

ABSTRACT

Writing Across The Genres: A Study of Syntactic Maturity in The Written Discourse of 11 – 12 Year Old Barbadian Secondary School Students

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This study investigated the syntactic maturity in the written discourse of 171 Barbadian 11-12 year old students, using 513 of their written compositions across three genres. The sample was drawn from seven secondary schools and the scripts were analysed using T-unit analysis, accuracy ratios, clausal density, rhetorical organization characteristics, and error analysis. The nature and extent of between group differences were analysed and the results revealed significant differences between groups with higher scores being recorded for expository writing than for narrative and descriptive writing. The accuracy ratio was lowest for expository writing and females performed better than males on all syntactic maturity measures. The results indicate that the syntactic maturity of the subjects is reflective of their ability to differentiate between the language of speech and the language of academic writing, and point to a need for language teaching methodologies that draw attention to the Bajan as well as the Standard Barbadian English.

Keywords: syntactic maturity, accuracy ratio, t-unit analysis, clausal density, rhetorical organisation characteristics and error analysis.