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# Oral and written language of low level ESL students

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Oral and written language of low level ESL students

by

Christina E. A. Cronogue

A Thesis Submitted to the  
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
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Major: English

**Approved:**

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In Charge of Major Work

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For the Graduate College

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Iowa State University  
Ames, Iowa

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . . . .	1
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION . . . . .	2
Problem . . . . .	4
Hypotheses . . . . .	6
Hypothesis 1 . . . . .	6
Hypothesis 2 . . . . .	6
Hypothesis 3 . . . . .	7
CHAPTER II REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE . . . . .	8
First Language Research . . . . .	8
Second Language Research . . . . .	13
Summary . . . . .	20
CHAPTER III RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES . . . . .	22
Subjects . . . . .	23
Pilot Study . . . . .	24
Data Elicitation . . . . .	26
Procedure . . . . .	27
Method of Analysis . . . . .	30
T-units . . . . .	30
Error-free T-units . . . . .	30
Dependent clauses . . . . .	31
Mazes . . . . .	31
Subject verb agreement and word order . . . . .	32
Summary . . . . .	33
CHAPTER IV RESULTS AND DISCUSSION . . . . .	34
Summary of Results . . . . .	46
Discussion of Results . . . . .	47
CHAPTER V CONCLUSION . . . . .	54
Summary . . . . .	54

Limitations . . . . .	57
Implications . . . . .	58
Suggestions for Future Research . . . . .	60
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	62

## LIST OF TABLES

	PAGE
TABLE 1. Age and Placement test results . . . . .	24
TABLE 2. Mean T-unit Length . . . . .	36
TABLE 3. Mean Error Free T-unit Length . . . . .	37
TABLE 4. Error Free T-units/T-unit . . . . .	38
TABLE 5. Dependent Clauses/T-unit . . . . .	38
TABLE 6. Mazes/100 Words . . . . .	39
TABLE 7. Subject-Verb Agreement Errors/100 Words . . . . .	43
TABLE 8. Word Order Errors/100 Words . . . . .	43
TABLE 9. Inter-rater Reliability . . . . .	45
TABLE 10. Average of Raters' Rankings . . . . .	46

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The Iowa State University Committee on the Use of Human Subjects in Research reviewed this project and concluded that the rights and welfare of the human subjects were adequately protected, that risks were outweighed by the potential benefits and expected value of the knowledge sought, that confidentiality of data was assured and that informed consent was obtained by appropriate procedures.

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, a brief introduction to research in the relationship of oral and written language is presented along with the problem and hypotheses to be investigated in this study. Chapter II consists of a review of relevant literature. The research design and method are discussed in Chapter III followed by a discussion and analysis of the results of the study in Chapter IV. Chapter V contains the conclusion, limitations of the present study and suggestions for future research.

One of the most important areas of current investigation in ESL and native speaker language research is the search for correlations between speaking and writing development. One can assume that the developmental relationship of these two skills is one of mutual dependence for literate adult second language learners. Yet, as many ESL teachers have observed, second language learners often have a markedly higher level of proficiency in one skill than the other. By determining the exact nature of the developmental relationship of oral and written language in second language learners, instructional programs can perhaps be designed to help students more effectively master these two skills.

Extensive work in first language acquisition (Hunt, 1965, 1970; Loban, 1976) has shown that children move from simple to more complex syntactic structures. Children first master spoken language and then transfer spoken forms to writing. The process continues to evolve so that their speaking and writing patterns become more similar. Then later as children become aware of the special demands of writing, written language becomes more complex than spoken (O'Donnell, Griffin & Norris, 1967; Falk, 1980; Kroll, 1981).

Second language acquisition research has for the most part found similar developmental patterns among adult second language learners (Monroe, 1975; T. Cooper, 1976; Vann, 1978). Monroe and Cooper found that the more advanced second language learners wrote, as did older children, longer T-units and used more subordinate structures than did their lower level counterparts. In addition, Vann's study found that the writing of second language learners contained longer T-units and more subordination than their speaking. Her findings provide evidence of the similarity to the developmental pattern in children acquiring their first language which involves a differentiation of speaking and writing and increased complexity in writing. Some differences appear to exist in the order that the structures



are acquired (R. Cooper, Olshtain, Tucker and Waterbury, 1979; Chiang and Costello, 1983), but the overall developmental pattern appears to be the same.

#### Problem

Second language research into oral and written language development has tended to focus on advanced levels of students. Little research, however, has been conducted using learners from lower levels of proficiency. The present study will look at differences in syntactic structures and grammatical correctness in the speaking and writing of lower level ESL students. This study replicates in part Vann's (1978) study which analyzed the oral and written language of Arabic-speaking adult male ESL students at various levels of proficiency. Like Vann's study, the subjects of this study are adult male Arabic speakers studying English in the United States. However, all these subjects are at a low level of proficiency. Data elicitation and categories for syntactic structures are the same as those used by Vann. A film without narration was used to elicit data. After the film was shown, the students' oral and written responses were gathered. The data were analyzed for syntactic and grammatical errors.

By analyzing these data, I have sought to determine if the speaking and writing of students at this beginning level of language learning are differentiated. Specific differences in the syntactic complexity of speaking and writing provide evidence of this differentiation. First language research has shown such a differentiation to take place sometime after third grade and before fifth grade in children. No research has yet determined precisely when this differentiation occurs for second language learners.

Research in second language acquisition done by Monroe (1975) and T. Cooper (1976) found that intermediate levels of second language learners used subordination extensively in their writing. Yet as their work dealt only with writing samples, the complexity of their subjects' oral language is unknown. Vann's work revealed that her subjects used greater syntactic complexity in their writing than their speaking. However, as her study dealt with various proficiency levels, the results do not focus specifically on low level ESL students.

The present study, therefore, investigates questions left unanswered by the previous studies as to what syntactic structures are used by low level ESL students in speaking and writing. Does their writing contain more complex structures than their speech? Or are their writing and

speech basically undifferentiated? Furthermore, the study investigates if the subjects' writing and speech demonstrate equal proficiency in the language as determined by ratings made by ESL instructors. Will the student who is ranked high in writing also be ranked high in speaking proficiency? This study attempts to answer the foregoing questions.

### Hypotheses

The study is designed to elicit data to test the hypotheses stated below.

#### Hypothesis 1

The subjects will use a greater variety of syntactic structures in speaking than writing.

To test this hypothesis, the texts of the oral and written samples will be analyzed to determine the number and average length of T-units and error-free T-units, number of mazes, and number of adverbial, adjective and noun clauses.

#### Hypothesis 2

The subjects will make fewer grammatical errors in writing than in speaking.

This hypothesis will be tested by counting the number of errors in the samples in subject-verb agreement and word order.

Hypothesis 3

Subjects who demonstrate high proficiency in writing will also demonstrate high proficiency in speaking.

Conversely, subjects who demonstrate low proficiency in writing will also demonstrate low proficiency in speaking.

To test this hypothesis, evaluators will rank the speaking and writing samples by placing them in one of three groups. These groups will be designated as representing relatively high, average, or low proficiency.

## CHAPTER II REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The complex relationship which exists between the development of oral and written language has been a subject of interest to linguists and educators for a number of years. First language research has sought to determine the exact nature of this relationship by investigating the developing language of children. The findings of this research have led to further investigation in second language learning. Studies have attempted to determine how similar learning a second language is to learning a first. While much is still in doubt, the patterns for the development of speaking and writing in the first language appear to be duplicated in the second.

## First Language Research

Kroll (1981) proposed a model for the developmental growth and integration of oral and written language in children. He stated that "in the course of developing writing abilities, an individual progresses through 'phases' of preparing, consolidating, differentiating, and systematically integrating his or her oral and written language resources" (p. 40). The preparation phase consists of the development of skills necessary for writing. Children learn handwriting and spelling, and practice

dictation. Their oral skills also undergo growth in this period. The second phase involves consolidation of speaking and writing. Children, unaware of the different demands of writing, use their oral language skills in writing and essentially write exactly as they speak. When they reach the differentiation phase, they begin to understand that speaking and writing differ in structure and style. They become aware of audience and "that writing tends to be formal and explicit, a relatively autonomous 'text', while speaking tends to be casual and context-dependent, a conversational 'utterance' (p. 39).

In the final phase, systematic integration, children understand the differences between speaking and writing and can use both with flexibility. They are able to use a variety of forms and structures for the specific purpose of communication. As children's awareness of the written system develops, so do their cognitive abilities. Their thoughts become more complex and they require more refined means of expression. The expression of more abstract and complex information in the written code requires greater syntactic complexity. Cayer and Sacks (1979) state that "the challenge is a dual one, for as the semantic complexity of the information to be written increases so, presumably, must the syntactic complexity of the discourse" (p. 122).

Studies which measure syntactic patterns provide additional support for Kroll's (1981) model of the developmental relationships of speaking and writing. These studies have analyzed syntactic complexity by two main indices of measurement. The first is length of syntactic units. The unit most commonly used is that devised by Hunt (1965, 1970) known as a T-unit. He defines a T-unit as "one main clause plus any subordinate clause or nonclausal structure that is attached to or embedded in it" (1970, p. 4). The second index is degree or amount of subordination. Subordination is the use of dependent clauses. These clauses cannot stand alone grammatically or convey meaning without being part of a T-unit.

Hunt's (1965, 1970) studies support the developmental growth of syntactic complexity in writing. He found that children wrote longer T-units as they got older and more accomplished writers wrote longer clauses. In addition, there was an increase in the amount of subordination in children's writing as they grew older. Hunt determined that T-unit length, clause length, and number of clauses per T-unit were, in that order, the best indicators of syntactic maturity.

Loban's (1976) longitudinal study of children from kindergarten through twelfth grade yielded similar results.

Beginning in kindergarten, the children were interviewed every year. From third grade onward, writing samples were also obtained from each child. Loban analyzed these samples using a measure essentially the same as Hunt's T-unit which he called a "communication unit". Loban found, as did Hunt, that the number of dependent clauses per T-unit seemed to indicate syntactic maturity.

A study of language development in speaking and writing of children in third, fifth and seventh grade by O'Donnell, Griffin, and Norris (1967) found the average length of T-units to be substantially greater in speech than in writing for the third graders. However, the reverse was true for the fifth and seventh graders. In addition, the writing of the older children contained more complex T-units and more adverbial clauses.

While all these studies used the most objective means possible to syntactically analyze the data, the mode of data elicitation was not specifically controlled. Crowhurst and Piche (1979) found that different modes elicit different syntactic structures. Argument produced more complex structures than did narration and description. Their findings make the results of earlier studies, particularly a longitudinal one like Loban's (1976), less reliable, for these studies took writing samples from students at various



times without controlling for mode of discourse. Comparisons between grade levels are, therefore, more difficult to make. O'Donnell, Griffin, and Norris (1967) obtained their data from students' responses to a film, and had, therefore, the same stimulus for data elicitation for all their subjects. That their findings are basically the same as Hunt's (1965, 1970) and Loban's with regard to increase in subordination and T-unit length with age provides some corroborative evidence for the other two studies. However, Crowhurst and Piche's finding demonstrates the necessity of controlling for mode of discourse in obtaining accurate samples of syntax for comparison.

These studies all provide support for a developmental growth of syntactic complexity in both writing and speaking. For children acquiring a first language, oral proficiency precedes written. O'Donnell, Griffin and Norris' (1967) study indicates that written language becomes more syntactically complex than oral language sometime after third grade and before fifth grade. Each of these studies found the amount of subordination to increase with age. Moreover, amount of subordination in writing became greater than speech as the subjects grew older. The best indicators of syntactic maturity were determined to be mean length of T-units, clause length and number of clauses per T-unit.

## Second Language Research

Compared with the substantial amount of first language development research, the amount of material in second language is somewhat limited. In addition, correlations between first language and second language development must be drawn with caution because of the fundamental differences between children learning a first language and adults learning a second language. For example, as Chiang and Costello (1983) pointed out, while native speakers will eventually acquire most structures in their language, second language learners may never acquire many structures. Furthermore, as Gaies (1980) emphasizes, second language learners are capable of thinking ideas which they are unable to express because of limited language skills whereas children acquiring a first language may not be capable of the complex thought that necessitates the use of more elaborate structures. Gaies' views are in agreement with those of Cayer and Sacks (1979) who posit that semantic complexity creates syntactic complexity. In addition, adult second language learners already have an awareness from their first language knowledge of the different conventions and forms demanded in speaking and writing. Even though they lack knowledge of specific forms and conventions in their second language, they recognize their existence. This

recognition represents a fundamental difference with children acquiring a first language.

While it is important to keep these differences in mind, the similarities in development between first and second language which research has uncovered are too significant to ignore. R. Cooper, Olshtain, Tucker and Waterbury (1979) found that less advanced adult second language learners seem to rely on semantic rather than syntactic information when trying to understand ambiguous sentences. These results are similar to Brown's (1980) findings that children respond to the meaning of an utterance rather than the form.

Vann (1981) applied Kroll's (1981) model of development for speaking and writing to ESL students. Students at level 1, in Vann's model, are much like children acquiring a first language in that their speaking and writing are undifferentiated. In level 2, the second language learners have differentiated the two systems yet not integrated them. They attempt to avoid speech patterns and focus on form in their writing as they recognize that writing involves the use of different conventions than speech. At level 3, students have mastered both speaking and writing and have knowledge of the forms appropriate for a variety of situations.

Studies involving the syntactic analysis of oral and written language of learners in second language learning situations have yielded similar results to the first language studies. Scott and Tucker (1974) compared the oral and written language of Arabic-speaking ESL students at the beginning and end of a semester. They found differences over time in their subjects' speaking and writing. Initially, the students made far more errors in speech than in writing. At the end of the term, however, they made the same percentage of errors in both with the total number of errors made being reduced in both modes. Scott and Tucker found that the number of error-free T-units was greater in writing than speaking initially. However, at the end of the semester, there were actually a slightly greater number of error-free T-units used in speaking. The number of relative clauses used in speaking and writing was essentially equal at the beginning of the term. At the end, the number in speaking was found to have stayed the same, yet in writing the number had doubled. This is an important finding in second language research as Hunt (1965, 1970) found frequency of use of adjective clauses to be a useful indicator of syntactic maturity in children acquiring a first language.

T. Cooper (1976) also investigated the syntactic development of second language learners. His investigation compared the written syntax of four levels of American college students studying German with that of German native speaker professional writers. He found, as did first language researchers, that students tended to write longer clauses and T-units as they developed their language skills. Rates of subordination also increased with level of proficiency. Cooper concluded that a developmental pattern appeared to exist for his students. However, the adult second language learners of his study seemed to make much faster growth in syntactic development in a shorter time than did Hunt's (1965, 1970) elementary school students. Cooper stated that this rapid growth could not be explained in terms of

habit formation whereby new syntactic patterns are added in a cumulative manner to previous patterns. Instead, the students' performance level may be due to an innate ability to internalize the basic rules of German syntax rapidly and automatically. This process may, indeed, be similar to the manner in which children learn their mother tongue. (p. 182)

Monroe's (1975) work with learners of French corroborates T. Cooper's (1976) finding that the writing of adult second language learners shows evidence that adults develop their use of structures associated with syntactic maturity more rapidly than children. He conducted a study

investigating syntactic differences with four levels of English speaking adults learning French and French native speakers. He found, as did Cooper (1976) and Scott and Tucker (1974) that the writing of more advanced students contained longer T-units and more subordination. However, the differences between groups, with the exception of the beginning level, were not great. Coordination appeared to be learned first. However, subordination seemed to be learned quite early as evidenced by its use by the second level of students. The use of subordination at this early level seems to further demonstrate Cooper's observation about the rate at which adults proceed in syntactic development.

Additionally, Monroe (1975) found that many of the advanced students who were good writers did not have particularly long T-units in their samples. Many used relatively short units, yet they combined them effectively. His results indicate that mean T-unit length alone cannot be used as a measure of an individual's syntactic maturity. His findings are similar to those of Hunt (1965, 1970) who found that mean T-unit length was a better indicator of syntactic maturity when combined with number of clauses and number of clauses per T-unit.

Subsequent research has shown that yet another syntactic measure appears to be necessary to evaluate the development of second language learners. Unlike first language data, second language data contain many errors of syntax and lexicon that must be considered in accurately evaluating syntactic development. Larsen-Freeman and Strom (1978) conducted a study which sought to identify an objective measure of proficiency for ESL students. However, their results also revealed that when error was taken into account in the syntactic analysis, a more accurate indicator of language proficiency was obtained. They analyzed the written compositions of five levels of students using mean T-unit length and number of error-free T-units per 200 words. In concurrence with other studies cited here, they found that length of T-units increased with proficiency level. However, statistical analysis revealed that T-unit length was not significant as a predictor of proficiency level. Further analysis showed that the average number of error-free T-units per 200 words did prove to be statistically significant as a discriminator of proficiency levels for their study. Consequently, their conclusion was that mean T-unit length combined with average number of error-free T-units was the most useful indicator of syntactic maturity for ESL students.

Vann's study of oral and written language of Arabic-speaking adult second language learners also found that mean T-unit length was more indicative of language proficiency when combined with ratio of error-free T-units. In addition, Vann's study found the mean length of T-units and error-free T-units to be longer in the written samples. Her findings indicate that parallels do exist between advanced second language learners and older children. O'Donnell, Griffin and Norris (1967) found that mean length was longer in speaking until around third grade. After that time, children's writing contained longer T-units than their speech. The subjects in Vann's study appear to reflect the developmental stage reached by children acquiring a first language after grade 3. Furthermore, Vann found that her subjects used more adverbial and adjective clauses in writing than in speaking. The increase in subordination in writing is also similar to the findings of O'Donnell, Griffin and Norris (1967) with children acquiring a first language. This study showed that with increased age, children were found to use more subordination in their writing than their speaking.



## Summary

Children acquiring their first language appear to go through specific phases of development in mastering speaking and writing. Initially, speaking and writing are essentially the same. Later children begin to differentiate the two systems. Finally, they are able to integrate spoken and written forms and are aware of the appropriate usage of the respective forms.

Adult second language learners as cognitively mature individuals proceed through the stages of syntactic development far more quickly than do child first language learners. However, the pattern of development appears to be similar. More advanced second language learners, like older children, tend to use longer T-units in writing and to increase the amount of subordination. Less advanced learners, like younger children, tend to use shorter T-units and less subordination. There appears to be little difference in their speaking and writing.

Error must be taken into account in evaluating syntax for second language learners although it is not a very important consideration in first language evaluation. Any comparison of syntax requires that the mode of data elicitation be controlled so that similar syntactic structures will be elicited in the samples to be compared.

The literature reviewed in this chapter provides important theoretical and methodological background for the present study. Although studies such as those by Monroe (1975) and Cooper (1976) have provided valuable insight into the developing written language of second language learners, they have not investigated the developing oral language. Others such as Scott and Tucker (1974) and Vann (1978) have looked at both written and oral language, but their emphasis has been on intermediate or advanced level students. Consequently, this study examines the differences which exist between the speaking and writing of beginning level adult second language learners. The following chapter contains a detailed explanation of the research design and procedures.

## CHAPTER III RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

First language research has shown that patterns exist for the development of children's speaking and writing. Second language research, while not as extensive, has uncovered evidence of similar patterns. Second language learners also seem to progress from writing as they speak to using more complex structures in writing than speaking. In addition, structures indicative of increasing syntactic maturity in first language learners seem to also be indicative for advanced stages of second language learners. Advanced second language learners use more subordinate structures and use longer T-units in writing than in speech. Moreover, subordination and T-unit length have been found to increase with amount of study.

The present study investigates the relationship of syntactic structures in the oral and written language of low level adult Arabic-speaking ESL students and replicates, in part, Vann's (1978) work with Saudi Arabian students at various proficiency levels. A major difference in the present study is that it uses subjects of a relatively low proficiency level. The basic procedure for data collection is a replication of Vann's work.

## Subjects

The subjects of this study are ten male students from Lebanon. All are native speakers of Arabic and arrived in the United States in the middle of January, 1985. The speaking and writing samples used in this study were collected on May 7 and 8, 1985. At that time, all the subjects were students in the two lowest levels of the Intensive English and Orientation Program at Iowa State University. The program provides 25 hours a week of instruction in English vocabulary, reading, writing, grammar, listening and speaking and is designed to help students gain admission and pursue degree programs in American Universities.

The subjects were assigned to their levels in the program based upon their results on the English Language Placement Test. This test was developed by the University of Michigan's English Language Institute and tests the subjects' listening comprehension, grammar, vocabulary and reading. There are a total of 100 points possible. The scores listed in Table 1 are total points scored.

Subject 6 had studied English for three months in Lebanon. No other subjects had studied English before arriving in the U.S. All the subjects had had 14 years of instruction in French in Lebanon. The subjects ranged in

age from 21 to 24 with the group mean age of 21.8. All the subjects lived in university dormitories at the time of the study and can, therefore, be assumed to have had at least some interaction with native speakers outside the classroom.

TABLE 1. Age and Placement test results

Subject	Age	ELPT 1 (Jan.)	ELPT 2 (March)	ELPT 3 (May)
1	24	25	31	40
2	20	21	30	60
3	22	23	18	33
4	21	20	37	26
5	22	6	23	44
6	21	45	57	74
7	21	26	45	53
8	23	27	34	40
9	22	18	37	46
10	22	-	41	58

#### Pilot Study

A pilot study for this project was conducted in March, 1985, to determine procedures for data elicitation. Because of the lack of availability of other low level students, the study was conducted using three advanced Arabic-speaking students. All had been in an English-speaking country, either England or the United States, for the last year. In

addition, all were currently enrolled in degree programs at Iowa State University. The three subjects were students in an advanced ESL composition class.

The subjects were instructed to write a short composition describing their hometown. They were given 30 minutes to complete the task. After finishing, the students were interviewed individually and asked to tell their interviewers about their hometown. The interviews were taped and lasted about ten minutes.

Information gained from the pilot study led to modifications of the data elicitation procedures for the actual study. The students seemed to have difficulty generating material for the compositions. As these students were at a more advanced level than the students to be used for the actual study, it was determined that a motion picture would provide a better stimulus than an assigned topic. The students would then have some specific information to relate. Scott and Tucker (1974) recommended the use of a film after they conducted their research using still pictures as the stimulus. Still pictures they felt did not inspire their subjects to communicate. Vann (1978) used a film without narration for her study. She found that the situation of retelling the plot of a film by someone who has seen it to someone who has not seemed to naturally

elicit a monologue. Based on her observation and the results of the pilot study, it was determined that a motion picture would be a better stimulus for data elicitation in the present study. In addition, O'Donnell, Griffin and Norris (1967) also used a film for data elicitation in their study with first language learners. Since their study also involved collection of oral and written samples and syntactic analysis, use of the same type of elicitation stimulus make comparisons between this second language study and their first language study more valid.

#### Data Elicitation

The data used in the study consist of samples of the subjects' written and oral language in response to a film. The subjects were shown an 11 minute color animated film entitled "Under the Rainbow". The film had background music but no narration. It presents the story of a blue man who works with computers and a yellow man who grows flowers. The two attempt to keep their worlds separate, yet inevitably each one must encroach a little on the other's territory. At first they fight, and later each tries to convert the other to his values. Eventually, the conflict is resolved; each retains his own culture, while learning to appreciate the other's culture. The film ends with a

representative union of the technological and agricultural worlds. The film, while not emotionally intense, does present a story which appeals to adults and gives them a message they feel worth discussing.

Selection of an appropriate film was important in this study in controlling the mode of elicited discourse. Crowhurst and Piche (1979) found that the type of discourse affected the syntactic structures produced. In the present study, a film that would elicit narrative discourse seemed most appropriate for the subjects' level. The problem lay in finding a film which was provocative enough to generate interest, but not so provocative as to elicit argumentative discourse. "Under the Rainbow" worked well because its message of peaceful coexistence could be related by the subjects in their responses by merely retelling the action in the movie.

#### Procedure

The subjects were divided into two groups of five each. The first group came to a classroom at their regularly scheduled class time. They were given consent forms to sign which explained the purpose of the research project but gave no specific details. They were then told that they would see a film, and afterwards be asked to write about it and



tell someone about it. It had been made clear to them before they signed the consent forms that their oral responses would be taped. The film was then shown. After viewing the film, two of the subjects remained in the room and were instructed to write about the film. They were told that the person reading their essay would be someone who had not seen the film and that they should tell this person what the film was about. Thirty minutes were allotted to complete the writing portion.

At the time the two subjects were writing, the three other subjects were taken to three separate rooms. In each room was an interviewer. The interviewers greeted the students, asked the students their names, and began taping. Interviewers told subjects that they had not seen the film and asked the subjects what the film was about. To keep the sample as much like a monologue as possible, the interviewers were instructed to ask questions of the subjects only if something were unclear or if the subject seemed to need a little coaxing to respond. Ten minutes were allotted for the interview portion.

The subjects who performed the writing task first were then interviewed. The subjects who performed the oral task first returned to the classroom and began writing. By varying the order in which the tasks were done any possible

ordering effect on the data was controlled. The same procedure was repeated the following day with the second group of students. However, for the second group three subjects wrote first and two spoke first.

The oral and written samples were then typed. Conventional punctuation was used in the oral transcriptions. In the typed written samples, the subjects' own punctuation was retained. However, spelling was corrected to make written versions comparable to the oral transcriptions all of which had correct spelling. Punctuation in the written samples was not corrected as the errors were relatively few whereas the spelling errors occurred with great frequency.

Copies of the typed written and oral samples were then given to three teaching assistants all of whom had experience working with low level students. They were not told which were the written and which were the oral samples but were instructed to rate each sample by placing it in one of three groups. The groups were designated as signifying high, average or low proficiency. Each group was to have no fewer than five samples and no more than eight.

### Method of Analysis

The written and oral data were analyzed syntactically with structures being categorized numerically into the categories of T-units, error-free T-units, adjective clauses, adverbial clauses and noun clauses. In addition, average T-unit length and the number of mazes were calculated. Grammatical errors were tabulated for subject-verb agreement and word order.

#### T-units

The basic syntactic measure used in this study was the T-unit. Hunt first used it as a measure of syntactic maturity in his 1965 study. He defined it as a "minimal terminal" unit which consisted of "one main clauses plus any subordinate or nonclausal structure that is attached to or embedded in it." (Hunt, 1970, 4). Therefore, the two sentences below would be analyzed as follows;

- The man is yellow who likes agriculture. (1 T-unit)
- The man is yellow and he likes agriculture.

(2 T-units)

#### Error-free T-units

T-units were determined to be error-free if they contained no syntactic or lexical errors and conveyed meaning clearly. Spelling and punctuation were ignored

since they are written conventions and would be impossible to analyze or compare in the typed oral transcriptions. However, in the case of verbs, a possible misspelling was regarded as an error if it made the tense wrong in a given context. For example, "become" substituted for "became" would be counted as an error rather than ignored as a misspelling. This procedure follows that used by Vann (1978).

#### Dependent clauses

Adjective clauses were defined as dependent clauses which occurred after and modified a noun, pronoun or noun phrase. Those dependent clauses which modified a verb, adverb, adjective or sentence and expressed meanings of time, place, cause, manner, concession, condition, comparison, purpose or result were considered to be adverbial clauses. A dependent clause which contained a subject and a predicate and functioned as a noun was considered to be a noun clause.

#### Mazes

The same criteria used by Loban (1976) and Vann (1978) were used to determine mazes in this study. Loban considered a maze to be "a series of words (or initial parts of words), or unattached fragments which do not constitute a

communication unit and are not necessary to the communication units" (p. 106). In this study, as in Vann's, data which fell into any of the following categories were considered to be mazes.

1. semantically redundant or corrected words or phrases
  - The blue one he is technologist.
  - He wanted to break to hit the flowers.
  - He likes his job, his work.
2. unintelligible words or strings
  - Because for the life union and for the life for live together for two color for give one color brown one maybe
3. fragments which could not be made into T-units by the addition of no more than two words (not to include relative pronouns). In most cases, these fragments occurred where a speaker begins a statement, stops to rephrase and begins with a new statement.
  - What he believes. . . he likes the machines.

#### Subject verb agreement and word order

Errors in subject-verb agreement were considered to be any instances in which the subject and verb did not agree in number. Ordering of words in ways inconsistent with the

normal grammatical patterns of English were considered to be errors. These errors usually occurred with the incorrect positioning of adverbs, adjectives, indirect and direct objects and embedded statements with how or wh- words.

- The yellow man made yellow the blue man.
- He made quickly the repair on the machine.
- He gave a flower him.
- I thought how hard fight they.

#### Summary

In this study conducted in May, 1985, data were collected from ten male Lebanese students enrolled in the two lowest levels of the Intensive English Orientation Program. Subjects' oral and written responses to a film without narration were syntactically analyzed in terms of T-units, error-free T-units, mazes and adjective, adverbial and noun clauses, to determine the relationship between oral and written performance at the beginning level of second language development. In addition, the number of subject-verb agreement and word order errors were calculated. The oral and written samples were ranked according to high, average or low proficiency by three ESL teaching assistants.

## CHAPTER IV RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter contains the analysis and discussion of the oral and written data collected from ten Arabic-speaking Lebanese ESL students. The data were gathered to test the following hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1

The subjects will demonstrate greater syntactic complexity in speaking than in writing.

- Hypothesis 2

The subjects will make fewer grammatical errors in writing than in speaking.

- Hypothesis 3

Subjects who demonstrate high proficiency in writing will also demonstrate high proficiency in speaking. Likewise, subjects who demonstrate low proficiency in writing will also demonstrate low proficiency in speaking.

Since two separate tasks were involved, the order in which the subjects performed the oral and written tasks was varied. A two-sample t-test was conducted to determine if the sequence of the tasks affected the raters' evaluations. A t value of 0.34 was found which was not significant at the  $\alpha = .05$  level. Hence, no correlation appears to exist between the sequence of tasks and the raters' evaluations of

the oral and written data. There does not seem to be an ordering effect on the data.

To test the first hypothesis, the oral and written data were syntactically analyzed. Tables 2 through 6 contain the results of this analysis using mean T-unit length, mean error-free T-unit length, ratio of error-free T-units to T-units, ratio of dependent clauses to T-units and ratio of mazes per 100 words as the indices of measurement.

Table 2 shows the mean T-unit length for the oral and written data for individuals and for the group. Oral mean T-unit length was one word longer than written mean T-unit length for the group. Six of the subjects had longer T-units in their speech while four had longer T-units in their writing. The differences in mean T-unit length, however, appear to be very slight between the oral and written samples with two exceptions. Concerning individuals with longer mean T-unit length for the written portion, the difference between the two modes was 1.2 words or less whereas two individuals having longer oral mean T-unit length had considerably larger differences. For example, subject 5's oral mean T-unit length was 3.3 words longer than his written, and subject 8's 4.2 words longer.

The mean error-free T-unit length index shown in Table 3 reveals a group mean length which is almost equal for the



TABLE 2. Mean T-unit Length

Subject	Oral	Written
1	9.7	8.1
2	9.5	9.9
3	10.3	11.5
4	8.5	9.5
5	14.5	11.2
6	10.0	8.9
7	10.3	9.1
8	13.8	9.7
9	10.2	9.0
10	13.8	14.2
Mean	11.1	10.1

oral and written data. Table 4 shows that the group had a higher percentage of error-free T-units in writing than in speaking. Subjects 3 and 5, among the lowest on the ELPT in the group, actually did not produce any error-free T-units in speaking although they did in writing. It is interesting to note that the mean length of their error-free T-units was above the group mean as shown in Table 3 although they did not produce a very high percentage of error-free T-units in writing. Subjects 4 and 9 had substantially higher values in the oral sample while subjects 2, 6 and 10 had substantially higher values in the written sample. Subject 10 is particularly noteworthy in that he had an extremely

high percentage of error-free T-units in his writing; however, the percentage in his speech was below the group mean.

TABLE 3. Mean Error Free T-unit Length

Subject	Oral	Written
1	8.9	4.8
2	8.5	8.5
3	0.0	8.0
4	4.4	8.0
5	0.0	7.0
6	9.0	9.3
7	9.0	8.3
8	9.5	5.0
9	8.7	6.5
10	9.0	7.5
Mean	6.7	6.4

Table 5 shows the results of the analysis of the ratio of dependent clauses to T-units. For this index, the oral samples had a higher mean percentage for the group than did the written. It is interesting to see that while at one end of the spectrum subject 1 had no dependent clauses in his written sample, at the other end subject 10 had a dependent clause in every T-unit. The percentage of dependent clauses in subject 10's written sample was also quite high.

TABLE 4. Error Free T-units/T-unit

Subject	Oral	Written
1	58.3	42.9
2	20.0	57.1
3	0.0	18.2
4	43.8	6.3
5	0.0	18.2
6	30.8	64.3
7	25.0	20.0
8	22.2	5.0
9	40.0	15.4
10	20.0	80.0
Mean	26.0	32.7

TABLE 5. Dependent Clauses/T-unit

Subject	Oral	Written
1	16.7	0.0
2	20.0	14.3
3	30.0	45.5
4	12.5	56.3
5	75.0	63.6
6	7.7	35.7
7	37.5	20.0
8	61.1	20.0
9	32.0	7.7
10	80.0	100.0
Mean	37.3	26.3

The index of mazes per 100 words in Table 6 shows that more mazes were found in the oral than the written samples. Six of the subjects' written samples contained no mazes while only two of the subjects' oral samples were maze free. Only three of the subjects had mazes in both their oral and written samples.

TABLE 6. Mazes/100 Words

Subject	Oral	Written
1	3.3	0.0
2	3.2	0.7
3	4.8	10.6
4	13.9	2.6
5	0.0	7.5
6	0.0	0.0
7	3.0	0.0
8	6.1	0.0
9	6.7	0.0
10	2.4	0.0
Mean	4.3	2.1

To determine what kinds of conclusions could be drawn from these data, t-tests were performed on the five indices to see if a correlation existed between the oral and written data. These t-tests compared oral with written mean T-unit length, mean error-free T-unit length, ratio of error-free

T-units to T-units, ratio of dependent clauses to T-units, and ratio of words in mazes per 100 words. Null hypotheses were formulated for each index stating that no significant difference existed between the oral and written data.

- Null hypothesis 1.1

No significant difference will be found between oral and written mean T-unit length.

The calculated t value was 1.70. With alpha = .05 and df = 9, the critical t value was 1.83. The calculated t value is less than the critical value; therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

- Null hypothesis 1.2

No significant difference will be found between oral and written mean error-free T-unit length.

The calculated t value was 0.43. With alpha = .05 and df = 9, the critical t value was 1.83. The calculated t value is less than the critical value; therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

- Null hypothesis 1.3

No significant difference will be found between oral and written ratio of error-free T-units to T-units.

The calculated t value was 0.68. With alpha = .05 and df = 9, the critical t value was 1.83. The

calculated t value is less than the critical value; therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

- Null hypothesis 1.4

No significant difference will be found between the oral and written ratio of dependent clauses to T-units.

The calculated t value was 0.11. With  $\alpha = .05$  and  $df = 9$ , the critical t value was 1.83. The calculated t value is less than the critical value; therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

- Null hypothesis 1.5

No significant difference will be found between oral and written number of words in mazes per 100 words.

The calculated t value was 1.24. With  $\alpha = .05$  and  $df = 9$ , the critical t value was 1.83. The calculated t value is less than the critical value; therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

Based on the results of the t-tests, none of the null hypotheses could be rejected. Consequently, the first hypothesis that oral data would be more syntactically complex cannot be substantiated. In other words, although some interesting individual differences were found, the results did not indicate that differences exist between the oral and written data for these indices.

The second hypothesis of this study was that the subjects would make fewer grammatical errors in writing than in speaking. To test this hypothesis, grammatical errors in the oral and written data were tabulated for the categories of subject-verb agreement and word order. Tables 7 and 8 contain the data from this tabulation.

The index of subject-verb agreement errors per 100 words contained in Table 7 reveals that the group mean was only slightly higher in speaking than in writing. Subject 6 made no errors in either of his samples. For the rest of the group, five subjects made more errors in their speaking and four made more errors in writing. Therefore, there seems to be no group trend toward better grammatical control in one skill over another.

Table 8 shows the number of word order errors per 100 words for the oral and written data. There were a few more errors found in the subjects' oral samples than the written, but the difference was very small. Six of the subjects made no errors in writing while five of the subjects made no errors in speaking. Only two of the subjects made errors in both writing and speaking.

T-tests were then conducted on the indices of number of subject-verb agreement errors per 100 words and number of word order errors per 100 words. Null hypotheses were

TABLE 7. Subject-Verb Agreement  
Errors/100 Words

Subject	Oral	Written
1	0.9	0.0
2	5.3	2.2
3	5.8	1.6
4	3.7	3.3
5	3.4	3.3
6	0.0	0.0
7	2.4	2.9
8	2.8	3.1
9	1.8	5.1
10	1.2	2.8
Mean	2.7	2.4

TABLE 8. Word Order Errors/100  
Words

Subject	Oral	Written
1	1.7	0.0
2	0.0	0.7
3	0.0	0.8
4	1.5	0.0
5	0.0	0.0
6	0.0	0.0
7	1.2	0.7
8	1.2	0.0
9	0.8	0.9
10	0.0	0.0
Mean	0.6	0.3



formulated for these two indices stating that no significant difference would exist between the oral and written data.

- Null hypothesis 2.1

No significant difference will be found between oral and written number of subject-verb agreement errors per 100 words.

The calculated t value was 0.44. With  $\alpha = .05$  and  $df = 9$ , the critical t value was 1.83. The calculated t value is less than the critical value; therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

- Null hypothesis 2.2

No significant difference will be found between oral and written number of word order errors per 100 words.

The calculated t value was 1.19. With  $\alpha = .05$  and  $df = 9$ , the critical t value was 1.83. The calculated t value is less than the critical value; therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

Since neither of the two null hypotheses could be rejected, it is not possible to support the second hypothesis that fewer grammatical errors would be made in the subjects' writing than in their speaking.

The third hypothesis of the study was that the subjects would demonstrate equivalent language proficiency in both

their oral and written samples. To test this hypothesis, the oral and written responses to the film were given to three experienced ESL teaching assistants who were instructed to rank the data into one of three groups. The groups were designated as representing high, average or low proficiency. Inter-rater reliability was computed to determine to what extent the three evaluators of the oral and written data agreed with one another in their rankings. Table 9 shows the correlation coefficients for the three raters. All correlation coefficients were .76 or greater, indicating high inter-rater reliability.

TABLE 9. Inter-rater Reliability

	X	Y	Z
X	1.00	0.80	0.88
Y	0.80	1.00	0.76
Z	0.88	0.76	1.00

Spearman rank order correlation coefficient was computed for the raters' ranking of the oral and written data. A value of .74 was found indicating a positive correlation between oral and written rankings. Therefore, if a subject's oral sample was placed in the high

proficiency group, it was likely that his written sample would also be placed in that group. Furthermore, rankings for either average or low proficiency for the oral sample were similarly scored for the written sample.

TABLE 10. Average of Raters' Rankings

Subjects	Oral	Written
1	2.3	2.0
2	2.0	2.7
3	2.0	1.0
4	1.0	1.0
5	1.0	1.0
6	2.7	3.0
7	2.3	2.0
8	2.3	1.3
9	3.0	2.3
10	3.0	3.0

#### Summary of Results

The study found that no significant differences appear to exist between the oral and written language of low level Arabic-speaking ESL students as measured by the indices of mean T-unit length, mean error-free T-unit length, ratio of error-free T-units to T-units, ratio of dependent clauses to T-units and number of words in mazes per 100 words. In the

categories of number of subject-verb agreement and word order errors, no significant difference was found between the number made in speech and the number made in writing. Rankings made by ESL instructors yielded results which indicate that the oral and written samples were closely correlated in terms of proficiency.

#### Discussion of Results

All the indices of measurement used in this study seem to indicate that the oral and written language of low level ESL learners is not significantly different. These results are different than those found by Vann (1978) in her study with students of various proficiency levels. Whereas Vann found significant differences in the oral and written indices of mazes, error-free T-unit length and percentage of error-free T-units, these indices were not significant for the low level students. In addition, although not statistically significant, mean T-unit length was found to be slightly longer in the oral data for the subjects in this study and in the written data for the subjects in Vann's study. The percentage of dependent clauses was higher in the written data for the more advanced subjects and in the oral data for the low level subjects. Furthermore, Vann found oral samples to contain twice as many words as

written. However, the oral samples were only slightly longer for the low level students.

These findings suggest that developmental differences exist with second language learners in ways that seem to parallel those found in first language development. Young children, like the low level subjects of this study, have longer T-units in speech than in writing. O'Donnell, Griffin and Norris (1967) found that children become more proficient in writing than in speech after grade 3. Vann observed that the subjects of her study were similar to O'Donnell et al. post grade 3 subjects because of the longer T-unit length and greater subordination in their writing. The subjects in this study seem to be more like the grade 3 or younger subjects in O'Donnell et al.'s study.

In addition, it seems that Kroll's (1981) model of development could be applied to the results of this study. The statistical tests conducted on the data indicate that no significant differences exist between the oral and written samples for any of the indices of measurement used in this study. Consequently, it seems that the speaking and writing of the low level students are not differentiated. That the subjects appear to write as they speak is evidence that suggests that they are at the consolidation phase in the development of their speaking and writing. Errors made in

subject-verb agreement and word order were also not significantly different in speech and writing which seems to further support this idea of the consolidation of the two modes. However, it is important to note that the subjects made very few word order errors in either mode. Selection of another category of grammatical errors, prepositions, for example, might have produced more informative results.

The consistency found in the raters' rankings of the oral and written data seems to also indicate that at this level of language learning, an individual's oral and written language are closely related. Although one sample of speech or writing cannot be totally representative of an individual's overall proficiency, it does appear that these subjects demonstrated equal proficiency in both modes. Therefore, at least for this group of beginning level second language learners, it does appear that the good writer is also a good speaker and the poor writer is also a poor speaker.

It is interesting to look at the two highest rated individuals, subjects 6 and 10, and the two lowest, subjects 4 and 5, to see what similarities and differences exist. Subject 10's written and oral mean T-unit length were quite high as was the percentage of dependent clauses in his oral and written data. Each T-unit of his written sample

contained a dependent clause. Although 80% of his written T-units were error-free, only 20% of his spoken T-units contained no errors. As longer T-units and increased subordination are considered to indicate syntactic maturity in native speakers, it is perhaps not surprising that both his oral and written samples were rated high by all three raters. The relatively low percentage of error-free T-units in his oral sample does not seem to have bothered the raters.

Subject 6 provides an interesting contrast. The mean T-unit length of his oral and written data was below the group mean. In addition, the percentage of dependent clauses in his oral work was the lowest in the group and the percentage in his written work was only slightly above the group mean. However, subject 6 made no grammatical errors of subject-verb agreement or word order in either his oral or written data. He was the only subject in the group to avoid these errors altogether. In addition, neither his oral or written data contained any mazes. Despite the shorter length of T-units and lesser amount of subordination, his written work was ranked high by all three raters and his oral work was ranked high by two and average by one. It appears that in the case of subject 6 mean T-unit length and amount of subordination were not indicative

of his syntactic maturity as judged by ESL instructors. Although he did not use many complex sentence structures, the evaluators may have been responding to vocabulary usage, mastery of idiom and other variables, not measured in this study, in rating his proficiency. In any case, the difference in mean T-unit length and amount of subordination between the two highest rated subjects is striking and seems to further indicate the difficulty in deriving measures of second language proficiency because of the number of variables involved.

Moreover, additional support for this difference can be found in the analysis of the language of the two lowest rated subjects who also present interesting contrasts in terms of subordination and T-unit length. Subject 4 had the lowest oral mean T-unit length in the group. His written mean T-unit length, while not particularly low for the group, was still slightly below the group mean. However, subject 5's oral mean T-unit length was the highest in the group and his written was one word higher than the group mean. In terms of percentage of dependent clauses, subject 4 was next to the lowest in the group for oral data. Subject 5 had the second to the highest percentage of dependent clauses in both his written and oral data. However, subject 5's oral data contained no error-free T-



units and the percentage in his written work was well below the group mean.

In summary, these results seem to indicate that evaluators are responding to a combination of variables in assessing proficiency. Measurements of T-unit length and subordination do not as fully account for language proficiency in second language learners as they do for first language learners. Subject 4's short T-units and low degree of subordination may be indicative of a low proficiency learner as subject 10's longer T-units and high degree of subordination may be indicative of a subject of higher proficiency. However, subject 5's data seem to demonstrate the converse of subject 6's. Subjects 5's relatively long T-unit length and high use of subordination yet low ranking seem to support the idea that error must also be taken into account for second language learners although it is not an important consideration for first language learners. The oral work of subject 5 actually contained no error-free T-units, yet by standards of T-unit length and amount of subordination, it would be considered syntactically mature. Subject 6 produced shorter T-units and used less subordination, yet he had a higher percentage of error-free T-units, no subject-verb agreement or word order errors, and no mazes in his data. His work received high ratings by the

evaluators although by the standards of relative T-unit length and subordination, it would not have been as syntactically mature as subject 5's.

## CHAPTER V CONCLUSION

## Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the oral and written language of the often ignored low level ESL student. Oral and written data were collected from ten Arabic-speaking students in the two lowest levels of an intensive English program. The data were analyzed to determine if statistically significant differences existed between oral and written language of the subjects. The major findings were as follows:

1. No significant differences were found between oral and written data for the indices of mean T-unit length, mean error-free T-unit length, ratio of error-free T-units to T-units, ratio of dependent clauses to T-units or number of words in mazes per 100 words.
2. No significant differences were found between the number of subject-verb agreement or word order errors in speaking and writing.
3. Individuals who were ranked relatively high in their oral language by ESL instructors were also ranked relatively high in their written language. Likewise, individuals who were ranked relatively

low in their oral language were similarly ranked in their written language.

4. The order in which the oral and written tasks were performed did not appear to effect the raters evaluations.

The findings indicate that differences do exist between the oral and written language of the subjects of this study and the more advanced subjects of Vann's (1978). The low level subjects' oral language was not significantly different from their written in terms of T-unit length and amount of subordination whereas the advanced level subjects' written language contained longer T-units and more subordination than their oral. Mean length of error-free T-units was almost equal in speech and writing for the low level subjects. The mean error-free T-unit length was longer in the written discourse than the oral for Vann's subjects. Furthermore, the oral samples obtained from the subjects in Vann's study were almost twice as long as the written in contrast to the low level subjects of this study whose oral samples were only slightly longer than their written. These findings seem to suggest a consolidation of speaking and writing at the low level and a subsequent differentiation of the two at more advanced levels.

A comparison of these findings with those of Scott and Tucker's (1974) study with 22 Arabic-speaking intermediate EFL students indicated some interesting results. They found, as did the present study, that their subjects made approximately the same amount of subject-verb agreement and word order errors in oral and written production. In addition, Scott and Tucker found amount of subordination to be almost equal in speaking and writing at the beginning of the term; however, by the end of the term, subordination in writing had nearly doubled. This increase in subordination seems to support the idea of progression towards differentiation.

That the low level subjects of this study used subordination supports T. Cooper's (1976) finding that subordination is learned quite early. The finding also lends additional support to his observation that second language learners progress far more quickly in acquisition of syntactic structures than do first language learners.

Furthermore, these findings support the notion of similarities between first and second language learners. O'Donnell, Griffin and Norris (1967) observed that the written and oral language of the younger children in their study were very much the same in terms of syntactic structure. The present study also found that syntactic

structures were similar in both the oral and written samples of the subjects.

#### Limitations

The results of this study are limited and should not be applied to other situations without certain qualifications.

First, there were only ten subjects in this study. The sample size is obviously too small to adequately represent all low level ESL students or even all Arabic-speaking low level ESL students. It is possible that different results might be found with a larger sample population.

Second, the subjects were selected based on their scores on the English Placement Test and subsequent placing in low levels of the Intensive English Program. However, a degree of variability still necessarily existed in the actual proficiency levels of these subjects. As the placement test results shown in Table 1 in Chapter 3 indicate, the subjects progressed at different speeds in their language learning and at a given point in time were not all at the same level of proficiency. However, the subjects were nonetheless representative of low level students.

Third, the oral and written samples were collected on one day and may, therefore, not be sufficiently representative of the subjects' oral and written language.

Fourth, only the narrative mode of discourse was investigated in this study. Other modes might produce different results.

Fifth, while group homogeneity is desirable in research design, the homogeneity of subjects in this study does not reflect the cosmopolitan make up of most ESL instructional settings. As the data in this study were obtained from Arabic-speakers, different findings might result from an investigation of the oral and written language of low level learners of another language group, or even from a group of non-Lebanese Arabic speakers.

#### Implications

Despite the limitations mentioned above, the results of this study were suggestive although certainly not definitive. The developmental relationship of speaking and writing does appear to be similar for both first and second language learners based on the results of this study and others previously mentioned. This finding implies that second language research can continue to look to first language research for clues to many unanswered questions about how literate adults learn another language.

That oral and written language were found to be similar suggests that writing instruction is justified even at the

low levels of second language instruction. Instruction in the beginning levels usually emphasizes oral skills through dialogues, choral drills and some limited free conversation. Written skills are often assumed to be too difficult for students at this level and are generally not expressly taught. This emphasis on oral skills is perhaps a holdover from the audiolingual method in which writing was actually the last skill taught. The difficulty many literate adults had in learning a language with this approach seemed to in part stem from "its emphasis on speech (and consequent deemphasis on reading and writing), and the rigid order it prescribed for teaching the skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing" (Newton, 1979, p. 19). Although most current language instruction does not strictly demarcate these language skills or the order in which they are taught, many texts for low level students do not teach writing.<sup>1</sup>

Any written work done usually involves sentence level grammar exercises or translations. There is ample opportunity for free expression in speaking but very little in writing.

The fact that the students appear to be able to express themselves equally well in writing as in speaking seems to indicate that they should have an equal opportunity to work

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Bruder, 1974 or Letterman and Slivka, 1983.



on written skills and begin to learn how writing differs from speaking. Current textbooks which focus on an integration of skills often give low level students opportunities to express themselves in writing with paragraph level composition assignments.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this earlier instruction in writing would help students to move more quickly into the next phase of development in which they begin to differentiate the two modes. Earlier instruction might also help prevent the failure to differentiate the two modes which seems to affect many ESL students who continue to write as they speak even at relatively high levels of overall language proficiency. As Halpern (1984) states "unless students are taught directly that speaking and writing have different syntactic requirements, they will continue to repeat their errors, not understanding why they are errors at all" (p. 352).

#### Suggestions for Future Research

Few studies have investigated the oral and written language of the low level ESL learner. This study examined only the differences that exist for Arabic-speakers. It would be interesting to replicate the study with other language groups such as Chinese or Spanish ESL learners.

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<sup>2</sup> See for example Azar, 1984 or Kirn and Jack, 1985.

Furthermore, a longitudinal study similar to Loban's (1976) study with first language learners but with mode of discourse controlled would perhaps yield a clearer and more definitive picture of the developmental relationship of speaking and writing for second language learners. Instructional programs could perhaps then be more effectively designed to help meet the needs of students at specific phases of development.

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