

The Developmental Relationship between Spoken and Written Clause Packaging in an English Secondary School

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This poster will detail the main findings of a new study into the relationship between speech and writing during the secondary phase of the English education system, situating these findings within the context of other recent studies into the syntactic development of L1 speakers and writers during the school years.

The present findings stem from the analysis of a bespoke corpus of 180 pairs of spoken and written *non-narratives*, with the author directly eliciting each pair from students attending a mainstream secondary school in Southern England. The corpus was further designed so as to be balanced across two core developmental axes: (a) the year group of the student, and (b) their National Curriculum attainment level.

So constructed, the corpus was analysed in terms of the students' modality-related distributions of clause packaging, defined here as comprising the various means by which *clauses* are combined via *coordination* and *subordination* (cf. Berman & Slobin, 1994). To help ensure a more in-depth analysis, an extended set of measures was employed, ranging from the general (e.g. the number of *clauses per t-unit* and the number of *words per clause*) to the more specific (e.g. the number of *non-finite adverbial clauses per t-unit* and *per clause*, the number of *relative clauses per t-unit* and *per clause*, and the number of *phrasal clauses per t-unit* and *per clause*).

So analysed, the study indicates adolescent students at the present age and attainment levels to be at a stage where they are capable of differentiating their modality-related syntax, at least for these texts and measures. It also found this differentiation to be something that varied according to the particular kind of packaging measured. Thus, the spoken texts exhibited a greater number of *t-units per t-unit complex*, together with a greater prominence of *finite adverbial* and *post-verbal complement clauses*. Conversely, the written texts exhibited a greater overall prominence of *non-finite clauses*, whilst neither modality was distinguishable in terms of their respective proportions of *relative clauses*. Finally, this differentiation was found to be developmentally static, with the students handling their spoken and written clauses in much the same way regardless of their age or attainment level.

Overall, these findings are interpretable in terms of the participants tapping into the differential production conditions of speech and writing, but without necessarily fully exploiting these conditions (Berman, 2008; Biber, 1988, 1992). Moreover, when placed in the context of the wider evidence base (Berman, 2008; Myhill, 2008; Nippold, 2007; Nippold & Scott, 2010; Ravid & Tolchinsky, 2002), the findings suggest two further conclusions. Firstly, they indicate students at the present age and attainment levels to be at a stage where their syntactic output is more in line with the discourse of mature speakers and writers. Secondly, they indicate modality to be an

aspect of student syntax that is potentially characterised by a nuanced sensitivity to the various communicative features of the wider discourse context.

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