6.3). It was therefore concluded that a majority of learners are satisfied with the explanations given in the writing lessons. This satisfaction reduces anxiety when doing a writing task. Low anxiety levels contribute to low affective filters. Lowered affective filters means the learners seek more input and convert more of the input into intake or stored knowledge according to Krashen, (1985).

On participation, 80.10% of the learners indicated that they are given opportunities to participate in the lesson. This position was born out of the fact that teachers allow students to ask questions, answer questions and make suggestions. This gives students the feeling that the teacher values their contributions. This feeling then is a motivation for them to participate even some more. High motivation also contributes to low affective filters according to Krashen, (1985). Generally, over half of the students, that is 63.57% of the students considered their writing lessons interesting. From these findings it was concluded that learners have a positive attitude towards the writing lessons. This positive attitude can be harnessed for the benefit of the pedagogic process (cf 6.2.2).
A final question sought learners’ suggestions on how the teaching of writing can be improved. A major suggestion was the need to write more regularly. This was made a total of 64 times (see table 6.7). It had been established earlier that learners only write an average three compositions per term. This was felt not to give adequate practice for writing, because writing is a skill that requires practice. Teachers indicated that they are not able to give a lot of writing tasks because of the wide syllabus that needs to be covered, and the fact that marking takes a lot of time. It was concluded that the situation could be improved by taking a process approach to writing where multiple drafting is practiced. This way various methods of feedback provision such as peer feedback, teacher-student conferences can be applied at various stages, freeing the teacher to mark and give comments only on the last draft. The multiple drafting would give learners a lot of writing practice.

Other suggestions for improvement made by students included the need to read other written materials and use of more samples of written compositions. Generally, learners seemed to suggest a need for diversification of resources and classroom activities. This corroborates with the earlier findings (cf 4.2) where the same conclusion was reached, because it was found that the classroom activities and materials and resources used in the classes under study were limited and largely teacher centered as opposed to learner centered.

Generally, the findings on learners' views of the writing lessons have an implication for methodology and materials used in the writing lesson. It seems teachers need to be more creative and open minded when designing classroom activities and choosing resource materials for the writing lesson. These two areas were found wanting in the classes under study. The findings also led to the conclusion that learners have a positive attitude towards their writing lesson, despite teachers’ views that learners have a negative attitude to writing. If the
positive attitude is coupled with proper approaches, resources and encouragement, huge benefits can be reaped in the learning of writing skills.

7.1.5 Learners’ Reactions to Teacher Feedback
In addition to learners’ views on the writing lessons, their views on the feedback provided by their teachers were also sought. It was first of all established that teachers provide feedback to learner writing, be it a teacher given assignment or a learner’s own initiative task. 87.38% of the students indicated that teachers mark all the assignments they give (see table 6.9). On the feedback learners indicated that they understand and utilize the feedback in various ways such as noting the points in mind, writing the points and questions raised in their books (this was the most popular strategy appearing 69 times, asking for teacher explanations and consulting reading materials such as course book or dictionary. Revision while incorporating corrections was also reported as a popular strategy although it was not observed in the classes since they were single-draft classes. From these findings it was concluded that the learners value the feedback provided and were willing to make use of it. According to Ferris, (2004) feedback is utilized best where there is multiple-drafting. The classes under study were found to be single-draft classes.

On focus, learners revealed that teacher feedback focuses on all important areas of writing but with a bias towards LOCs, such as grammar and mechanics. Grammar was said to receive many comments by 72.19% of the students, while 49.01% of the learners also said that mechanics receives many comments (see table 6.12) The learners would prefer feedback in all areas of writing but more on vocabulary usage, followed by grammar, punctuation, content and organization in that order (see table 6.13). The findings on the learners’ views on the focus of the feedback agree with those got earlier where teachers were found to focus most of their comments on aspects of grammar and mechanics (cf 5.3.2). It was therefore concluded that to both teachers and learners the LOCs are more important. This
could be attributed to the washback effect of examination culture prevalent in the school system in Kenya. The KNEC lays a lot of emphasis on aspects of language in the marking of composition writing papers (see appendix 9).

Learners held the view that teacher feedback is fair and useful, especially because it helps them to improve their writing and ultimately do well in their exams. 87.42% of the learners said the feedback was very useful and 50.99% said the comments and scores are fair (see table 6.15). It was thus concluded that learners have a positive view of teacher feedback. They see the comments as meant to help them improve.

On how to improve feedback provision, learners indicated a need for a variety of error feedback strategies as well as use of other methods such as peer feedback and student-teacher conferencing. They would also appreciate more and varied feedback from different teachers as well as marking guides. Learners would also appreciate a revision aspect in the feedback process and a balance in the teacher feedback so that it does not concentrate on learner weaknesses only (see table 6.19).

It was thus concluded that since learners seem to value and utilize teacher feedback, teachers should continue providing feedback. They may however need to diversify their methods of feedback provision and broaden the focus of the feedback in terms of the different important areas of writing as well as individual learner needs. They may also need to use multiple-drafting for a better utilization of feedback.

7.2 General Conclusions.
From the findings of this study, the following general conclusions were made.

1. Input is an important aspect in the pedagogic process. It is therefore important for it to focus on all-important aspects of writing, both
HOCs and LOCs, though HOCs may require more attention. Additionally, the learning activities and resources used in the provision of the input need to be more varied and learner centered in order to improve comprehensibility of the input. These sorts of activities would be more applicable in a communicative-oriented instruction as opposed to code-oriented instruction found to be prevalent in the classes under study. Thus there is need to use classroom activities that are more interactive and that will get learners to write and not just hear about writing.

2. It is not enough for learners to know the stages in the writing process, but they also need to be trained in specific strategies for use in the various stages in order to come up with an essay that effectively deals with the four bases of effective writing namely, unity, support, coherence and sentence skills. Emphasis should be on practice. This suggests a need for shift from single-drafting to multiple-drafting.

3. Provision of feedback is a central part of the pedagogic process of writing. As such, teachers should be careful with the feedback practices they adopt as these have a significant implication for the development of writing skills. Teachers should adopt a multi-faceted approach to feedback where they employ different methods, peer feedback, teacher-student conferences, and error feedback plus teacher commentary together for maximum benefits to the learners.

4. Teacher feedback should focus on a few pertinent issues that the learner can easily address. The pertinent issues focused on could arise from the aspects of language being tackled at that point in the syllabus and from other areas that learners have been found to have problems.
Alternatively, the choice can be guided by the demands of the task or text type or by the rubric of a responding guideline where it is available (Ferris, 2007). In addition to being the focus of feedback, the pertinent areas can also be made part of the focus of the lesson, to raise learners’ awareness of their importance (Ferris, 2003). While at it an integrated approach is best employed so that the issues permeate the speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Further, an aspect of progression should be incorporated so that the teacher has a way of checking if the issues raised in an earlier task are addressed in the next piece of writing. This would best be done if multiple-drafting with revisions were adopted.

5. The feedback should be balanced to focus both on strong and weak points of learner writing. The feedback should be made clearly and concisely for it to be useful. In addition it should be suited to individual learner needs. When providing feedback teachers are encouraged to adopt multiple roles, judges, motivators, and interested readers so that they provide broad based feedback (Keh, 1990, Ferris, 2003). Teachers in this study were found to pay more attention to their roles as judges or evaluators of student writing. Additionally, teachers should provide feedback on all-important aspects of writing, both on HOCs and LOCs and ensure that comments given clearly and concisely specify the problem the learner needs to address or the positive point that the learner has achieved. Teachers may also need to give some practical suggestions on how to address some of the problems. While doing this, teachers are advised to use hedged sentences that suggest that learners are free to take or leave the suggestions, as long as they have a good reason not to. Hedged suggestions are less appropriative than directives that were found to be
the most common form of comments in the teacher comments in the present study.

6. Learners have a positive view towards the writing lesson. They appreciate information on all-important areas, especially when it is contextualized in some written text and presented well. They also would appreciate more participation, a wide variety of activities and resources in the writing lessons. Therefore, the lesson should be made more communicative oriented in order to take care of learners’ interests.

7. Learners would like more practice in writing and a revision aspect included as part of the writing process (multiple-drafting). In addition, learners value and utilize feedback. In fact they would like more feedback and in all important areas of writing. As such, teachers should not be discouraged by the hard task of providing feedback. At the same time teachers should find ways of involving learners in the writing process and the provision of feedback.

8. It is important for teachers to know that learners are central participants in the pedagogic process. Therefore, learners’ views on the teaching and learning of writing should continually be sought and considered. This suggests the need for classroom or action research on the part of the teachers. The information gathered in such research is an important heuristics in the pedagogic process.

7.3 Pedagogic Implications of the Findings.
The findings of the present study have implications for both classroom practices and for factors external to the classroom but which have a bearing on the pedagogic process of ESL writing. These implications are presented in
this section of the present chapter. First the implications of the findings on features of the pedagogic process investigated in the current study, that is, input, feedback provision and learner reactions are discussed. Secondly the implications of the finding on examination practices, teacher preparation and teaching materials and resources, factors external to the classroom but with a bearing on the pedagogic practice are presented.

7.3.1 Implications on Classroom Practices
The findings of the present study have implications for the type of instruction used, the classroom activities and resources utilized, feedback provision practices employed and the way learners are viewed in the classes under study.

For a start, it was established that teachers in the classes under study provide input that contains important and relevant information for the development of writing. It was, however, noted that comprehensibility of this input could be improved by the adoption of communicative oriented instruction. Communicative oriented instruction is said to provide learners with “real operating conditions” for practice of writing and other language skills (Ellis, 1994). This is achieved by using classroom activities that are learner centered and interactive such as group discussions. The activities work well with the utilization of a range of resources such as texts and visual materials. These provide contexts for written communication as well as stimulation for a variety of writing activities. Communicative activities not only stimulate but also allow for integration of the different language skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing.

The following are examples of communicative classroom activities that can be utilized in writing lessons.
Use of headlines: These can be invented or extracted from newspapers. Below are two examples of possible headlines: “Minister killed in plane crash”. “Student arrested over examination cheating.” Various writing tasks can be done using such headlines, for example, stories, expository writing, and argumentative writing. Students can then be put in groups to discuss the different headlines. This would involve speaking, listening and note-taking. The learners can then go on to draw an outline and write their essay. The essays can be exchanged and read out in class.

Use of picture sequences and other visual materials.
A picture of a scene of accident for example, can be used to generate various writing tasks such as newspaper report of the accident, insurance claim report, a police investigation report, a story on accident, an exposition of causes of accidents or even letters. In groups or pairs students can engage in dialogues on what is happening in the picture. The aim is to interpret and not just describe the pictures. The dialogue helps learners rehearse the language for writing. From the ideas that emerge in the dialogue students can then go on to write whatever task they are assigned. The teacher may choose to assign different tasks to different groups from the same picture and compare the different pieces of writing or compare different versions of the same task.

Projects: these may involve learners working on a task for some period of time, say a week or two. It begins with a presentation by the teacher on a topic for discussion, for example “fashion” The teacher can help he learners “open up” the topic by for instance making a chart on possible aspects that can be discussed on the topic. A chart on the topic fashion might look like fig
Opening up the topic involves talking and writing. The opening up can be done in a whole class discussion. From this discussion some aspects can then be chosen and assigned to groups for further discussion. For example, different groups could discuss the different aspects shown in Fig. 7.1. The teacher may guide each group on the scope of their area. The next step is for the learners to go out and gather necessary and relevant information. This may involve interviewing certain people, drawing up questionnaires, reading and
summarizing information. The learners are then required to report back their research, for example, in the form of brochures, a booklet, a story or report. It can consist of text and illustrations that make it clear and interesting. This final write up involves writing and editing. The length of the final product can be constrained to a number of pages or words depending on the level of students. This will call upon the learners’ use of summary skills. In all this the teacher acts as a consultant on what reference materials the learners need, the language they need to use and any other necessary guidance. However, the responsibility for the final product should be the students’.

Activities such as those presented above, allow for two-way interaction necessary for negotiation of meaning. They are also useful for drawing out learners’ potential and for developing learners’ problem-solving skills. All this is achieved using interlanguage talk. These features are useful for the simplification of input and in turn increasing its comprehensibility (Ellis, 1994; Krashen, 1985). This comprehensibility in turn aids the development of the writing skills.

Another finding of the present study that has an implication for the classroom practice is the observation that the teaching of writing takes a product rather than a process approach. The concern of the teacher is largely with the end product (essays or pieces of writing) that the learners produce. It is therefore not surprising that the classes are single-draft as opposed to multiple-draft classes. In single draft classes learners write only one final product that is marked and they move on to another essay of the same or different genre. Multiple-drafting, on the other hand, means that the learner writes and receives feedback on several drafts of the same essay. He/she uses the feedback provided for one draft to revise and produce the next draft, writing...
up to three or four drafts. Thus, the teacher is not only concerned with the last or final essay but also with the process of arriving at the final draft.

Multiple-drafting is a feature of a process-approach to writing and has been shown to have a number of advantages. For instance, it can allow for very good training on various strategies for use in the different stages of the writing process, especially revision strategies. Secondly, it gives learners a clear view of the progress of their essays and in effect the development of their writing skills. Thirdly, it provides for better utilization of the provided feedback. Additionally, it allows for use of different methods of providing feedback as well as allowing choice on what the feedback should focus on in the different drafts: content or form (Keh, 1990; Ferris, 1995). It would thus be useful for the teachers in the context of the present study to shift from a product approach to a process approach in the teaching of writing. Specifically, there is need to incorporate multiple-drafting as part of the pedagogic process of writing. Learners in the present study actually suggested that revision be part of the teaching of writing (cf 6.3.5)

Keh (1990) observes that it is possible for learners to write up to five papers in a semester with each paper taking approximately three weeks to go through the process to the final product. Keh provides the following model of implementation of feedback for one paper in a multiple-drafting class.
Adoption of such a model in the secondary schools would improve the teaching of writing skills.

A third significant finding of the present study was that teacher feedback tended to concentrate more on weaknesses in the learners’ essays as opposed to strong points (cf 6.3.1). The feedback focused on LOCs such as grammar and mechanics as opposed to HOCs such as content and organization. It was felt there is need to focus on specific pertinent issues when providing feedback. Additionally, it was found that similar feedback was provided to all learners without regard to individual learner needs and learner differences.

The overall score given for the essay was based on a holistic scoring of the essay. Holistic scoring involves reading for an individual impression of the quality of writing, by comparison with all other writing the reader sees on that occasion. (Hamp-Lyons, 2003). The quality can be recognized only by carefully selected and experienced readers using their skilled impressions, not by any objectifiable means (White, 1985). As a result of this, the judgements made by the readers are unreliable.
A way of improving the above weaknesses in the provision of feedback would be to adopt multiple trait scoring. Multiple trait scoring treats the construct of writing as complex and multifaceted. It allows teachers or test developers to identify the qualities or traits of writing that are important in a particular context or task type and to evaluate writing according to the salient traits in a specific context. Multiple- trait scoring also allows raters to pay attention to the relative strengths and weaknesses in an individual writer’s text and score some traits higher than others (Hamp-Lyons, 2003). Multiple trait scoring provides teachers and raters with rich information that will facilitate decisions about remedial courses, selection of course types and other choices.

In following multiple traits scoring the teacher would need to have a scoring guide outlining the specific traits being focused on. This helps maintain a focus on overall problems and strengths of the text. It also ensures that all the important areas contribute to the final score. A guide such as the one below could be used for the marking of a narrative.
Fig. 7.3: Model marking guide for a narrative (designed by the researcher)

1. Content (2 marks)
   - Relevance to the topic
   - Relevant ideas and supporting information
2. Development and Organization of the story (6 marks)
   Consider the structure of the story (plot).
   - The conflict
   - Clear events that build up towards the resolution of the conflict
   - Final resolution of the conflict
3. Cohesion (2 marks)
   - Correct use of connectors and other features of cohesion
   - Appropriate connection of ideas
4. Creativity (2 marks)
   - Sense of originality and freshness that makes the story interesting.
5. Style (2 marks)
   - Use of aspects such as description, dialogue, suspense, humour, exaggeration, and rhetoric questions. These go beyond mere narration
6. Grammar (4 marks)
   - Word order
   - Sentence construction and variety
   - Tenses
   - Vocabulary usage (correct, appropriate and creative use of words and expressions)
7. Mechanics (3 marks)
   - Punctuations
   - Spelling
   - Paragraphing
   - Handwriting

This guide was designed based on the important features of writing presented in 4.2.1
A guide such as this one could be restructured to suit the needs of different writing tasks. Notice that different features are rated differently. The rater would have to give a mark within the range of a particular feature depending on the individual essay. The overall score of the essay would be a total of the scores in the seven different areas. Such a guide would help both the teacher and the learner to see specific areas where the learner is weaker or stronger, hence guiding future effort. This would particularly work if the teacher indicates the mark given for each particular area. Students found to be weak in a common area can then do teacher-student group conferences on those areas. Alternatively, they can be put in peer feedback groups with others who are better in the areas so that the weak learners can learn from the strong learners.

Generally, in the provision of feedback, teachers in the context of the present study could benefit from the following principles taken from Ferris and Hedgcock (2005, Fig 5.1p. 190: see fig 7.3)

**Fig 7.4 Guiding principles of written teacher commentary**

- The teacher is not the only respondent
- Written commentary is not the only option
- Teachers do not need to respond to every single problem on every single student draft
- Feedback should focus on issues presented by an individual student and his/her paper, not on rigid prescriptions
- Teachers should take care to avoid “appropriating” or “taking over” a student’s text.
- Teachers should provide both encouraging and constructive criticism through their feedback.
- Teachers should treat their students as individuals and consider their written feedback as part of an ongoing conversation between themselves and each student.

(From Ferris Hedgock, 2005: 190).
Regarding individual learner needs, it is imperative that teachers be in constant communication with the students to find out how useful the input and feedback they (teachers) provide to the learners is and how learners feel it could be improved. Ultimately learners need to be viewed as and be made to feel that they are active participants in the pedagogic process. Their ideas could be utilized at different levels such as provision of input, per feedback and self-evaluation. This may require the teacher to train the learners though, so that they are able to make useful contributions to the pedagogic process.

This section has presented implications of the findings of the present study on classroom practices that have a bearing on the development of writing skills. The next section presents implications of the findings for aspects external to the classroom but which relate to the pedagogic process of writing.

7.3.2 Implications on Factors External to the Classroom.

The findings of the current study also have implications for aspects such as the examination practices in the education system, teacher preparation and recommended teaching materials and resources.

First of all, it appears that the examination culture prevalent in the school system tends to overshadow the ultimate goal of teaching language that is to equip learners with communicative competence. Instead, focus shifts to preparing learners to pass the exam. This explains the code-oriented instruction found in the classes under study as opposed to communicative-oriented instruction. It was also established that in the marking of the composition or essay writing exams, KNEC gives prominence to linguistic competence as opposed to content (cf 5.3.2 and appendix 9) Linguistic competence is only one important feature of writing. Others are unity, support and coherence. The prominence given to linguistic skills has a wash back effect in that in the classrooms more attention is paid to aspects of language
while the other aspects of written discourse are treated as peripheral. For, example, teachers in this study were found to give more focus on LOCs such as grammar and mechanics compared to HOCs such as content and organization in their input and feedback. Students also indicated a preference for more feedback on LOCs.

The findings of this study therefore imply a need for the re-examination of the examination culture in our school system. There is need to focus attention to the ultimate goal of getting learners to achieve communicative competence and not to just pass exams. All stakeholders involved, teachers, learners, curriculum developers and examiners need to be consciously aware of this fact. In the classroom for example more communicative oriented learning needs to be used to make learning of writing more realistic (cf 7.7.1).

Secondly, the examining body KNEC may need to shift the focus of marking of composition exams from LOCs to HOCs. It is our opinion that since aspects of language such as grammar, mechanics of spelling and vocabulary are broadly tested in other parts of the English exam, such as cloze, comprehension and grammar, the writing parts of the exam, functional writing in Paper 1 and Paper 3 that tests conventional composition and essays based on set texts, should focus on writing as a form of written communication, hence giving more weight to content, organization, and coherence as opposed to grammar, mechanics and formatting. Marks can be awarded for such aspect as clear lines of reasoning, appropriate choice of evidence, ample development of ideas, effective organization and precise use of language.

Further, the findings of this study may have an implication for teacher training and preparation. A finding of the study was that teachers seem to be well versed in the content on writing, but there is a need for improvement in
teaching methodology. This therefore implies a need for more training in
teaching methodology. In-service teachers may need to be trained on the
various approaches to the teaching of writing, namely product, process and
genre based approaches. They may also need to be trained on the how to
design and use various communicative and learner centered classroom
activities. Such training can be done in seminars and workshops where
teachers can shares ideas on the teaching of writing. Teachers interviewed in
this study indicated that any they had not attended any workshop, seminars or
training dealing specifically with the teaching of writing. Additionally,
teachers need to continually be in-serviced on the integrated approach adopted
in the secondary school syllabus. Some of the teachers in this study admitted
that they did not know how to go about with the integration. Yet, the
integration is felt to be a good way of helping cover the syllabus within the
allocated time frame.

Teachers may also need specific training in responding to learner writing in
order to improve teacher feedback practices. Among the aspects they can be
in-serviced on are methods of providing feedback such as how to use peer
feedback, how to conduct teacher-student conferences and how to improve
their error feedback and comments. It is our view that the training should be
practical involving response to real learner essays rather than theoretical
where teachers are told what to do.

For the pre-service teachers the responsibility of training falls on colleges and
universities. Teachers in the present study reported a deficiency in the training
for teaching of writing that they received. A review of the universities and
colleges syllabi, where teacher are trained, showed there is little or no
guidance to the trainee teachers on responding to learner writing. Matters are
worsened by the fact that in the secondary schools there are no guidelines for
responding to learner writing. The syllabus simply says that the feedback provided should be meaningful and helpful. These findings imply the need to improve the teacher training and preparation related to the teaching of composition writing. In addition to equipping the pre-service teachers with content knowledge on aspects of writing, an aspect on responding to student writing should be incorporated into the course on writing.

From a different angle, colleges and universities may need to specifically train teachers of writing rather than general teachers of English. That is, teaching of writing be made an area of specialization so that teachers are well grounded in different aspects of teaching and responding to writing.

A further point is that teachers need to be made aware of the importance of continued action research. This involves the teacher constantly finding out what does and does not work with his current group of students. The information gathered includes students’ views on how best the teaching and learning of writing can be improved. The information is then ploughed back as a heuristics to help the teacher in the day-to-day teaching. The teachers also need to keep abreast with current developments in writing in general and second language writing in particular.

Lastly the findings of this study have an implication for materials and resources used in the teaching of writing in secondary schools. It was found, for instance, that there is great reliance on the English course book especially on the part of students. These books were found to present writing as products, with small bits of information presented for teaching at different levels from form one to form four. The details presented at different levels are, however, limited requiring the teachers and students to search elsewhere. Therefore teachers and students suggested that a comprehensive guide or
reference material be provided for the teaching of writing. Such a guide, in our view, should include aspects like the writing process, strategies for use in the various stages for the writing process, content on specific forms of writing such as narratives, descriptions and memos, learning activities for teaching writing, and methods of responding to students’ writing.

Still on materials, clear guidelines on responding to student writing need to be provided. The ministry of education, through KIE and in conjunction with KNEC may need to come up with such guidelines. The guidelines can be part of the syllabus or can be published separately. It should then be ensured that teachers are familiar with these guidelines, they understand and follow them. Such guidelines may determine to a great extent the focus of teaching and provision of feedback in the writing classes. Alternatively, teachers need to familiarize themselves with the KCSE marking guidelines Ferris, (2007) argues that it is the duty of teachers to make learners aware of the standards by which their writing will be judged. Since the learners are being prepared for the KCSE exam, it is imperative that they know what the examiner expects of them.

Ultimately, the success of the pedagogic process of writing depends largely on the teachers and learners. The teachers need to find ways to make the teaching and learning of writing meaningful, practical and enjoyable by use of a variety of learning activities and resources, for example. They also need to appreciate the struggles of the apprentice writers and always respond as interested readers with the best interest of the writer at heart. Learners, on their part, need to be conscious of the hard work needed to develop the writing skill and to go out of their way to use any source of input and feedback available to them while striving to improve their writing. Ultimately learners need to know that the skills acquired are for their benefit and not for the teacher.
7.4 Further research

From the findings of the present study other possible related areas that require further research have emerged. For a start, one finding of the present study was that learners are aware of the writing process and they do try to follow it in their writing. It may however be useful to carry out an in-depth study of learners’ competence in the writing process, especially for learners with different linguistic proficiencies. Such an in-depth analysis could form the basis for training in strategies needed in the various stages of the writing process. This kind of training was thought to be necessary from the findings of this study.

Our study also focused on teacher feedback practices. It emerged that the main method of feedback used is error feedback and teacher comments. Given the continuing debate on the efficacy of error feedback, this is a rich area of research, especially in the Kenyan context, where to the best of our knowledge not much has been done. A good starting point would be to carry out an experimental longitudinal study with a control group not receiving error feedback and another group receiving error feedback to judge whether error feedback has any effect. Another interesting line of research that would contribute to the debate on error feedback would be to investigate the effect of the focus of the error feedback. In the present study teachers were found to largely focus on LOCs as opposed to HOCs. However, since no revisions of the written essays were required, these were single-draft classes, the effect of the focus could not be established. As such, a study with different groups receiving error feedback focusing on form (LOCs) and another group receiving error feedback focusing on content (HOCs) plus a revision aspect incorporated would provide more insights into what needs more focus in the Kenyan context. At the same time, it would be interesting to establish the effect of different error feedback strategies on revision of essays.
A third possible area of research would be to explore how teacher factors such as prior grammatical knowledge, training and experience and philosophy regarding error feedback strategies impact on teacher error correction. The findings of this study were that teachers do not receive adequate training on responding to learner writing and are therefore forced to rely on prior experience. The questions of prior grammatical knowledge and philosophies regarding error feedback were not explored.

The findings of the present study also seemed to imply that learners who are motivated and have a positive attitude to writing generally have a positive attitude to the provided feedback. This information was however only gathered using questionnaires to students only. Perhaps a triangulation of instruments of data collection such as questionnaires, interviews, protocols and checklists could provide more in-depth information on the impact of learner attitudes, motivations and beliefs on their ability to learn from the error feedback provided by the teacher.

Among the suggestions made by learners in the current study was the need to incorporate multiple-drafting (revisions) in the pedagogic process of writing. It would be interesting to discover whether such multiple-drafting would result to surface level revisions or meaning level revisions among learners in our context.

It has been shown that other methods of providing feedback such as peer feedback and teacher-student conferences have a positive impact on the development of writing skills. However, since such methods were found not to be in use in the context of the current study, an experimental study where the methods are used and their effects assessed may be necessary. While on
peer feedback another interesting investigation would be on the effect of training students for peer response. How would such training impact on learners’ ability to provide feedback to their peers as well as on their own ability of self-evaluation?

Finally, students in Kenya come from a multiplicity of ethnic backgrounds. Therefore an investigation into the impact of language background and possibly gender on learners’ behaviour in peer response groups would be a worthwhile venture.

7.5 Summary
This chapter has presented a summary of the findings and conclusions drawn with regard to the objectives of the current study. The chapter has also presented various implications of the findings of the study on features internal and external to the classroom. The chapter concludes with a presentation of other possible related areas of research.
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Appendices

Appendix 1 a: Candidates’ Overall Performance in English for the years 1999-2003.
(Extracted from KCSE Examination Candidates’ Report, 2002, 2003) and the years 2006 & 2007

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Key (1a)
1A: English Composition
1B: English Summary, Comprehension and Grammar
2: Literature in English

(1b)
1: Testing Functional Skills
2: Comprehension, Literary Appreciation and Grammar
3: Conventional Composition and Essays Based on Set Texts
### 1 b: Candidates’ overall performance in the years 2006 & 2007
(Source KNEC KCSE report, 2008)

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**Appendix 2: THE KCSE ENGLISH EXAMINATION FORMAT**

**The Old Format (Used up to 2005)**

101/1 - Composition writing (functional writing, creative writing) (40 marks)
101/2 Language (Summary writing, Comprehension, Grammar) (80 marks)
101/3 Literature (80 marks)

**The New Format (Effective 2006)**

Paper 1(101/1): Testing functional skills (marked out of 60)

Paper 2(101/2): Testing comprehension, literary appreciation and grammar (marked out of 80).

Paper 3(101/3): Testing conventional composition and essays based on set texts (marked out of 60)
Appendix 3: TRANSCRIBED LESSONS

A: Input Lessons

Lesson 1: School J
Teacher: Ok, today we are going to start something about narrative writing and something else. In the first 5 minutes we are talking about writing. Do you know what narrative means and of course writing? We have had our lessons on composition writing so we are going to take a few minutes, just the beginning 20 minutes or so looking at how we go about writing a composition. Now, a narrative means to narrate or to tell. So we have a story at the back of our mind, so it is this story that we want to write so that we share it towards the end. So the first thing that we should of course have when we think of writing a composition of whatever type is what?

Students: The title!

Teacher: We should think of a title or a heading of which we are going to tell our story. So we may imagine that we have been given a certain heading to write on and then we now decide on how do I go about writing my composition? So I’d like someone to tell us, you have a heading and you want to write a composition on that same heading, what’s the very first thing that you should do?

Student: Plan!

Teacher: Okay, you need to have a plan. So you need to work with a plan, a general outline of the composition you are going to write. Now, in the plan, what is the very first thing that you are going to have?

Student: The meaning of the title in the plan.

Teacher: The meaning of the title in the plan? We already have the meaning of the title, don’t we? So we already have the title and we know what it is we are planning to write on. So we now come to the plan itself.

Student: Ideas that are based on the title.

Teacher: Ideas that are based on the title. Which ideas are these? The first ideas that should come into our minds as we plan should be?

Student: The first idea?

Teacher: Yeah, the first idea that you should think about. The story is all about? So far we have said we have a title already and we know, we understand the title and therefore we have the information we are going to write on the title or the story that agrees with our title and when we come down to planning, the first thing is; we think of how we are going to introduce our story. So we should think of an introduction, an appropriate introduction to our story. Now what do you remember about an introduction? What should it be? How should it be? Why should we have it?

Student: It should …

Teacher: It should be?
Student: In capital letters.

Teacher: In capital letters, eeh. Okay, we have a paragraph, a paragraph. I hope we are not confusing between the introduction of our story and the title. So in this case, we should think of our first paragraph. Our introduction takes the first paragraph. How are we going to introduce our story? Ok, we should have a brief introduction so you should be careful not to make your introduction so long. But it should be just a brief paragraph maybe of about 2 or 3 sentences, an introduction that is of course going to interest your readers so that they want to read the rest of your story. Now after the introduction or the introductory paragraph, we move to, we come to the body of the composition. Now, it’s the body that now carries the real composition just like the word itself. So it is here that you have a number of paragraphs, you may have 2, 3 or 4 paragraphs depending on the ideas that your story has. Now in paragraph 2, remember that the first paragraph is our introduction so you just introduce your story in a short paragraph. The $2^{nd}$ paragraph is therefore part of …?

Students: The body!

Teacher: The body, and therefore that one carries the main idea. So you need to divide your ideas, those that are going to make up the composition into paragraphs such that each paragraph takes a major idea and maybe it could be important probably to mention that the beginning sentence of the paragraph introduces that new idea, and there after you come up with other sentences to build on the main ideas that you have introduced in your first sentence. So you now see that in the body we have 2, 3 or 4 paragraphs depending on the number of major ideas that you have. So that will be our $2^{nd}$, $3^{rd}$, $4^{th}$ paragraphs and finally after the body,

Student: Conclusion.

Teacher: Ok, we come to our conclusion. Now our conclusion again is another paragraph that ought to be quite short because what we are doing in our conclusion is just summing up our story. For example, if we were writing a story of a Wedding I Attended, then you come to the conclusion, you sum it up. What judgment you make on that wedding, do you like it or was it an enjoyable day, would you like to attend another wedding? So the conclusion again should be fairly short. So this is the general plan that we ought to have for our composition of the story that we are writing. So next I am going to quickly go through some major points that you need to have at the back of your mind as you write down your story.

The first point is that you should avoid subjects or scenes and actions that you are not familiar with. What this means is that, when you want to write a story, of course you may be asked to imagine but the kind of scenes that you choose, the kind of scenes that you choose to talk about, the subject or the actions that you include in your story must be areas that your are familiar with so that you will be able to have a flowing story right from the beginning and therefore choose a subject, action or theme of a story that you are familiar with. Secondly, you should be able to think of convincing experiences. Now there is a kind of an experience that you may be include in your story but definitely sounds not convincing. So think of themes that sound convincing to the reader or to your composition. Thirdly, the sequence of your events should be coherent. Let this idea lead to the next idea and so on. Remember here of course we said we are organizing our work in paragraphs so the idea you discussed for example in paragraph 2 should in a way lead to what is coming in paragraph 3, ok? This is what we mean by flow. The next thing is that you should include an element of suspense. Include an element of suspense; this is to help your reader create interest in your story so you should have a story that keeps the
reader moving on, wanting to read the text. The next thing that you should bear in mind is that you should vary the pace of your story … vary the pace of your story so that you use different types of sentences, this is how you vary the pace. You may use simple sentences and alternately what I may call compound sentences. Make for example a sentence made of 2 or 3 clauses joined up to make a sentence. Soon after that you may use a very short sentence made up of one clause or even two or three words if possible. By that kind of mixing you vary the pace of your composition. And finally we should bear in mind that we need to have some good general impression of our composition or our work and this will be achieved by making use of writing or appropriate subject choice, the way we organize our work as a whole, the kind of language we make use of. Now, for example, if you were to write a general story you do not go using very formal language but you may apply a few words here or there, so even by the look of your work, one should be able to get impressed. So let’s not write compositions that will put off our readers, so the general impression should be taken care of. At that, I am going to give you a composition to write on. I know you’ll write it on one piece of paper but you have the say.

Lesson 2: School B

Teacher: This is a very good English student. So I looked into your work, which you did just before lunch. Most of you hadn’t completed you have the notes. I know you went through your books so the various parts of the composition that you had done earlier on so we go through into reviewing what part we need to do when we write compositions. We are going to be interested in writing imaginative compositions. Imaginative compositions. And we said there are various parts of compositions that we must always see any time we write a composition. Any time we write a story we must have various parts; which were they? Which did we mention this morning?

Student: A title

Teacher: We must have a title, correct. What else should we have?

Student: introduction

Teacher: Yes, introduction, very good. What else do we need to have? Yes, Kinagu?

Student: Main body

Teacher: Main body, we have a main body and finally we have, Warucy?

Student: A conclusion

Teacher: A conclusion, very good. We must have a conclusion for a composition where we are going to tell the real story. How well you tell your story will depend on you. How well you interest your readers will also depend on you but we said that several things that must come out within the main body. We are talking about somebody, isn’t it, or several people. What did we call this people? We have characters. Where are they? Yes, we must have a setting, where is the story taking place? If we want to talk about our school, the school is the setting of our composition. If you want to talk about the roadside, if you want to go to the riverside, if you want to go to the forest that will be the setting of our composition. So our characters will be within a setting and the setting could change. For example, you could have a story beginning in the school, we traveled
all the way to Nairobi, we moved from Nairobi, got to Mombasa or we fly away to New York. The setting of the story can change depending on the story that you are telling. Again we said in the main body we must have something else, the character activities are going to be influenced by, what did I call it?

Student: Conflict

Teacher: Good, the character activities are going to be influenced by a conflict. The problem that we are solving, the issue at hand, it could be a problem, it could be something very sad, it could be very happy or whatever you want to make depending on you because it is you telling this imaginative composition. So I ask you why do you think we are calling it imaginative composition?

Student: it has the various parts

Teacher: Imaginative composition, we have the parts that we had talked about and I can see your composition coming out in the various parts and I hope you are not going to label, aha. If you label it title … are you going to do that? No, you simply have the title at the top of the page, you underline it. You are not going to have one paragraph labeled introduction, it will be me to see that actually you have introduced your composition. You have introduced your character, you have introduced your setting, you have introduced your story without actually labeling it an introduction. I should be able to see that coming through from the words that you use, from the language that you use. So I am asking why do you think they are calling it imaginative?

Student: we imagine

Teacher: Yes I can ask you to imagine you are a bird, write a story about it. Is it possible to be a bird? No, but I expect you to write a composition, a long story, one or two foolscaps then we have you telling me how it will be when you are a bird. I would ask you to imagine you are a student at Starehe, are you at Starehe? Not yet, you imagine and you write me a story. I would ask you to imagine you are a deputy principal at Kanjai. Wang’ombe, you are imagining in style. You could imagine and you write a story about it. So we are not representing ourselves but you are expected to be and turn up with a very interesting story. You use adjectives; the people you are dealing with, real characters out of imagination as much as we are saying you imagine the story. You also have to remember that a story will be very much controlled by your very own experiences. The other day we were writing about directions. I asked you to travel to Nairobi. If you have never been to Nairobi, you will write a story but you will not be accurate. I will ask you to write about being a market woman, if you had never been a market woman, you will see the market that you come across but you will only write from what you think they are. But if I ask you to write about being a day scholar, it would be very fluent, isn’t it, because it is something that you have experienced first hand. So when you come to imagining, sometimes you have to go wild imagining what would have happened if you had experienced but would be very much controlled by things you already know. So when we come to writing our story, I expect to see that coming out very, very clearly. I don’t know whether there are any questions so far for me or our visitor rather?

( no questions)

Teacher: I brought some newspapers to class today. I want you to look at these people. I am mainly interested on the sporting activities. I want you to look at these people and imagine what they are feeling. Look at it, imagine, and then pass along. We have more we are interested in the sport. Imagine what they are feeling, what they are doing, what they are feeling as they are doing. We are interested in that and as soon as
you get to look at it, think about it and keep the answers to yourself, you will give it to us in a minute. Not too long, you don’t have to look at it in 5 minutes. One or two words to describe the feeling what they are doing. Mwangi, you are interested in the sport, I will give you the newspaper after the class? What are they doing, what are they doing? Has it reached to the back? Ngure is eagerly waiting for that paper, you cannot even lean forward, mnh, or you are asleep? So we have seen the picture isn’t it? What do you think those people are feeling, what are they doing? They are playing different games. The paper you had had different games. You will enjoy the game. What did you think about it, Peter, the one at the bottom had won the race. The one at the bottom had won the race, so she was feeling?

Student: good
Teacher: She was feeling just good because she had won the race? Caroline, what do you think? You have two pictures to yourself? What do you think she is feeling? From the picture, what do you think she is feeling, Fridah? … But what does the picture show? What one word would you use to describe the theme of that word,

Student: she looks to be happy.
Teacher: Just happy? She is happy yes, but is she just happy? You are avoiding the word I want to hear.

Student: she is very excited
Teacher: Sorry
Student: she is very excited

Teacher: she is very excited, isn’t it, that victory has given her a lot of excitemenent. Wanyoike ?

Student: they are enjoying the game.

Teacher: true they are enjoying the game, what about the little girl?

Student: They are having the fun of the game.

Teacher: You have read the caption isn’t it? Have you read the caption? They are having fun, the little girl, what are they doing?

Students: They are dancing.

Teacher: Why are they dancing? Mark, what do you think is making those girls dance, are they dancing for the president? Are they dancing for the president, who are they dancing for? So actually what are they doing? It is the music festival and they are dancing and enjoying themselves, but they are in a competition. If you see that competition in the picture, once they win they are very excited isn’t it? What do you think they are feeling, Teddy?

Student: They are proud.

Teacher: they are proud to be participating. From the way they are doing it, you can see they are very… doing it very proudly. What other words can we say; would you use to describe those girls?
Student They are happy

Teacher: happy, yes, but remember happy is too general and that is why I am also looking for other adjectives from you. Ndungu? Yeah, speak up.

Student: excited.

Teacher: they are yeah, but there is also something else. If I ask you people to go out there and to dance like that, would you, would you? Wang’ombe, what are you drawing? Maybe we show Wang’ombe the picture of the girl. Would you dance like this girl, would all the people in Kenya dance like that?

Students: No

Student: they are flexible

Teacher: yes

Student: they have confidence.

Teacher: yes, very good, that is what I am looking for, confidence to stand in front of the others and actually participate in the District Music Festivals competition. So we have another picture there. Njiru, what do your competitors feel? They are happy and thinking about how they are going to win the match. I can see you out there waiting to win the match. Isn’t it Njiru? You have … yes Njiru, what do you think about those players?

Student: Celebrating

Teacher: celebrating because he has scored a goal, so when you score a goal you celebrate, you are very excited, isn’t it? You are regenerated. You remember me using this word in school the other day? Mwihaiki, what do you think about my picture, the one behind the one that we looked at?

Student: They are very excited.

Teacher: they have a lot of excitement, not many excitements because they have won the match.

Student: they are overjoyed

Teacher: Yes Judy, they are overjoyed. Why do you think they are overjoyed?

Student: By winning the match

Teacher: eeh. Kanyege, he is very proud of himself for scoring the goal. When you go out to play, how do you feel when you have scored a goal? Valerie

Student: happy

Teacher: and when you don’t score? You are laughing at her … Karugu.
Student: proud.

Teacher: What do you think about that?

Student: they are struggling.

Teacher: and why do you think they are struggling? You really want to win, isn’t it? Isn’t that so Lucia? Tell us about the pictures.

Student: it is showing that the player is overjoyed.

Teacher: The one at the top or at the bottom? At the top he may be overjoyed. Yes Wang’ombe,

Student: he is trying very hard to win.

Teacher: Yes Shauri,

Student: he looks like he is the conqueror that particular player.

Teacher: You looked at the pictures and now you are wondering why are the pictures different but each of the pictures is a story in itself. You can actually look at that picture and write for us a story. You have time to read the paper but just wanted you to look at the picture. What do you think these people had done before they went to the music festival? What do you think these people had done before they went for the festivals? What do you think they must have done? Practiced, isn’t it? They must have practiced for them to get the confidence to go to the field and start doing whatever they were doing confidently. They must have practiced.

Now, we have looked at the pictures. You have looked at the composition. You have got an imagination. Have you participated in a competition before? Anybody here who has participated in any competition? Own up! Silence means nobody. Ehe, Mwangi had an idea. Everybody here has competed at one point or another for one thing or another. But you have all been in competitions. And with these pictures maybe you have gotten an idea. Cultural day backfired and you were ready, you were ready, you hadn’t completely, you hadn’t completely practiced. Keep on practicing, cultural day is coming. You will compete and you will win, isn’t it? Yes, are you determined you are going to win? Yes. Now think about our paper. Imaginative composition. Think about a situation where you won. You have won, isn’t it? What did you do? Can you write me a story about it? Yes, I can see people are very happy. And I am very happy because I know I will get good stories. I want us to imagine that we have won and we are going to write a story on… we will start. The teacher will tell you, get your papers, Kevin, very quickly get your papers, Shauri. Imagine you have won the National Drama Festival.

Lesson 3: School E
T: Those who are still opening their desks will you please settle down. Narrative writing is a different … kind of narrative because … you have to tell a story depending on the topic that you have been given, so what narrative writing does is that it calls for your creativity, you have to be creative enough to be able tell a story so that anybody reading that particular story will be happy at the end of the day and will enjoy reading your
So how do you then write a story? What are some of the things you are interested in a writer to come up with a good story?

S…

T: Yes … the steps involved in writing a story … So, good in a nutshell we accept that what we do … So I would like to take you in the steps that we follow when writing a narrative so that I make sure all of you know. So the first thing that we do is you are represented with a situation like to write that particular situation and then now plan for the particular story. The first thing you need to do when you plan is that you plan your narrative. So you’ve been presented with a topic. This topic will guide on what you are supposed to talk about. So if the topic for instance is about a football match the reader will expect that your narrative will be geared towards a football match not something any different … so in your class the first thing that you think about is that particular topic so think about the topic which will guide you into getting a theme so if you have a topic on a football match, it is expected that your theme is related to a football match, so the first thing that you must have is the title – what you want to talk about then followed by the question that you’ve been presented the you need a plot so that means that before you write, you must have a rough idea of what this story is going to be like and how it’s going to begin and where it will end. A rough idea, so have the flow of your narrative, maybe start in the field and end up in the particular field, then you also need to have characters in that particular story of yours, so who are they, are you going to talk about you and the events that were happening that is one approved or is it going to be about two people that were in the field or are you going to have several characters. When you are writing a narrative it is good to have between 350 – 400 words and just a few characters so that you develop them well, you have too many characters the information might be haphazard then of course the idea of time and that is where most of us have problems, are we then going to write, are you going to employ the use of, things like creative language, are we going to go back and forth like flashback, are we going like a dialogue narrative, will you have some imagery, some similes and some metaphors? Just to show how to use language then how are you going to articulate language? This should be easy as you already have a prior knowledge of what a dialogue is or what a creative language is or how to use repetition and on. So when you have this plan you can then go to the writing of this particular play. Then as you write this play you are expected to be original, I’m talking about the play instead of the narrative. So the narrative should be original. What do we mean by that, originality.

Student: you should not use somebody else’s ideas.

T: Yes. You are not supposed to use someone else’s idea, even in a topic that you’ve realized that I have read a novel on that particular topic so then let me just produce the story that was in that particular novel, then you will not have been original. What you’ll have done is you’ll have copied or what we call you’ll have plagiarized, that is not your information. Into the academic work it is equivalent to theft, you have stolen somebody else’s creativity, so you have to be original. If you have watched a movie before, we don’t expect you to reproduce that particular movie so you are just using your creative mind to come up with an interesting story so we’ll expect you to be original so that means that your events must be real and convincing. Real events and convincing, what do we mean by that when we talk of events being real? I just want you to know that revision will be allowed, you are being creative. Ok, yes, what do we mean that the events must be real? Yes, something that is ordinary, understood and acceptable in our environment, for instance … you don’t talk about that you were shaking the hand of somebody you had just married, that would not make sense, so if you are writing a story
get to achieve the reality in that story then this story of yours has to be logical, how the events happened in that story have to be logical, where an event begins and where an event ends so that you are not telling us about the students who were in the field and the crowd was agitated then you run back and say that the buses had just started arriving and the students were getting out of the bus, so let us be, say things that are logic, the first thing that happened was the arrival the crowd was in the field pitch, then you have the introductory part, therefore when we think about the use of style, the style would make this composition appeal to the readers sense of emotion so your composition has to appeal, it should appeal to the readers emotion, so if you intend for your story to be sorrowful then let us see the reader getting sad at the play, if it is supposed to be interesting let us see the laugh, let us see humour in that particular story. I don't know how … It is so boring, there is nothing nice or there is nothing that is appealing in that particular story, would you watch it till the end, you'll stop. So we are saying that now for your essay you have to appeal to the readers sense of emotion, so what can you do when you are writing a narrative, so what are some of the things that as a writer can do to make a narrative interesting?

Student: use imagery.

Teacher: Yes. You can use imagery to make it nice, instead of just saying that boy, who, the boy was fat, you can make an analogy and say she was as fat as a pig or something that is voluminous. What does voluminous do? Yes it expresses the use of exaggeration. Yes, what is the word for exaggeration? Kevin

Student: hyperbole,

Teacher: Yes hyperbole. The word is pronounced as hyperbole. So you can use some exaggeration so that reader gets to be amused maybe or wonders the kind of exaggeration you have created. Any other.

Student: proverbs

Teacher: Yes, the use of proverbs. Any other?

Student: Use of suspense.

Teacher: Yes, you can use a lot of suspense so that the reader wants to read even more to find out what really happened to this boy who maybe collapsed as the match was going on. What else?

Student: Dialogue

Teacher: You can employ the use of dialogue to prevent that monotony of continuous prose. Any other? You can employ the use of vocabulary so at that point as the reader reads the story and comes across that variety and it makes them to be more interested to read it even more. So you know what you are required to do, what you need to write. So how then is your composition going to be when you are presenting it? It should have a layout, so the first thing that you are going to have is a title. You will have a title in the layout, that layout has got to be relevant, anybody reading the title “A football match” for instance should see that football match in the title. If your title is a narrow escape then let us see that narrow escape in the story. The title has to be relevant in the content of the story. Then we move on to the essay. The essay write must have an introduction. In the first paragraph, come up with a strong introduction so that the reader
has got the urge to even read further. So you introduce your essay and of course, you are introducing it with the line of the main idea, what people of drama might call the conflict, that when a play is beginning, it begins with a conflict and then it moves up. Then you have the body. Now the subsequent paragraph should be the body of your essay, so you’ll have several paragraphs that have the body of your essay and this body should be logical to the sense that there will be advancement to the story you are telling. How, let us see that sequence and of course as you write the body let us use connectors, a step from one paragraph to another, use a lot of that. Then of course you have the ending of your essay, what we call the conclusion. You have the conclusion … so as we plan to write let us have this in mind. You write a composition ending such a tragic day, somewhere on a rough paper you can have that layout then if they are saying it was such a tragic day what can be relevant title apart from a tragic day, write a composition ending with it was such a tragic day, yes, then let us say the title will be “A fatal accident” now this is you writing an exam but you are planning on what you are going to write so if it was a fatal accident what would you say in the introduction, what can you say, you can talk about where the accident happened

Student: the circumstances

Teacher: Yes, maybe the circumstances that were surrounding that particular accident, what was happening just before that particular accident? So let us say you were the one in that particular accident, begin on how you started the ordinary day. So you are talking about that in the introduction. So now when you come to the body what are some of the things you should mention?

Student: what happened.

Teacher: Yes, so what happened just after the accident or what caused the accident, you can talk about the cause, how it was, were there many people that were involved, were there several cars that had crushed.

Student: how it started.

Teacher: Yes, how the situation was started, yes, there are so many things to talk in the body. Then the conclusion, what would you say? Yes, what happened after or a lesson you have learnt from the particular accident, yes, developments on hospital, so that is what will be in the conclusion.

Student: How long should a composition be?

Teacher: Okay, any composition that you are required to write, if your handwriting is not to small not too big maybe 1 or 2 pages, if it is big then 400 words that is what the exam council requires you to do.

Student: Can we use any aspect of style?

Teacher: Yes any aspect of style that you can apply at that time that is acceptable you are allowed to use. Any other question?

Student: Can we use a word from another language?

Teacher: Yes but you have to put it in quotes and sometimes you will be forced to explain what that means because the fact brings out does not carry the language of that particular essay and that is why you see on our case now I would like us to write in
Lesson 4: School F

Teacher: So as we have been told, we want to look at imaginative writing.

Creative writing sometimes it is also called narrative writing. Now aah, in an exam situation you can be given a proverb and told to write a story based on that proverb. You can be given a sentence and you are instructed to start your story using those lines, those words ending or use it within, or you can be given some characters and you are told to come up with a story based or using any of those characters in your story. This is one of the easiest questions to answer, why? As a student you are able to explore all your abilities. Ok, that writing is not confiding unlike a letter or any other form of writing, a speech, minutes and so forth that conform to that format, that style, the content is really confining you to the subject matter. But when it comes to narratives, you expand your imagination. You think of a journey and you want us to be with you. Also that is what we want to look at today. What do you need to do? Last time we talked of description. Why do you need to describe? How do you make it vivid? Now you’ll also realize that imaginative writing involves a bit of description. You must make the reader to see what you are writing from your own perspective. Eeh let us write down the following: imaginative writing is also known as creative writing. It requires someone to think and come up with a story of their own. Now when you are talking of, you are required to come up with your own story, it does not mean that you are going to write your real life experience. It could be a story that occurred, it could be a story you heard somebody talking about, you watched a movie, you read in a book, that way you relate, you compose, so if you talk of ‘a night of terror’, possibly you have never had a night of terror but you can come up with a very good story about a particular night of terror. It could also have happened to you but through your imagination. Now we are going to look at, on how you come up with those kinds of imagination. Eeh this kind of writing down, this kind of writing gives you an opportunity to explore language and use it freely, to express one’s ideas. The vocabulary that has been learnt is put into use in this type of writing and I’ll expand on that area of vocabulary because when we talk of vocabulary, are you going to use big words such that whoever is writing has to keep on referring to the dictionary? Sometimes you might fail to communicate, so simplicity is the word when we talk of vocabulary, we are talking of economy of language. Instead of using many words to explain something, you just have to look for one word or something like that. Ok, I’ll come back later to that. The story, the story should sound as real as possible and avoid gross exaggeration. The story should sound as real as possible and avoid exaggeration. Now, you can be given a very interesting topic, like you can be told to imagine you are going to the moon, of course you haven’t been there, ok? What are you going to write about? You have heard stories that people have been to the moon, you have read books about people who have been to the moon. So don’t come up with very weird kind of imagination like something or how do I put it? Like you can talk of taking a bus to the moon. Of course that one is not true, ok? That’s what we are saying; it should sound as real as possible. So you should begin with how the journey began and so on. What means are you going to use to make it to the moon? So even of you have to...
talk of exaggeration, think of, use things that are realistic. Aah, my next point, make the scenes, not scenario, make the scenes as vivid as possible. The teacher should be able to visualize, not the teacher, the reader should be able to visualize; the reader should be able to visualize everything they read. The reader should be able to visualize everything they read as vivid as possible. Now this is where we are going to employ what we had learnt about descriptive or description writing. Now we talked of when we are describing a play, we use our five senses, isn’t it? Which are the five senses? Which are the five senses?

ST: Seeing

TR: What we see, aha.

ST: Smell

TR: What we smell, aha.

ST: Touch.

TR: What we touch, aha.

ST: Taste.

TR: What we taste.

ST: Hear.

TR: And what we hear. These should be the guiding principles when you want to write description. The five senses, what did you see? What did you hear? What did you touch? Did you … cough? Ok? These if you employ should be able to broaden your imagination. If you get a sentence, don’t aah … think what are we talking about here? Aah … like there is this sentence I want you to write it down please. ‘The sitting room was in a real mess, Mwavu must have left in a hurry.’ Aha! What is in your mind? What are you thinking about now? What could be the next sentence, aha?

ST: Clothes were scattered everywhere.

TR: Clothes, good, what else? Clothes scattered everywhere. Aha?

ST: A foul smell.

TR: A foul smell. What else? Sitting room is in a mess, what he has left in a hurry? You are trying to tell us something, ok? The clothes scattered everywhere, there is a foul smell. Ok, what drives you to point three?

ST: Probably, the …

TR: Eeh?

ST: Probably …

TR: You know, we want to come up with a paragraph. We have talked of clothes; the sitting room is in a mess. Now we are writing, the clothes have been scattered all over the place,
then the smell, there is a foul smell coming from the kitchen. Do you move to the kitchen or you keep standing in the sitting room, or where are you when you are talking of wardrobes? Are you seeing or? We want to move to the next. What do you see? We want to bring this scenario. What could have happened to Mwavu, where is Mwavu or are you shocked at what you are seeing? In the sitting room? Timothy?

ST: …

TR: So first you give a description of the place. So you could be having dirty dishes, ok. Then what comes to your mind? Ok, we are still in that place, are you in that sitting room?

ST: Yes.

TR: Eeh?

ST: Yes.

TR: Aha? You are not in it. You are imagining, I am not telling you that you are there. Aha, what else is there?

ST: … (Not clear)

TR: Aha, sorry? …

ST: … (Not clear)

TR: Now, we can move. Ok, we go to the bedroom. What is in the bedroom?

ST: More clothes.

TR: Aha! Clothes, wardrobes, drawers open. What else?

ST: You try to …

TR: You ask where Mwavu is, isn’t it? Aha! Where could Mwangu be? Yes Ian, what did you have to say?

ST: The bed is not even made!

TR: The bed is not even? You had talked of the foul smell, are we going to ignore the foul smell? Aha! What about the foul smell? Where is it coming from?

ST: …

TR: Mwavu committed suicide? That’s not imaginative.

ST: …

TR: Aha? Or is the story over? When we go to the kitchen and the bedroom, we find that the bed is not even made … how do we make it more interesting? That’s what I am driving at. Aha?

ST: … (Not clear)
TR: Ok, that’s your idea.

ST: Maybe the foul smell was caused by …

TR: Ok, maybe. You are convinced that Mwangu has committed suicide? That’s the reason we have foul smell, aha?

ST: … (Not clear)

TR: Is that interesting?

ST: (continued laughter)

TR … are you getting the point? So what’s with the garbage? Are you going to … (laughter) Ok?

ST: … someone committing suicide … death … talk about someone …. (Not clear?

TR: What are you bringing in?

ST: There is the issue of the police coming and ransacking the house …

TR: Who is ransacking the house?

ST: Eeh … was untidy … (not clear)

TR: By the house being untidy, what comes into your mind? There could be some funny struggle, note of Mwavu himself trying … and maybe this is someone who is known to be tidy. Then you move to the sitting room and what a mess! You are getting the story. Now you can even give us a flashback of what kind of person he was. And that is why you are shocked. Why is his sitting room in this kind of state? It has never been like this. So you want to tell us a story. So what we are saying is this, as much as we want to make something look great and real and avoid exaggeration, we also have to be creative. Let us relate what is there with reality. What kind of person is Mwavu? Remember you are describing this character; the mess tells you that there is something wrong. So you, the person narrating, it is you who carries the story, not Mwavu. Let us talk about Mwavu. You are going to tell us a story about Mwavu. What do you find? Is the suicide theory a good one?

ST: No.

TR: Ehe …

ST: Ok. Aah, I think with the knowledge that some things … used are fictional … can give us a hint and probably Mwavu had some documents in the house …

TR: … you know why I am bringing the suicide, is that it gives us another turn of the plot to develop. If you begin to talk of the objects, the food, the smell, what, what … smelling of course unattended, ok? If you come up with the theory that this person has not been seen for the last one week, are you getting it? So you have to create your plot, let it move. Let us not just be in the sitting room, it’s dirty and clothes and so on and so where is Mwavu? Then you find him. If you find him then what are you going to write on?
TR: Are you getting my point? So what I am trying to tell you here is that be imaginative, come up with many other themes. Maybe not the suicide one but why is the sitting room untidy? Why is the mess? You know you have triggered our mind? There are things we are going to ask ourselves. Let’s see, what do we see? A messy sitting room. Is it usually like this? What are your senses? You talked of a foul smell, what could be bringing or causing this smell? You talked of garbage, that’s so obvious, what would you write about garbage in the kitchen since only unattended houses are likely to bring foul smell from garbage. Is there a story to write about it? No. Aha, what else do you see when you go to the bedroom?

TR: So what I am simply saying is broaden your what …? Your imagination. I was just bringing in that suicide theory to make you … to let you know how you can have a plot; you know how to twist everything. Let us not have the obvious. When you hear foul smell not to go to garbage, no, thank you.

TR: Alright. I hope you are ok with that description and you can get it very well. Now we move to what we consider vocabulary or what makes a linguistic work because composition is marked based on the linguistic ability. We talked of you explore all the language use here. We talked, I’ve talked of a style, flash back, to take us back to the kind of person Mwavu is. Tell us something about him. Linguistic ability is considered by one: fluency and ease of expression, fluency in English and ease of expression fluency. You are fluent in language, you don’t have problem expressing your, the state the house is in, ok? Or you can even tell us, you can work out a theory how the scandal ensued between him and his wife. So how you express that is very, very important. Second; variety of sentences is another important point. Variety of sentences, we have simple sentence, compound sentence, complex sentence, ok? Use all of them. Don’t use long sentences without using variety. Third; a range of vocabulary, a wide range of vocabulary and idioms. And idioms, we have to be very, very careful. In primary, you were really, really taught those idioms. I don’t know what happened along the way here, they tend to disappear. You remember when you were writing, ‘I was as proud as a peacock’, ‘I was as happy as a king’, aah? You know those phrases? Because ‘I was born with a silver spoon in my mouth’, aha! Continue … ‘I was the apple …

TR: You know, what happened? Nowadays we don’t use those phrases, those kind of idioms. Now what I am saying is this, aah … at this level we also have to be careful, the kind of idioms we use. These are called clichés, the over used idioms. ‘As proud as a peacock’, does it add anything? They’ve been used over and over again. Use these other idioms like white feather, chicken hearted, what else? Give me examples of idioms. ‘It was a red letter day for me’

TR: A black letter day. I was green with envy. Aha, Wafula, yes?
There is somebody behind you there. Aha, Wafula?

You have a lion’s share of any thing. Make good use of them. Now, vocabulary as well as economy of language, here we are not saying you use your … you read and crammed very difficult words from the dictionary and you want to impress upon the teacher that you have learnt some new words. Can they be words that you are able to communicate? You should be able to communicate, not making the teacher to start looking for the meaning of the words in the dictionary. We … simple, simple words but they carry meaning. For example, if I say we are referring to Mwavu, we don’t know what happened to Mwanvu, then we say, ‘He has recently suffered from loss of memory.’ Do we have to say he had recently suffered from a loss of memory? What is yeah? That’s unnecessary, right? We can say he had recently suffered from amnesia. Ok, so let us use economy of words. ‘Amnesia’ vocabulary must come from you and this is developed, inculcated from wide reading, various books. You cannot be taught. And if you cram, if you cram vocabulary, if you cram those big words, you don’t express, eeh, you don’t express what? Freely with a lot of ease. So what we are saying is first learn slowly. If you come across the way some words have been used, also try practicing them by using them in your talking and also in writing and so on. Now we can have time to also talk of flashbacks, figures of speech, sarcasm, irony, name it, to make or spice up your narrative. Is there any question up to that point because we need like forty minutes to write. Yeah? Any questions? Bring in, when we talk of variety of sentences, don’t talk of just narratives, bring in what? Dialogue, ok? Short sentences. Now, I want to read for you one, one story here so that you get an idea of what you need to write. Ok, the title is ‘Money cannot buy happiness.’ And it goes:

Fred, so that is what his friends called him, clutched the teddy bear and pressed it firmly to his chest. His mind wandered away and often it did wonder to America, Sweden … the big bed, the Great Wall of China, not that he had been to those places, no. These places reminded him how … life was … what? Some of these words … that is why I’m saying if you’re not very sure … ehe, one also didn’t have a wink of sleep all night, for at least a couple of hours. He had seen that in the internet. Maybe it did not apply to him, for to him, sleep had just been another cliché inserted into the dictionary because of oversight. Maybe it was his bed. Opulent as it was, it had cost him a whole 500 dollars, he still could not a trickle of sleep or comfort. The reading lamp at his head, the Sony transistor radio with the headphones, the company had said that is a prototype he had been duped into buying thinking it would give him the comfort he so much desired. He remembered his inn bed so many years before at the boy’s national school. What comfort it had offered him. He remembered his wife, no his former wife. ‘You think so about yourself and your investment plan that you fail to realize that we need you.’ She had screamed at him. But had he not struggled to make her happy? He had just deposited a good sum into her account. “People can be so ungrateful”, he mumbled to himself. “Couldn’t she see that the Jacuzzi, the sauna, the heated swimming pool was meant for her? How could I? An ungrateful lot.” He cursed as he remembered what his son had told him, “Dad, I’ll stay with Otieno in his single room, you can rent out my room.” Otieno! That son of a cobbler. What a disgrace. “You mean to leave all these?” He had said, referring to the television set, the video cassette recorder, the CD players, the new robe done by the country’s best artist and many more items which graced the rooms of people only as affluent as he. “I am not seeking after these; I go in search of happiness.” His son had responded. He had been out to the heart. Thinking of how he had strived to
make his family happy, by making them lead an opulent life, top musicians in their lawn, celebrities calling on them, rod trouting, but maybe this is what he was seeking after, happiness. Happiness, which to him had been very elusive, happiness, which seemed to be the reserve of a few individuals.

TR: What do you say? It’s over. Why? Too short? But is it straight to the point? Do you have to write a composition of three pages to make sure you have written a good composition? This one is very rich in vocabulary, rich in description. When we were talking about ‘opulent’ then a good narrative should be able to communicate. And more so, it should be able to show that you are somebody who is able knowledgeable of things around your. How many of you have seen a Jacuzzi, a sauna? Not all, isn’t it? But that shows that at least you have read, you are knowledgeable and you are able to express that. So what we are saying is that, Fred, despite all the riches he had, he still did not have what? Happiness. We cannot buy it. Any question up to that point, aha?

ST: … there is one … aah … to write a composition … (Laughter)

TR: (Not clear)

ST: … but teacher … (Not clear)

TR: … (Not clear) but you have to be very, very careful with this kind of compositions. You have foolscaps? We are going to use them because some will be use … the question is this: write a composition, write a story on, sorry, write a story based on, let me write on the board. Write a story based on a … a win at the school National Drama Festival. Trying to explore our writing skills and also our prowess at writing descriptive composition.

B: Feedback Lessons

Lesson 5 : School E

Teacher: I will give you back your papers. It has been marked. We’ll talk about it generally and then we’ll write another essay. Every one of which has been marked David Kinyua, Kevin, Ian Wainaina, Samuel, Eric, Jeremy, Samuel Ndungu, Michael, Joram, Joel Waweru, Brian, Michael Muthama … so you have your papers now and you’ll see places which have been underlined or pointed out so you’ll have… lets just say you take one or two minutes looking at your papers, what has been underlined before we can talk about the lines generally. The writing was average. Average means that it was not perfect but it was good. I would have liked us to listen to one of the essays that were written but because of time, we had our lesson a little late. So let us save that for next lesson. So what we’ll talk about are the few things that must be present so when we do the next essay we implement or rather look at those factors that you write, so the first thing that the essay needed to have was a title. Almost all of you had a title except one or two people so I wrote title and question mark. So you needed to have a title so that whoever is reading your work can relate the title to the content that was given. So the second problem that emerged in all your essays was the idea of spelling, either there is a lot of carelessness or you made a lot of spelling mistakes. There is this particular one that was very common, the practice one is a noun the other is a verb so note that. Then there is the use of the word ‘a lot,” those are two words, eeh, and I talked about that just a few days before you wrote your essay and any other. When you look at your paper you’ll see another issue that emerged was the use of tense. The
writings of tense so that if you choose to write your narrative in the present tense then you maintain the tense and let it be seen in all your work so that we don’t see you beginning a sentence at the present tense then for the main clause we are going for the present tense and the subordinate clause we are going for the may be past tense. So you have to choose your tense so if you have chosen to use the present tense assign the tense with the verb appropriately. Another issue was the use of the prepositions so that if you are talking of: “The book was on the table,” let us see the writing “on the table” and not “n the table” so it can never be inside a table. Then punctuation, how you punctuate your work. Now you find you are opening you make a direct speech and you open but you forget to close so when you open you must also close eeh, when you are giving the … let us see the comma there and whatever that speaker must say. Then choice of words, that is vocabulary. You use the appropriate vocabulary so that you may note the meaning of what you wanted to say, so if you use the wrong word then your meaning is distorted then the frequency of events. Generally you had a good, many of you had a very good frequency of events, as you read you followed the stories but there are few that wrote frequency of events distorted so that they don’t have enough back and forth reading. Then the relevance, if you give a title it must be relevant … and your aim should be to sustain that title from the beginning to the end. A few people deviated from their title. And this title of yours was guided by the question you had chosen so you have to have had a title towards that. Then finally the … if you wrote a word a boy then you thought that was wrong, just cross it out and write it the right way. Don’t do that, that makes the work untidy, or picking a rubber and trying to erase, some of your papers get holes. Don’t do that. Just cross it and write the write word, nobody will penalize you for that. Okay so I would like us to write again so if you wrote a good essay, write the question on the board. Remember to write your name and your admission number.

Lesson 6: School K.

In the next one you are going to write, we expect at least you avoid some of the things you made. I say, I am not quite okay with your compositions but there was a show of effort even in the little time you were given to prepare. I say there was an effort made. Whatever your performance is, if your handwriting is generally neat, expect a few things I comment. Some of you had very good handwriting from a … until a colleague of mine commented what is wrong with the handwriting until he got hold of the paper and could not make out many of these words. It means your words are always misspelt. If the examiner cannot read the whole word, you make a mistake of a P. You are wrong. If it is a P let it look like it, if it is an R and so on. That is a problem with very many people. Those of you with the problem work on that. Then there are others that write very small letters. Try to enlarge your numbers; your letters at least … And there is another thing on people that join words. It’s supposed to be two words but they write together to look like one word. Even that is wrong, okay? Avoid that. Something positive is that you seem to understand the topic but the problem is that you didn’t develop the topic. You had an idea of what you were talking about, almost everyone had that idea but then you did not develop it. It means there are many things you would have added, okay, to bring the bigger picture. So you narrow down to just an experience, so try to be more imaginative, try to be more creative.

Then now when writing, repetition is a major problem, big one. You repeat yourself; you keep on using the same words, even those mistakes that can normally reduce your marks. Mother tongue interference; you think in your mother tongue then you write in English. Sometimes it does not work well, okay? And that is what most of us are doing and when we think in Kikuyu and think we can write correct English. Spellings; spelling mistakes there are sentences you keep on writing simple sentences. I woke up early and went to school. I found everyone was there at the gate. Our matatu came. That is what we call simple sentences. We talked of sentence connectors; that
is what we are supposed to use together. Words: simple ordinary words. Put a vocabulary here and there. Then at the middle you need to be very creative. The story is interesting yet it is so packed … you add dhania, royco, isn’t it? At the end of the day it will be colourful. Then misuse of capital letter; when are you supposed to use a capital letter? When you are starting a sentence and when it is a proper noun. A proper noun is the name of a place, a person, a town, name of something; that is what we call a proper noun. That is where you use a capital letter. Some of you use capital letters in the middle of a word. We use it in the beginning of a word. So you find somebody has written something like this. This is wrong so correct that. Using expressions that too old, dated, overused … and they work at that level, the work. “I ran as fast as my feeble legs could carry me.” These are some of the things I am talking about. “I woke up in the morning as the birds were singing their melodious songs.” Seriously at your level of writing, you are now in secondary school, so you need to be more creative, okay? … They are outdated … you can even use simple words. Language is a skill that is developed … or to improve on that but mistakes like this joining words. There is also misuse of capital letters

**Lesson 7: School H.**

Teacher: Looking at your work, we have marks ranging from 5 - 12 out of 20. 5 – 12 depending on what you wrote. So the very common errors that I encountered in those compositions, I had quite a number of you having spelling mistakes, whereby you find that you were spelling words out, for those who did that, from your compositions you can see that double underlining on that. Then we also had mistakes that had to do with a lot of repetition whereby you keep on repeating words or statements and that shows the mark ‘R’ on the paper. Then there was use of the wrong words whereby some of you used words wrongly. So when somebody misused a word such as ‘there’, while you wanted to use “their”, we indicate use of wrong word. We also had omission of some markers like commas, we had omission of articles whereby you are supposed to use an article such as the article ‘a’ or ‘an” or even the article “the”, then we indicated you have an omission of an article and you can see that in the result. There are some who had mother tongue influence. You translate from the mother tongue to English. “So as not to be another student” is that correct English “who was looking me through the eye?” You see the kind of mistakes that there were. Then there were also mistakes to do with the tenses, mistakes whereby somebody would want to use a word that is supposed to be in the past tense and these are some of the verbs. We have the verb come and then the past tense of this verb “come” is supposed to be what? Kizito

Student: came.

Teacher: We had some students who went ahead to writing ‘comed,” while we know that in a sentence, come cannot be comed. So that was a mistake that was very common. We also had misuse of capital letters. Some of you either did not use where they were supposed to be used. When we talk about the use of capital letters when we are dealing with nouns especially the proper nouns and then you end up not doing that or at the beginning of a sentence, then that was also another error noted. Then, we had some of you having very illogical sentences, the events that took place in your composition. When we are talking about an illogical sentence, you are talking about a win at the drama festival and you say that you went to K.I.C.C. and after you performed the adjudicators had to take spirits before giving results. I think these are some of the things, which we do not expect to happen. If you go for drama festivals, they do not take spirits before they are out. Some of you said that they went to a secret meeting, before they could announce the results which should not be the case, again the time, one drama festival and then you expect people to have the results after one hour and they can never take three days. So those are the mistakes that were noted and in each of those compositions I indicated the
mistakes that were made and what should be done about them. So there are some who should be a bit more creative such that we woke up in the morning when the birds were singing and then from there we went to the school bus and then once we got to the school bus you found yourself performing at K.I.C.C. I think what was supposed to be performed at drama festivals; there could have been some dances. It was not a music festival but a drama festival. And then you talk about when you went on stage all the students were waiting to see what you were doing. I think every other school that goes for drama festival is after winning, so you cannot say that all the other students were looking at you as if you are the only persons who could win. So we are talking about what the writer is saying that can be credible. So we are going to have another composition that you are going to write and we hope that the mistakes that you have made this time round you rectify the mistakes that you made earlier on.
Appendix 4: MARKED COMPOSITIONS

A)

A WIN AT THE NATIONAL DRAMA FESTIVAL

It had been a long tiring week. You could tell just from a glance at the students and our drama tutor, Mr. Kimwakhe how much they longed to have a good long rest. However, this was not possible. Not until after the big day, anyway. Being the drama club members of Kimutai Girls' Secondary School, we were elated about having the chance to compete at the highest level of competition in the country.

The performances were very good, and I could not think otherwise. Suddenly it was time. Next to turn, Kimutai Secondary School, said a voice through a microphone that came from somewhere. I did not bother to know. We all went backstage and prepared ourselves, trying to ignore the feeling of anxiety and panic that we had. A thumbs-up sign from our patron boosted my confidence. We were going to succeed. We had to. All our efforts had to bear some fruit.

We prepared our play as best as we could. Although we could not miss some little mistakes here and there, I myself thought it was beautifully done. What did the adjudicator think?

Then came the announcement of the results. After all the performances were through, I was almost shaking due to panic. The adjudicator called out the names. Three position holders. It was not our school. We discovered we were in position two. We could not hide our happiness as we celebrated with joy.

No such word as screams...
Write a composition on a win at the National Drama Festivals.

Preparation began with rehearsal.

Concentration on the journey.

Performance by other schools.

Results announced and celebrating our good performance.

HARD WORK PAYS.

And together we will always be, Kenyan. That was the last word in preparation for the next day. For the past two weeks we had been rehearsing, having sleepless nights and of course, you know that there is no excuse for buying your head in class.

By day we were restless and bored as that thing was tired and thought of nothing less than the warm, though not comfortable bed in the dormitory. I longed for the time I could give myself a thorough nap, not even I was asleep that could last for days. But I knew that commitment and determination was the only road to the success. Didn’t it?

We were all prepared as the day had finally arrived.

By ten o’clock in the morning we set off to Nakuru High School for the National Drama Festivals. Our teacher, Mr. Hungari, looked at us, and by that one look, I knew that he saw us lose in us. We were all in a mood of nervousness, like a man who had had a ‘good drink in a bar. We walked proper into the bus carrying with us food, preparing for our time to perform. We wished in our hearts, rather softly and hoped on the other students from the other schools. They were dressed in their brightly coloured clothes, continuing preparing for their turn to perform. As I prepared to my scale of preference, I saw no hope for us. But I was too late to change my plans as Mr. Hungari was already in the audience watching other schools perform.

Finally, our time to perform. Once, we were all ready and we all gave our best. I didn’t know what really happened but I really felt good about myself, hoping that
my colleagues also did. With all my energy into it knowing that even though this would be my last time I would be honored. We finished and went out stage. We prayed as a group and now it was God's turn to do his duty.

The time for the reading of the result was nearing. Here first there was the awarding of the personal talents of which none from our school was called. From where I was seated, I could see Mr Hungani sitting in his seat, his head near close to his chest and his eyes almost closed. Probably praying, as I knew his spiritual status. We are just going home.

I told one of my colleagues who was sitting in front of me. When they asked me, "Who am I?" he asked me.

Now was the time that had and every school was waiting for. Well at least every school and not my other colleagues. We were even looking for our bus return the stage which we didn't yet return of our costumes. The names of the school were called out starting with the school in position ten up to position one. The 5 schools that were called out next to receive their presents. "Number three, two and one are Kipasi School, Nairobos High and Kariki High in their respective order. "What," I couldn't believe my eyes. Did he just call out our school? I thought that I had a hearing problem, but he did call our school. I couldn't see Mr Hungani jumping up and down even stood on his seat to boost of his school. We screamed in joy, dusk and fists flew in the stage to take our trophy. I had a cool feeling within and still was in disbelief. We drove all through giving thanks to the Almighty for this wonderful just a the moment.

From that day, I knew that hardwork pays and it does not matter where you come from but the steps you take in life having determination and confidence.
As a part of the National Drama Festival, all public and private schools had to participate. The procedure started with the presentation of plays. We, along with other schools, had to be at the venue at least an hour in advance. We sat back, the judges to decide among us which one should perform. The performance started, and from that moment, we know that we had to perform our best. We started our presentation and once we were done, the judges announced the winners. We were happy, knowing that our hard work paid off. We were informed that at about eight o'clock in the morning, we would have the opportunity to see other schools' performances and compare with them. We prepared our outfits and our costumes so as to avoid confusion. When we were about to present, other schools started arriving and suddenly, St. Mary's High School, the school which we all looked for, arrived, and suddenly, all seemed to go out of order.

"I am, we all assemble at the front yard, please," a voice said. We assemble and the master of ceremony took the microphone.

"Thank you for arriving on time. I hope you had a nice journey. This is our National Drama Festival, and we all know that this is where we usually make our best and interesting drama presentation. First of all, we will start with a word of prayer. A woman who was standing behind him took the microphone and prayed a word of prayers. After the prayer, we will start with the school's play. Then, only one school will proceed to the others," he said.

Our hearts were pounding in our chests, after hearing that we were the first one to present. We changed into our costumes and we took our coats and laid them on the stage. We started off clearly and nicely. We presented the play like it was our last day to perform in festivals. Our voices were loud and clear. Then I noticed our teacher was smiling and when we finished, he clapped and jumped up and down, while others people were looking at him surprised.
“Where are you going?” we asked him. He kept quiet and nodded his head. “Just want to see the results at the end.”

Other schools presented their plays and we thought we were the last one.

A. Many high school were the last ones to present and they got on stage proudly and with a don’t-care attitude. Their caps were beautifully painted with classic paint, compared to ours which we used old paint that were stored by the school’s staff. Their costumes were made with great care and we thought for sure they will take the first position, they finished their play and everybody clapped and cheered for them as they left the stage with a smile on their faces.

It was two o’clock until we hadn’t taken anything more than refreshments so about one hour and a half before it was time to perform, all the schools changed into their uniforms and assembled in the auditorium to be announced. We agreed on this, but we were not satisfied. The presentation was beautiful, and interesting, now we wanted to present the best drama presentation for the year 2006. We will ask one of the judges to stand and tell us to:

And now, the winners of the drama festival 2006, are everybody was covering their eyes and came with crying.

First, Annabella, we did a dream which came true: we received our trophy, we were taken photographs and we thanked God for it.
Topic: Imagine your school won in the National Drama Festival.

I remember very well like yesterday the day before Saturday morning. I woke up very early in the morning as the woodpecker was busy pecking a rotten tree nearby. I woke up with some unusual feeling of happiness and prepared breakfast. I went to the frog's kingdom and took a shower. As it was chilly, I was shivering like a hungry goat in the wet season. Seconds ended and the clock displayed eight o'clock in the morning.

I stepped down the road to school where I met my fellow students already settled inside the bus ready for the drama festival, which were to be held in a nearby school compound. After some minutes, the driver started the engine and we were off. We disappeared in the horizon. My heart was full of joy which I could hardly explain to anyone.

After remarks were made on the festival and the bus then left, the 'big time.' The team were being awarded numbers from the last one and we all wanted to hear who was first and is stock of everyone in the compound. There were the 'Runners. Cheerful' and 'Quietly' and were to be celebrated. The trophy was awarded to us and also we were given certificates which made us feel even more excited. We all thanked God for the win.

He returned back to school very happily as an old woman being named to a tycoon and that is a day I shall never forget until Victoria becomes a grassland.

- A good effort made.
- Correct misuse of capital letters especially the P.
- Avoid using expressions that are not clear and relevant.
- There is still room for improvement.
Imaginative school won in the National Drama Festival. It was a very bright and sunny day. The sun was shining, which was the day on which the drama festival was held. The school was very bright when drama was going on. The student was no fear and they were brave. In the drama festival, they sang a song that was about how they were the student's in the school.

In the drama festival, the school was earlier because of going to sing with another school and the my school. I was very happy because I was not happy because of students. I was happy because I was the student. The next day, the drama festival took place. The teacher, who was one of the students, asked a question and some students answered it. The problem the teacher had was that the few students were not paying attention.

The drama festival was the last event. The school's students were given some fees by the principal. The principal was in the school and the winners were given some fees. The education exams were not coming, but the student was coming to school to prepare for the exams.
F)

Unforgettable Day

It was on Saturday morning on 16th June and I was to go to Alliance High School. The aim was to give our Drama Festival. Actually it was a bright day and we prepared ourselves and got time to sort our journey. The journey was quite good though there were some problems here and there.

Later we arrived at Alliance High School. The place was strange to some or no. Who hadn’t been there before. Our faces were very smooth and we had taken our goods to a place where they were safe and settled down.

The session started and it came a time for changes. Our school was the last to enter on the stage. We try and do our best helping that we will win. The drama itself was very interesting and the audience were enjoying shouting and clapping. When it was over, suddenly came out of the stage our teachers congratulated us.

Then it came the time to eat a meal. Lunch was within a minute the field was filled and space of students moving here and there, we got to taste our lunch and yes. Later we got back.

Everyone was seated waiting to hear the announcement. The results were to be given other 10 minutes to come. The chairman was about to comment and then gave the results. Actually he was to share them in the form.

We were not to believe our ears that we have the first prize which was very joy. We jumped everywhere with joy and shouting with loud voices, we were given a trophy and certificates. We put it up and start singing and horn in our vehicle.
Title 7

After hearing my way for the second time, I went to my grandmother's house in the city. With great reservation, I sat at the breakfast table and ate my breakfast. I had already jumped in the car with my very uncles. At that point, I was very nervous and expected some horseplay from my uncle. I knew they were going to make me run or jump, but I was not going to let them. I was determined to not let them control me.

We were getting closer to the bus stop, and I was ready. My uncle had promised to give me a quarter if I didn't run or jump. I was not going to let them control me. I was going to go and do my own thing. I was going to be my own person. I was not going to let them control me.
Stay with my uncle because my parents would both be travelling. I had readily accepted the offer for liked my uncle and his kids. My mother had taken me to Nairobi.

I had enjoyed the holiday even though it was short lived. I was to stay for two weeks. After the end of the two weeks my uncle had told me to prepare myself. He would take me home. I had disagreed. He asked the went to the Nairobi bus station and booked a bus to Nairobi.

The bus left after a few minutes. It was an old bus but all the same all the buses from Nairobi were old. Suddenly the bus had broken a metallic sound and in a fraction of a second the bus was heading down the Nairobi highway with the speed of lightning. Halfway the bus had crashed into a quarry and my uncle lost his life.

My uncle was buried with tears but no one could bring him back to life. I regretted having gone to Nairobi for if then he would not have died. Life later accepted it as God's will and continued with life.

Come rain, come sunshine, it was a day I will never forget. It still lingers in my mind like a bad dream. I remember the accident. Surely I had a normal escape but then a life had been lost.

Check on the errors made and try to rectify them.
HORRIBLE ACCIDENT.

The day was good and rays of sun
lent our presence to the female group. It was on a
Wednesday and we were breaking for our 4th December Holiday
from school. Everyone looked cheerful and curious to go home.
We all were looking forward to when the parade would
be over and when we would get out of the school gate
because we seemed to be in a prison.

When the parade was over all the fans
one were the first ones to get out of the gate because
they were most excited. I got back to school and joined a mate to go
and bought a packet of nuts. After that we
decided to go to Kiambu but my mother had told me to go
home early so as I can help her to visit my grandparents.

I decided that I could go home so
that I could break my promise. I took a taxi from the station
to take me home. On the way there were complaining that

I was lucky that I was not hurt and
I found my way out. A good conversation by that time had
already creased over that place and helped me out out by
bed time they all those who died. On hearing that there was
the one killed next to tears fell from my eyes and I would
not believe that I was hearing.

The ones who were hurt were rushed to
hospital. I was left wondering what to do next because
I even learned to take doctor materials home. I just felt
like waking. When I arrived at home I didn't even find
my mother she had already gone. I had nothing to
do but just rest while thinking of the accidents.

I was not believing that I was involved
in an accident because I had never even been involved
at one. But I was also grateful because I was alive and
kicking as well. I thanked God for I was among those who
were safe and not among those who died and stood there.
I will not forget that day till I die. No other.

Write clearly by expressing your ideas fully
Avoid direct benedictions from your

A
A ROAD ACCIDENT

It was on Friday morning, when I and my cousin woke up very early, the birds were singing their sweet melodies, the time was running out so we prepared ourselves very quickly. We were going to my uncle's place in Nairobi.

After a hour or two, we boarded a matatu at the bus stop. On our way, the sun was shining bright and everything seemed clear and calm to me.

After a few minutes, I saw that we had an accident. The driver was dead, the but was seriously injured. Some of the passengers were bleeding so much. My cousin was unconscious. Some of the good Samaritans came to help me to remove the injured one. I could not even utter a single word, thousand questions were running my mind. Many people were hurting. The goods were scattered all over and the blood was flowing like a river.

One passenger who was not seriously injured, brought the injured person to the hospital for treatment. After a fraction of a minute, we heard the ambulance sirens. Doctors and nurses took the injured to hospital. I stood next to him, wondering...
If she would make it or not.

I knew some of the passengers were taken to the ICU, because they had serious injuries and back pain. My mind was in a haze, and I could not process the news. My body was shaking, and I could not believe it. I was in shock, knowing someone I loved and cared for was in a matter of life or death.

Suddenly, I could see my mum, family, and other family members. When I saw my cousin, I cried. Tears started streaming down my cheeks. I knew I had to forgive myself because I could not forgive myself.

At around 1:00 pm, the doctor gave us a report that she didn't make it, and the hospital had tried to resuscitate her, but it was too late. She was pronounced dead, and I could not believe it. I felt like I was losing my mind. I didn't know what to do.

After one week, the burial was held, and many people attended. During the burial, I was coherent, and I could not believe she had departed from me. Still, I was recovering from an accident, which was an awful day. How can I forget such a terrible day?

Goodbye, Lone. We will see you soon.

Remember to use pronouns and prepositions to get even better in composition writing.
THE ACCIDENT I HAVE EVER EXPERIENCED.

It was a Monday morning, I woke up early when the sun was behind the horizon. I hurriedly rushed to the bathroom and bathed in a hurry. I dried myself with a towel and ran towards the kitchen since the aroma of breakfast was calling me.

After my breakfast, I left my room even before my parents were aware. I rushed through the bush and my bag was on my back heavily loaded. All this was a secret and I wanted to attend my friend's birthday ceremony. I arrived at the market centre before six in the morning and boarded a vehicle.

After the passengers occupied all the seats in the vehicle, I saw an old man who entered the vehicle and sat at the driver's seat. His hair was uncut and his eyes were having red eyes. Suddenly, the vehicle departed from the parking and left with a very high speed. We were thrown up and down as the vehicle sped along the rough road.

As the journey continued, passengers started complaining, but to the driver that was nothing. Our vehicle moved like war jets, as it overtook other cars on the road and the driver was overjoyed. That's when I realised that this man was not sober but he used drugs. I started praying and wishing I didn't do this, but since I didn't...
have an alternative I continued to pray to God to make us arrive to the nest bus site alive. Since then I believed that if wishes were
horse beggar it would ride. All my wishes drive
me to this risky thing, but I asked God to
drive me out of difficulties and give me
bravery like David.

As our vehicle was climbing and
descending the upland ranges inside of it, being
overspeeded it meet with a large trucker.

Our driver tried to turn the vehicle out of position, but it resists,
our vehicle and the trucker meet head to head or
body to body, and our vehicle was turned over
and over again on the tea plantation or the tea.

Windscreen and they broke the window of the vehicle with
their tools and rescued some of us from death.

Wonders is that the young man who had
been seated close to me was dead among other
injured people who were hurriedly taken to
hospital. From that day I came to learn and
realise the power of prayers since I was the
only person who was not injured. But all of
all my dream was not fulfilled since I did not
attend to my friend’s birthday ceremony I was
taken back home by police who then talked to
my father. I was forced to wear the school
uniform and told to do it in hurry to get out of my
father’s sight.

You have a very good storyline, but you have to
improve your grammar, spelling and decision to tell it.
Moments of pain and anxiety kept coming back to
my mind every time I remember about my dad’s death. His
death occurred on a Saturday, 21st August 2000. He had promised
to take me to Malindi for the August holiday and so
when the streets were closed I reminded him about the
promise. The journey was to start at noon! We were to start
the journey on 22nd or 23rd at night.

The day finally dawned and I was so eager that I
had told all my friends and all my neighbors about
my visit to the coast with my dad. I woke up at
around 8 am in the morning. By this time, the sun had
been spreading on its beautiful rays all over the town.
After having my lunch, I started becoming anxious my
best out first in my bag. My dad came home at around
11 pm and we hurriedly drove off to Malindi in order to
do some shopping and also book the bus. By
10.30 pm, we were already finished everything and now my
dad was ready to board the bus on the named FGM.

The journey started and as time went by, my dad got
laid and he started dozing. My currant did not even give
me even a chance, only a second to doze. The road started
at a town was very bumpy and bumpy. The bus was moving at
a very high speed that one, it was so sudden to train
Mombasa. I started being formally at around 1:00 PM, we came
to reach Malindi. We bought some beverages and at usual
my dad lit his usual cigarette in his usual style loving occasional break. I
Put on his sunglasses. He was a chain smoker, smoking almost
three packers on average to smoking anywhere per day.

As we continued our journey, the bus started moving slowly
and as the driver was trying to accelerate it. I saw him
side of the road, still smoking. As we continued our journey, the bus
stopped several times before landing in a dire. I was
became unconscious but not for long. I had broken one of my arms, although my biggest problem was to see my dad again. People from the nearest village had Sasaki to the beach when they heard the loud bang. I was the first one to be saved. I was later sent to a small hospital nearby a small tree. People were washing on the ground drenched with blood on their bodies. I was also in extreme pain. People yelled and screamed at the lot of their voices because of pain. It was a great and excessively terrifying experience. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw that my dad's body was hanging in the wreck, and someone in pieces. His eyes had pep up our almost completed out of their sockets. They were instantly healing our arm. My smiling and happiness was turned down to be terror, fear, and anxiety. I remained breasts and widened as tears ran down my cheeks. I stood uncertainly near the wreckage not knowing what to do. Other passengers were shaking and grasping for breath. I was feeling just like a balloon which had suddenly lost air. My dad was there no more. I stared to him in utter disbelief. I could not even get much pain from my broken arm as much as my brains had been bitten by the terror. So his body was removed from the wreck I closed and required myself in a hospital bed. This day remains a mystery to me. May God rest his soul in eternal peace. I shall never forget that night on the hungry remains Feed on my blood.
Appendix 5: STUDENTS’ QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is to find out your views about the writing, teaching and marking of compositions. Please answer the questions with reference to how you write compositions, and how your present teacher of English teaches and marks your compositions. All your answers will be treated confidentially.

School_________________________________

1. Please indicate your mother tongue.
2. How long have you been taught by your current teacher of English?
   a) More than 3 terms
   b) 3 terms
   c) Less than 3 terms
   d) Others (specify)

3. How best can you judge the vocabulary your teacher uses in teaching writing?
   a) Easy
   b) Fairly easy
   c) Difficult
   d) Very difficult

4. Which of the following does your teacher use when teaching composition writing?
   (Indicate using a tick. Use two ticks for what he/she uses most and one tick for others)
   a) English text book
   b) Newspapers, magazines, journals.
   c) Pictures, photos, diagrams, charts.
   d) Real objects
   e) Other people (experts) to explain to you about writing
   f) Other things not listed here. Give examples.

5. Which of the following best explains what your teacher does in the composition-writing lesson?
   a) Spends a lot of time explaining important points about the topic and how to write.
   b) Gives a brief explanation of a few things and asks you to write
   c) Simply gives you a topic and asks you to write.

6. Tick what your teacher does among the following
   a) Explains things to do with grammar, punctuation and spelling.
   b) Explains some points we can include in writing.
   c) Explains the format of writing where it is applicable e.g. the lay out of a business letter
   d) Explains how to organize ideas, sentences, paragraphs when we write
   e) All of the above
   f) None of the above

7. Which of the following is true?
   a) The teacher gives me enough opportunities to participate in the writing lesson
   b) The teacher rarely gives me opportunities to participate in the writing lesson.
   c) The teacher does not give me an opportunity to participate in the lesson

Briefly explain why you feel the teacher gives you or does not give you enough opportunities to participate in the writing lesson. How does this affect your composition writing?
8. Which of the following best describes your writing lessons
   a) Interesting
   b) Fairly interesting
   c) Not interesting

9. Briefly explain your answer above.

10. How many compositions have you written this term?
    a) 6 and above
    b) 3-5
    c) 1-3
    d) None

11. Out of these how many were you asked to write by the teacher?
    a) All
    b) Some
    c) None

12. Does the teacher explain to you what he/she expects of you in each writing task?
    a) Yes
    b) No

13. Which of the following best describes your teacher
    a) Marks all the composition he/she gives
    b) Marks some of the composition he/she gives
    c) Marks none of the composition he/she gives

14. Does your teacher mark any composition that you write on your own initiative?
    a) Yes
    b) No

15. When you receive your marked essay you
    a) Look at the score or grade only
    b) Look at the score and the comments.
    c) Look at the score, and the comments, and keep it safely for follow-up later
    d) Look at the score and the comments and make corrections immediately

16. Which of the following best explains how your teacher gives you corrections on your compositions?
    a) Uses correcting symbols like v, Adj, voc, sp etc) and makes comments in the composition but does not explain what he/she marked
    b) Does not use correcting symbols, but underlines or circles and makes comments on the composition but does not explain what he/she marked
    c) Uses correction symbols, underlines or circles, makes comments and explains in class what he/she marked
    d) Does not do any of the above

17. When used, do you understand the symbols and comments and explanations?
18. Indicate by a tick below what you do with the corrections given, whether in form of symbols and comments or verbal explanations?
   a) Note them in your mind
   b) Write down the points and questions raised by the teacher so you can remember them in future
   c) Ask for teacher explanation
   d) Consult a friend to explain those you may not understand
   e) Refer back to previous compositions to see how you dealt with similar problems.
   f) Consult an English textbook, Dictionary or other reading materials.
   g) Rewrite taking care to make the corrections pointed out by the teacher.
   h) Do nothing

19. Please indicate by a tick in which of the following areas you feel your teacher gives comments in the scale indicated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Punctuation</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Content (points to include in your composition)</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Many</td>
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</table>

20. What would you prefer the teacher to provide feedback on? Tick in the table below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammar and punctuation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocabulary usage</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Content</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

21. Briefly explain why you prefer comments in the chosen area

22. What do you feel about the comments and grades made by the teacher on your essay? They are
   a) Very useful
   b) Fairly useful
   c) Not useful

23. Briefly explain your answer to above. How and why are the comments useful/not useful?
24. I think the teacher is……in making the comments
   a) Very fair
   b) Fair
   c) Not fair

25. Briefly explain your choice above. How and why?

26. Give at least two things that the teacher does in teaching composition writing to help you become a better writer.

27. Give at least two things that your teacher does in marking and giving corrections to help you become a better writer.

28. Give at least two ways in which you think teaching of composition writing can be improved.

29. Give at least two ways in which you think marking and giving corrections in compositions can be improved.

30. Which of the following best explains what you do?
   a) Think about why I am writing (purpose of writing) before beginning to write
   b) Think about why I am writing after I have finished writing
   c) Don’t think about why I am writing as it is always an answer to the teacher’s question.

31. When I write I ……………………
   a) Think about my readers and how best to communicate with them.
   b) Think about how best to communicate with the teacher, as he/she is always the reader.
   c) Don’t think about the readers or how best to communicate with them.

32. Before beginning to write a composition I ……………………
   a) Write brief points on what I am going to include in the composition
   b) Make detailed notes and an outline of what to include and how to write it in my composition
   c) Make a mental outline of what to include and how to write it in the composition
   d) Just write ideas as they come to mind.

33. I do the following when writing
   a) Write a first draft of my composition
   b) Don’t write a first draft, but go straight to the final copy.
34. In the process of writing I do the following
   a) Check grammar, spelling and punctuation errors and correct them
   b) Check whether there are necessary explanations, examples, arguments etc that I might have left out and add them
   c) Check whether ideas and paragraphs are well connected and flowing into one another and make any necessary adjustments
   d) All of the above
   e) None of the above

35. At the end of writing I ..................
   a) Leave time to proofread my work and make any minor corrections necessary
   b) Read parts of my work and make any necessary corrections if there is time.
   c) Don’t proofread my work, but simply hand it in.
Appendix 6: TEACHERS’ INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What is your level of training?
   a) Diploma  b) First degree  c) Masters d) others
2. Is English language your area of specialization?
3. Do you teach any other subjects? How does this affect your teaching of writing?
4. How long have you taught writing in English in this school? /or in other schools?
   a) Less than a year  b) 1-5 years  c) 6 or more years
5. Do you participate in the marking of the Composition paper in K.C.S.E? If you do how does this influence your teaching of writing?
6. Have you ever attended any special course, seminar or workshop on writing? What did you learn and how did it influence your teaching of writing?
7. How many compositions have you taught and marked this term?
   a) more than 5  b) 1-4  c) none
8. How often do you give compositions? Do you mark all of the compositions you give? In case you are unable to mark what do you do to ensure learners have got feedback on their writing?
9. When you teach composition writing, what are the things you emphasize and why?
10. What are the things you focus on when you mark your students’ work? Why?
11. How do you make learners aware of what you expect in their written work and do you explain what you look for when you mark?
12. What do you think differentiates between the good and bad writers among your students?
13. What do you think hinders or aids your teaching of writing? How can this be improved?
14. What do you see as your role in the writing lesson and in marking students’ compositions? Why?
<table>
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<th>Pre-writing / planning</th>
<th>Drafting</th>
<th>Revising &amp; correcting</th>
<th>Editing</th>
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<td>Detailed notes</td>
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Appendix 7: Observation Schedule: Students’ Composing Steps

Appendix 8: Observation schedule: Source of Input

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of input</th>
<th>Course books</th>
<th>Newspapers, Magazines, journals</th>
<th>Photos, Pictures, Graphs, Diagrams.</th>
<th>Realia</th>
<th>Resource Person</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Others (specify)</th>
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Appendix 9: ENGLISH PAPER 3 (101/3) MARKING GUIDE
(Source: Knec 2007 )
Kcse Examination Report

Paper 101/3 is intended to test the candidates’ ability to communicate in writing. Communication is established at different levels of intelligibility, correctness, accuracy, fluency, pleasantness and originality. Within the constraints set by each question, it is the linguistic competence shown by the candidate that should carry most marks. In a factual essay, attention must also be given to the format, tone and ability to follow instructions.

Examiners should not hesitate to use the full range of marks for each essay. In a two-essay paper, it is the final, total mark that counts. It is important to determine FIRST how each essay communicates and in which category A, B, C or D it fits.

D CLASS
The candidate does not communicate at all. His/her language ability is so minimal that the examiner practically has to guess what the candidate wants to say. The candidate fails to fit English words he/she knows into meaningful sentences. The subject is glanced at or distorted. Practically no punctuation. All kinds of errors. “Broken English” is evident.

D- 01-02 Chaotic. Little meaning whatsoever. Question paper or some words from it simply copied.

D 03 Flow of thought almost impossible to follow. The errors are continuous.

D+ 04-05 Although the English is often broken and the essay is full of errors of all types, we can at least guess what the candidate wants to say.

C CLASS
The candidate communicates understandably but only more or less clearly. He/she is not confident with his language. The subject is often undeveloped. There may be some digressions. Unnecessary repetitions are frequent. The arrangement is weak and the flow jerky. There is no economy of language. Mother tongue influence is felt.

C- 06-07 The candidate obviously finds it difficult to communicate his ideas. He/she is seriously hampered by his/ her very limited knowledge of structure and vocabulary. This results in many gross errors of agreement, spelling, misuse of prepositions, tenses, verb agreement and sentence construction.

C 08 The candidate communicates but not with consistent clarity. His/ her linguistic ability being limited, he/she cannot avoid frequent errors in sentence structure. There is little variety or originality. Very bookish English. Links are weak, incorrect and repeated many times.

C+ 09-10 The candidate communicates clearly but in a flat and uncertain manner. Simple concepts, sentence forms are often strained. There may be an overuse of clichés, unsuitable idioms. Proverbs are misquoted or misinterpreted. The flow is still jerky. There are some errors of agreement, tenses, spelling.

B CLASS
This class is characterized by greater fluency and ease of expression. The candidate demonstrates that he/ she can use English as a normal way of expressing himself/ herself. Sentences are varied and usually well constructed.
Some candidates become ambitious and even over-ambitious. There may be items of merit of the one word or one expression type. Many essays in this category may be just clean and unassuming, but they still show that the candidate is at ease with the language.

B- 11-12 The candidate communicates fairly and with some fluency. There may be little variety in sentence structure. Gross errors are still found occasionally.

B 13 The sentences are varied but rather simple. Straightforward. The candidate does not strain himself in an effort to impress. There is a fair range of vocabulary and idiom. Natural and effortless. Some items of merit. Economy of language.

B+ 14-15 The candidate communicates his ideas pleasantly and without strain. There are errors and slips. Tenses, spelling and punctuation are quite good. A number of items of merit of the “whole sentence” or the “whole expression” type.

A CLASS The candidate communicates not only fluently, but attractively, with originality and efficiency. He/she has the ability to make us share his/her deep feelings, emotions, enthusiasms. He/she expresses himself/herself freely and without any visible constraint. The script gives evidence of maturity, good planning and often humour. Many items of merit, which indicate that the candidate has complete command of the language. There is no strain, just pleasantness, clever arrangement, felicity of expression.

A 16-17 The candidate shows competence and fluency in using the language. He/she may lack imagination or originality which usually provides the “spark” in such essays. Vocabulary, idiom, sentence structure, links, variety are impressive. Gross errors are very rare.

A 18 Positive ability. A few errors that are felt to be slips. The story or argument has a definite impact. No grammar problem. Variety of structures. A definite spark. Many margin ticks.

A+ 19-20 The candidate communicates not only information and meaning, but also and especially the candidate’s whole self: his/her feelings, tastes, points of view, youth, culture. This ability to communicate hi/her deep self may express itself in many ways: wide range of effective vocabulary, original approach, vivid and sustained account in the case of a narrative, well-developed and ordered argument in the case of a debate or discussion. Errors and slips should not deprive the candidate of the full marks he/she deserves. A very definite spark.
Appendix 10: Research Permit

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:

Prof./Dr./Mr./Mrs./Miss. PURITY MUTHONI

of (Address) KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

P.O. BOX 45844 NAIROBI

has been permitted to conduct research in...

Location, CENTRAL

District, Province,

on the topic WRITING IN ENGLISH IN KENYAN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS: THE PEDAGOGIC PROCESS AND ITS IMPlications FOR THE PRODUCT.

for a period ending 31ST DECEMBER 2007.

Research Permit No. MOST 13/001/36 C 321

Date of issue 23-5-2006

Fee received

Applicant's Signature

Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Science and Technology
Appendix 11: Letter of Introduction

KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LINGUISTICS

P. O. Box 43844
Nairobi, Kenya

Telephone 810901/19
Fax: 811242/811875
Website: www.ku.ac.ke

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: PURITY MUTSONI NTHIGA

The bearer of this letter, Purity Mutsoni Nthiga is a member of the teaching staff in the English and Linguistics Department at Kenyatta University. She is currently pursuing Ph.D studies in the same Department. In connection to this, she is carrying out research on the Teaching of Writing in English in Kenya Secondary Schools.

This letter is to request you to allow her to carry out the said research in your school and offer her any other assistance that she may need while in your school.

CHAIRMAN
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LINGUISTICS
KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

DR. EMMY A. OGUTU
CHAIRPERSON, ENGLISH AND LINGUISTICS DEPARTMENT

Permission has been granted by this office. Please give them necessary assistance.

[Signature]
Appendix 12: TEACHERS’ CONSENT FORM

I am interested in investigating the teaching of writing in English as a second language in Kenyan secondary schools for my PhD in Applied Linguistics at Kenyatta University. The title of my proposed study is “The Pedagogic Process of Writing in English as a Second Language in Kenyan Secondary Schools.” To facilitate this research I require participation of and information from teachers of writing in English and their students. This form is to request for your consent to be a participant in the study. The form provides important information related to the study to help you make an informed decision.

(NAME)
I……………………………………………………………… understand the following:


2. That for the purposes of the research I would be required to prepare and teach two lessons on narrative writing, give and mark two compositions for the students as well as be interviewed by the researcher.

3. That the researcher will observe and record the lessons and the interview as well as access the marked compositions.

4. That my name will not be used in the thesis that will be eventually written.

5. That the information gathered will be confidential and will only be used for the purposes of the above study and other related academic presentations.

6. That I will not be subjected to any harm or danger in the course of or as a result of this research.

7. That there are no monetary gains attached to participation in the research.

8. That participation in the research is voluntary and I am free to drop out incase I feel uncomfortable

Having read and understood the above I undertake to participate in the indicated research.

Signature………………………………Date………………..
Appendix 13: PARENTS/GUARDIANS CONSENT FORM
(to be signed by the parent/guardian/teacher on behalf of students as they are minors).

I am interested in investigating the teaching of writing in English as a second language in Kenyan secondary schools for my PhD in Applied Linguistics at Kenyatta University. The title of my proposed study is “The Pedagogic Process of Writing in English as a Second Language in Kenyan Secondary Schools.” To facilitate this research I require participation of and information from teachers of writing in English and their students. This form is to request for your consent on behalf of your son/daughter/student to be a participant in the study. The form provides important information related to the study to help you make an informed decision.

(NAME)

I……………………………………………………………… understand the following:


2. That for the purposes of the research my son/daughter/student will be required to write two compositions (narratives) and respond to a questionnaire.

3. That the researcher will observe and record writing lessons in my son’s/daughter’s/student’s class as well as access his/her marked compositions.

4. That my son’s/daughter’s/student’s name will not be used in the thesis that will be eventually written.

5. That the information gathered will be confidential and will only be used for the purposes of the above study and other related academic presentations.

6. That my son/daughter/student will not be subjected to any harm or danger in the course of or as a result of this research.

7. That there are no monetary gains attached to participation in the research.

8. That participation in the research is voluntary and my son/daughter/student is free to drop out incase he/she feels uncomfortable.

Having read and understood the above I hereby give consent for my son/daughter/student to participate in the indicated research.

Signature…………………………………..Date……………………