CHAPTER 6

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: LANGUAGE FORM

AIM:
To present and discuss the aspects of language form identified in the language behaviour of the pre-school participants, to distinguish the aspects of language form that appeared typically in the language production of the three age groups, and to evaluate the potential utility of this information by considering the results to be carried over to the *Profile*.

6.1. General introduction: The language database for the language profile of multilingual EAL pre-schoolers

A profile, as its name suggests, is no more than a first approximation to an accurate description; but it does at least imply that the salient, identifying features of a problem area have been isolated.
(Crystal, 1981:22)

The goal of this and the following chapters is to present the results of the various language analyses performed on the language data collected from multilingual EAL pre-school learners in a specified urban setting, and to indicate to what extent these results can be utilised to construct profiles of typical language behaviour and of risk for language impairment in the case of these learners. The purpose of the set of profiles is to assist the collaborative therapist-teacher team in selecting appropriate language enrichment activities for typical EAL pre-school learners, and also to promote early intervention/prevention by allowing the therapist to distinguish between typical (due to language difference) and atypical (due to language disorder) language phenomena in multilingual EAL pre-school learners.

The literature provides examples of useful profiles derived from data collected from relatively small numbers of linguistically and culturally diverse pre-school populations (Stockman, 1996, in Schraeder, Quinn, Stockman, & Miller, 1999). It was considered apposite, therefore, to construct a profile of these typical language characteristics for a *circumscribed group* of thirty multilingual EAL pre-schoolers, to compare this profile to the characteristics usually associated with language disorders in children, and then to determine which characteristics, if any, can be utilised with any measure of

assurance to identify those EAL learners who truly present with an innate language disorder.

The results are presented according to the four phases of the research described in Chapter 5, namely:

1. Preparation of the language database
2. Construction of the language profile
3. Description of typical EAL learners
4. Profiling language disorders in EAL learners.

These phases were differentiated methodologically, and were not necessarily temporally sequential. Figure 6.1 relates these research phases to the research objectives as stated in Chapter 4. The first phase, which comprised the preparation of the language database, is discussed according to the language dimensions of form (Chapter 6), content (Chapter 7), and use (Chapter 8), and specifically those aspects of each dimension identified in Chapter 4.

As the volume of the raw data obtained from the semi-structured conversations between the research assistant and the multilingual pre-schoolers precluded inclusion in the text, the results presented in Chapters 6 through 8 will be the processed forms of the data. Raw data is provided in the form of spreadsheets on CD Rom included in the back cover.

The results are presented in tables and graphs, since graphical representations can often convey more information and be more intuitively comprehensible than statistical measures (De Vaus, 2001:195). The results from the language analysis of the pre-school participants will be presented for the three age groups separately and, where appropriate, for the group of participants as a whole. The main purpose of the representations will be to determine whether a typical spread or phenomenon could be identified. Where a table has the entry *No representative range could be determined,* the distribution of scores obtained for that particular group is scattered throughout the range of scores, with no grouping in any specific area. The resulting standard deviation, therefore, is too large to permit the formula *mean/median +/-2SD* to be

used. Where the distribution was skewed by a single very low and/or a single very high score, the 10th and 90th percentiles were used to delimit the range of behaviour displayed by 80% of a group of participants (Steyn, Smit, Du Toit & Strasheim, 1994:127).

The extensive nature of the information presented in this and the following two chapters requires some orienting reference to the way in which data was organised. *Description of the results* are followed by a *discussion* at the end of each subsection, and a subsequent indication of the information to be carried forward to the language profile. The discussion is intended to relate the results obtained to associated information in the literature. Due to the scope of the investigation, the discussion will of necessity be relatively brief, but every attempt will be made to ensure inclusion of all pertinent aspects that could contribute to the depth of the argument. The *typical language profile for pre-school EAL learners in a circumscribed urban area* will be denoted "the *Profile"* in the rest of the discussion. Two versions of the *Profile* will subsequently be presented in Chapter 9:

1. The complete profile listing all the typical behaviours that were identified and also additional notes on behaviours that are relevant for speech-language therapists.
2. The reduced profile listing the typical behaviours that are likely to be most relevant for teachers in the designated multilingual pre-school setting.

In the *Profile for speech-language therapists* the results will be presented in a coded form for brevity. In the *Profile for teachers* the typical behaviours will be presented in a descriptive fashion utilising terms such as *"can produce …"*, *"demonstrates …"*.

Following the two typical profiles, Chapter 10 will provide a proposed *risk profile* of indicators for specific language disorders (SLI) in multilingual pre-schoolers in the circumscribed urban area selected for the current research. The similarities and differences between this risk profile and the indicators of SLI, as described in the literature, will be highlighted.

Various authors and researchers who study language provide different definitions of terms or different emphases in their definitions (Owens, 2001:3). A precondition for any meaningful discussion of language behaviours, therefore, is an agreement on the terminology to be used. A glossary of the terms employed in this analysis and discussion of the various aspects of language form, language content, and language use are consequently provided in Appendix F.

Figure 6.1 is a schematic representation of the presentation and discussion of the results. The various methodological phases are related to the stated objectives of the research, and an indication is provided of the respective chapter where each aspect is to be put forward.
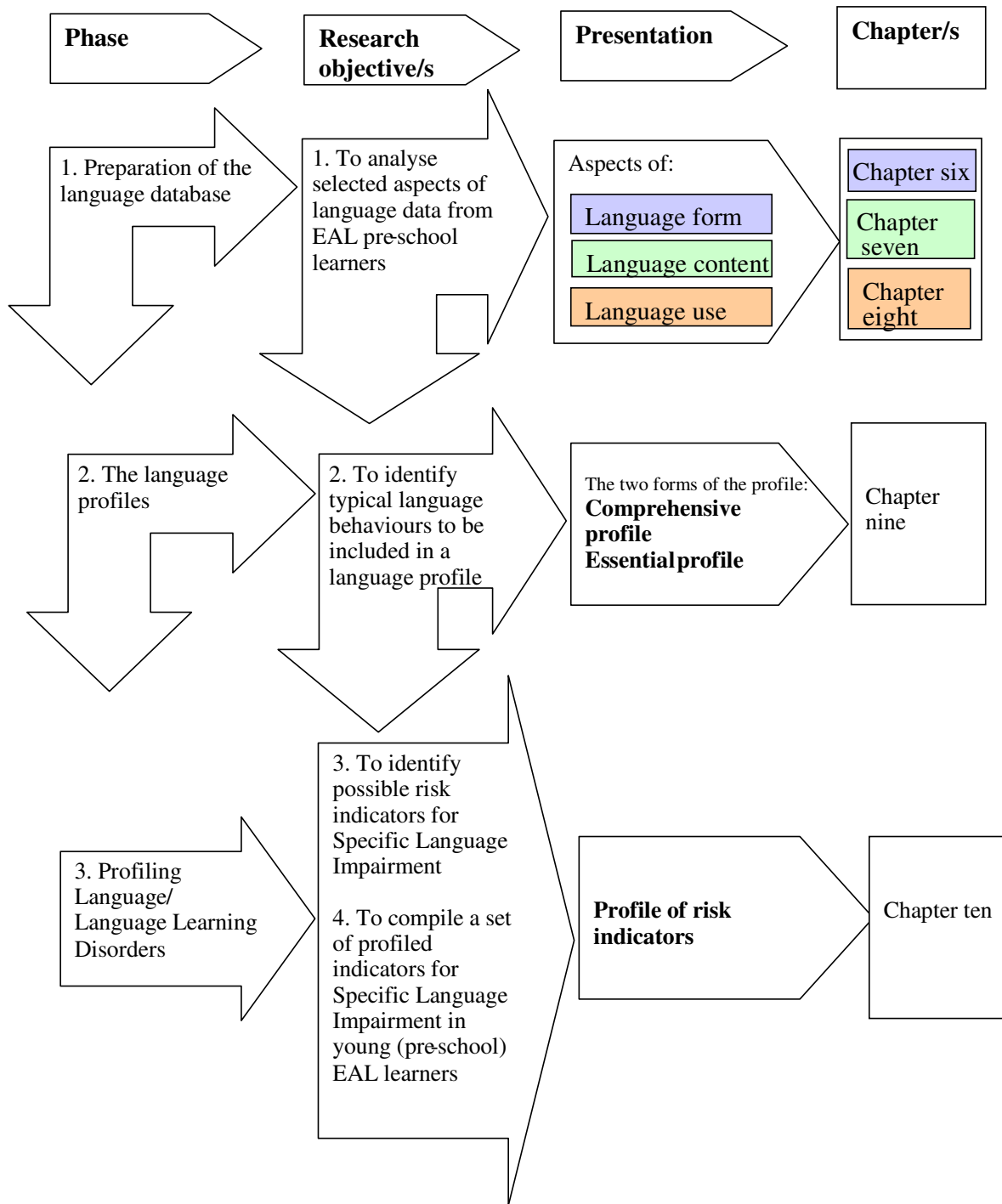
Phase	Research objective/s	Presentation	Chapter/s

1. Preparation of the language database

1. To analyse selected aspects of language data from EAL pre-school learners

Aspects of:

Language form

Language content

Language use

Chapter six

Chapter seven

Chapter eight

2. The language profiles

2. To identify typical language behaviours to be included in a language profile

The two forms of the profile:
Comprehensive profile
Essential profile

Chapter nine

3. Profiling Language/ Language Learning Disorders

3. To identify possible risk indicators for Specific Language Impairment

4. To compile a set of profiled indicators for Specific Language Impairment in young (pre-school) EAL learners

Profile of risk indicators

Chapter ten

Figure 6.1.   Presentation of results and discussion

Phase 1 of the research process, the preparation of the language database, was related to objective 1: to analyse selected aspects of language data from a group of EAL pre-school learners in an urban setting in South Africa, relating to form, content and use.

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The outcome to be achieved in this phase was the identification of information to be carried forward to the *Profile*.

The language behaviour displayed by multilingual EAL pre-schoolers in a structured interview with an adult, in this case the research fieldworker, is discussed under three headings: *language form* (Chapter 6), *language content* (Chapter 7) and *language use* (Chapter 8). The results of the respective language analyses were utilised to determine whether any typical language behaviours could be identified for the three groups of pre-school participants. The labels *Junior group, Middle group*, and *Senior group* are used to distinguish these groups. The age range of each group is indicated below:

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4 years 0 months to 4years 11 months     =     Junior group (N=10)
5 years 0 months to 5 years 11 months     =     Middle group (N=10)
6 years 0 months to 6 years 11 months     =     Senior group.(N=10)
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> **Language form (syntax and morphology) produced by the pre-school participants**

6.2.   Introduction: Language form

The aspects of the language dimension of *form* that were identified in Chapter 4 as significant on account of their relationship to either language impairment or EAL, were investigated as they appeared in the language behaviour of the pre-school participants. The results are presented below, together with a brief discussion of each set of results.

The presentation and discussion is optimally viewed from the perspective already stated in the definition of language (Chapter 1), that *the subsystems of language may be described separately, but they never function separately. They are as closely intertwined as the strands in a braid, forming one functional whole*. This perspective is cogently expounded by Rollins (1994:373). The implication for the current chapter and those to follow, is that although some attempt has been made to separate the "strands" of language into form, content, and use, the researcher remains patently aware of the interconnectedness of these dimensions and of their influence on each other. The researcher also acknowledges that it is not always a simple matter to

distinguish between aspects of form and of content in the case of structures such as verb phrases and pronouns. The primary intention of the research should be stated clearly once again: to *describe* the language behaviours observed in pre-school EAL learners, rather than to *explain the presence of* these behaviours from a linguistic, socio-cultural, or clinical point of view.

The aspects of language form included in the following description are those listed in Chapter 5, namely syntactic complexity, syntactic structures, morphology, and mean length of utterance.

6.3.   Syntactic complexity

For the purpose of this discussion, the term *conversation sample* will be used to refer to the language sample from the elicited conversation, and the term *test sample* will refer to the language sample obtained by means of the picture cards from the KLST-2 (Gauthier & Madison, 1998).

The results for syntactic complexity are presented in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1.   **Number of participants from each age group who produced two or more examples of each sentence type (data from two language samples)**

From test sample - number of participants producing identified structure more than once										
Group (n=10 for each group)	Simple sentence	Connected through intonation	And	(And) then	But	Because	If	(So) that	Object clause	Adverbial clause
Junior	6									
Middle	10		1							
Senior	9		4	1						
From conversation sample – number of participants producing identified structure more than once										
Group (n=10 for each group)	Simple sentence	Connected through intonation	And	(And) then	But	Because	If	(So) that	Object clause	Adverbial clause
Junior	9		1						1	
Middle	10								1	1
Senior	10	2	7	4	1			1	5	2

The connectives *because* and *if* were not used more than once by any participant. Moreover, none of the participants produced two or more examples of complement clause or post-modification clause, although other examples of subordinate clauses were produced, as illustrated in Table 6.1.

The only sentence type truly *typical* of these EAL pre-schoolers from the age of 4-0 years to the age of 6-11 years, was the simple sentence. The conversation sample rendered more information than the test sample, so that it appears a more useful sample for the purpose of determining the amount of complex syntax used by the pre-school participants. From the conversation sample two more examples of *noteworthy* sentence types became apparent, namely compound sentences joined by "and" and complex sentences with an embedded object clause.

When these observations were compared to the data for typically developing English-speaking children in the USA (Owens, 2001:326-327), it was evident that a separate register of risk indicators would be required for these multilingual EAL pre-schoolers. According to Owens (2001:326-327), clausal conjoining with "and" is typically produced at the age of 41-46 months, while clausal conjoining with "because" appears at 47 months and "when", "but" and "so" soon afterwards. The absence of complex syntax at the age of 6 years would be regarded as a clinical marker for the English-speaking USA pre-school population, but not for the population of EAL pre-schoolers who acted as participants in the current study.

The information regarding syntactic complexity to be carried over to the *Profile* will be the following:

Profile summary 1: Syntactic complexity

Group	Noteworthy behaviour (50-80% of group)	Typical behaviour (80%+of group)
Junior group (4-0 to 4-11)		**Simple sentences** Example (from J1): That one, is his birthday
Middle group (5-0 to 5-11)		**Simple sentences** Example (from M15):

		He's blowing a candles
Senior group (6-0 to 6-11)	1. **Compound sentences joined by "and"** **Example (from S21)** **They can open the presents and they can play.** 2. **Complex sentences with an embedded object clause.** **Example (from S24):** **I don't know what they are doing here.**	**Simple sentences** **Example (from S23):** **They can wash the dishes**

6.4.   Syntactic structures

Data for this section was obtained from the conversation language sample only, since the conversation provided sufficient data on syntactic structures. Examination of the test data revealed no additional or modifying information. Data will be presented in two sections: clause level structures, and phrase level structures. The data obtained from the pre-school participants will be discussed separately for the three age groups.

6.4.1. Clause level structures

The term "clause level structures" refers to the constituent elements of the clause, as indicated in the list of abbreviations. The following abbreviations are used in this section:

S	subject	V	verb
O	object	Od	direct object
Oi	indirect object	C	complement
A	adverbial	c	connective
Q	question/question word	Comm	command

Data for participants in the Junior group

The syntactic structures produced *more than once* by members of the Junior group are presented in Tables 6.2 to 6.6.

Table 6.2.   **Minor utterances (no syntactic structure) observed in Junior group**

Type of minor utterance	N Participants
"Yes"	2
"No"	1
Other social expressions	1

Key:
N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure *more than once.*

Table 6.3.   **One-word utterances observed in Junior group**

Type	N Participants
Question word	1
Verb	2
Noun	4
Other	1

Key:
N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure *more than once.*

Table 6.4.   **Clauses containing two elements observed in Junior group**

Type	Notes	N Participants
SV		5
VO	Acceptable as elliptic response	1
VO (i)	Acceptable as elliptic response	1
VO	S expected but omitted	2

Key:
N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure *more than once.*

Table 6.5.   **Clauses containing three elements observed in Junior group**

Type	N Participants
SVA	3
SVO	6
SVC	4

Key:
N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure *more than once.*

Table 6.6.   **Clauses containing four elements observed in Junior group**

Type	N Participants
QSVC	1

Key:
N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure *more than once.*

The most commonly produced clause structures were those consisting of three elements (SVA, SVO, SVC). Only one irregular structure type was observed, namely the omission of the subject expected together with verb + object.

Example: "Must get it off" (J4 - Participant 4, Junior group)

It is interesting that, although a variety of syntactic structures were produced, no single clause structure could be identified as *typical* (i.e. produced more than once by 80% or more of the group members) of the Junior group. The clause structures SV (subject-verb) and SVO (subject-verb-object) can be regarded as *noteworthy* for this age group (produced more than once by respectively 50% and 60% of the group members).

Data for participants in the Middle group

The syntactic structures produced more than once by members of the Middle group appear in Tables 6.7 to 6.11.

Table 6.7. **Minor utterances (no syntactic structure) observed in Middle group**

Type	N Participants
"Yes"	2
"No"	2

Key:
N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure *more than once.*

Table 6.8. **One word utterances observed in Middle group**

Type	N Participants
V	3
N	4
Adj	1

Key:
N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure *more than once.*

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Table 6.9.   **Clauses containing two elements observed in Middle group**

Type	Notes	N Participants
SV		5
VO (i)		2
VO	Acceptable as elliptic response	1
VA	Acceptable as elliptic response	1
VA	S expected but omitted	2
VC	S expected but omitted	2
VO	S expected but omitted	1

Key:
N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure *more than once.*

Table 6.10.   **Clauses containing three elements observed in Middle group**

Type	Notes	N Participants
SVA		3
SVO		9
SVC		2
QSV		1
SVOi		2
SVV		1
VOA	S expected but omitted	1

Key:
N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure *more than once.*

Table 6.11.   **Clauses containing four elements observed in Middle group**

Type	N Participants
SVOiOd	3
SVOiA	1

Key:
N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure *more than once.*

All examples of irregular syntax were omissions of expected elements, specifically the omission of the subject in various clauses. As in the case of the Junior group, the SV (subject-verb) clause structure was *noteworthy* (produced more than once by 50% of group members). The three-element SVO (subject-verb-object) clause structure was *typical* (produced more than once by 90% of group members) of participants in this age group. No other typical or noteworthy clause structures can be identified from Tables 6.7 to 6.11.

Data for participants in Senior group

Tables 6.12 to 6.16 display the syntactic structures produced more than once by members of the Senior group.

Table 6.12.   Minor utterances (no syntactic structure) observed in Senior group.

Type	N Participants	
"Yes"	9	Key:
"No"	7	

N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure *more than once.*

The one-word response "yes" was *typically* used (90%) by participants in this age group, and the response "no" was used by 70% of the participants, making it a *noteworthy* item for this age group.

Table 6.13.   One word utterances observed in Senior group.

	N participants
Pron	2
N	5
Other	2
V	1

Key:
N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure *more than once.*

Table 6.14.   Clauses containing two elements observed in Senior group

Type	Notes	N Participants
SV		9
VC	S expected but omitted	2
VO	S expected but omitted	1
VO	Acceptable as elliptic response	1
VA	S expected but omitted	1

Key:
N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure more than once.

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Table 6.15. **Clauses containing three elements observed in Senior group.**

Type	Notes	N Participants
SVA		9
SVO		8
SVC		6
QSV		3
SVOi		3
SVA	Adverb clause	1

Key:
N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure *more than once.*

Table 6.16. **Clauses containing four elements observed in Senior group.**

Type	N Participants
SVOA	6
SVCA	4
SVOiOd	4
SVAA	4
SVVO	1
SVOiA	1
SVOiC	1

Key:
N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure *more than once.*

In addition to the one-word structure "yes", the following *typical* structures (produced more than once by 80% or more of the participants in the group) were identified for the Senior group:

SV (subject-verb)
SVA (subject-verb-adverbial)
SVO (subject-verb-object)

There were also some clause structures that occurred *notably* in this group (produced more than once by 50%-70% of the group members):

One-word utterance "No"
SVC (subject-verb-complement)
SVOA (subject-verb-object-adverbial)

These typically and notably occurring structures correspond to the syntactic structures seen to develop earliest in typically developing English-speaking children between the ages of 28 and 34 months (Owens, 2001:326, 1999:200). The EAL pre-schoolers

appeared to be following the accepted characteristic developmental sequence for the development of English syntax.

Although Table 6.16 does not include clauses of more than four constituent elements, some members of the Senior group did occasionally produce longer clauses. The following types of clauses containing more than four elements, or containing more complex syntax were produced only *once* by one, two or three participants in the Senior group:

SVVOA	SVVO + postmodifying clause
SVOA + postmodifying clause	SVOAA
SVOiOdA	SVOiOdAA
SVC + postmodifying clause	SVAA + postmodifying clause
SVOAA + postmodifying clause	SVOC + postmodifying clause
SVCAA + 2 postmodifying clauses	SVO + 2 postmodifying clauses

This information is worth mentioning because it is indicative of a developmental potential for more complex syntax. No clauses with more than four elements or more complex syntax were produced by any participants in the younger age groups. This fact, as well as the data in the tables for the respective age groups, indicated a developmental trend in clause structure as illustrated in Figure 6.2.
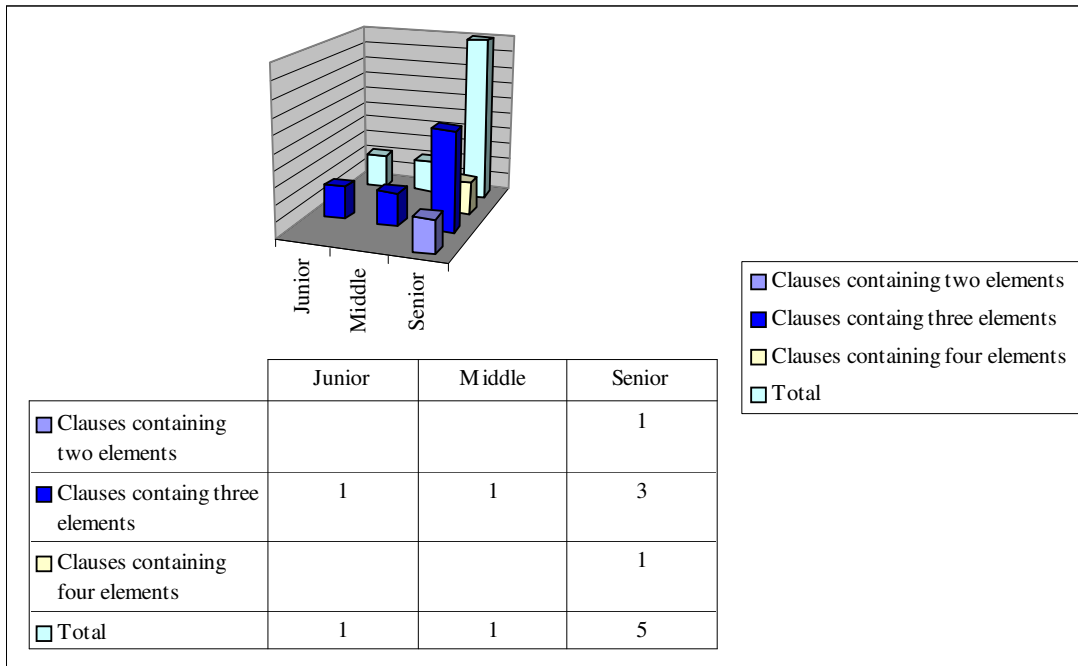
	Junior	Middle	Senior
▨ Clauses containing two elements			1
■ Clauses containg three elements	1	1	3
☐ Clauses containing four elements			1
☐ Total	1	1	5

Figure 6.2.   Developmental trend for clause structures produced by EAL pre-schoolers

It is remarkable that the examples of irregular syntax found in the Senior group were of the same type as for the younger participants, namely the omission of the subject in three types of clause structure: VC (verb-complement), VO (verb-object), and VA (verb-adverbial).   The co-occurrence of less mature and more mature syntactic forms was noted for children with SLI (Leonard, Miller & Gerber, 1999; Owens, 1999:37). However, these omissions occurred only in 10%-20% of the participants in the Senior group and therefore cannot be regarded as truly typical of this group.   Furthermore, researchers have pointed out that children who learn language through imitating linguistic units of various lengths (words, phrases, clauses) are likely at any given developmental moment to display a great variety in the complexity of the linguistic units that they use (Bishop & Leonard, 2000:2).

The information regarding syntactic structures to be carried over to the *Profile* will be the following:

Profile summary 2: Clause structures

Group	*Noteworthy behaviour (50-80% of group)*	*Typical behaviour (80%+of group)*

Junior group (4-0 to 4-11)	SV
	  Example (from J5):
	  We playing
	SVO
	  Example (from J6):
	  The man is take this
		No typical behaviour could be identified

Middle group (5-0 to 5-11)	SV
	  Example (from M12):
	  I was crying
		SVO
		  Example (from M11):
		  I eat sweeties and chips and Simbas

Senior group (6-0 to 6-11)	3. **"No"** 4. **SVC (subject-verb-complement)** **Example (from S23):** **It's sore** 5. **SVOA (subject-verb-object-adverbial)** **Example (from S23):** **You put it at the back of the people**	6. **"Yes"** 7. **SV (subject-verb)** **Example (from S29):** **I'm playing** 8. **SVA (subject-verb-adverbial)** **Example (from S25):** **The cat he sit in this girl his chair** 9. **SVO (subject-verb-object)** **Example (from S25)** **This one he want the cake**

Note: The sentences used as examples contain various instances of unconventional phrase or morphological structure. These examples were intentionally included to indicate that the focus here is on *clause structure* only. This policy will apply in the rest of this chapter as well as for Chapters 7 and 8.

6.4.2. Phrase level structures

The term "phrase level structures" refers to the noun or verb representing a specific clause element, or a noun or verb together with its modifier/s, or the group of words that is used as a noun or verb substitute. The following abbreviations are used in this section:

D/det	determiner	Prep	preposition
N	noun	V	verb
V part.	Verb particle	Aux	auxiliary verb
Cop	copula	Adj	adjective
Pron	pronoun	Neg	negative

In the discussion and the tables to follow, the term *conventional* is used to refer to structures that occur in the grammatically acceptable utterances of typical speakers of

conventional English, while the term *unconventional* is used to refer to structures that occurred in the utterances of the EAL pre-schoolers but would not be regarded as grammatically acceptable for typical speakers of conventional English.

Noun phrases - Junior group

A noun phrase can consist of several parts, but must always contain a noun. The possible constituents of noun phrases in English include determiners (such as "a", "the"), modifiers such as adjectives, and postmodifiers ("the boys *from the junior class*") (Brown & Attardo, 2005:34, 358). Noun phrases produced more than once by members of the Junior group consisted of one, two, or three constituents (Table 6.17).

Table 6.17.   **Noun phrase structures observed in Junior group**

Conventional	Unconventional	N Participants
DN		7
	D (the) superfluous	2
	Inappropriate D (*the/a*)	1
	N only, D omitted in obligatory context	5
PrepN		2
PrepDN		4
	Omission of Prep	1
DAdjN		2

Key:
N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure more than once.

No *typical* noun phrase structures (produced more than once by 80% or more of the participants) were observed for this group. Two phrase structures, however, can be regarded as *noteworthy*, both involving the D (determiner). In one case the production of N (noun) was preceded by D (determiner) (produced more than once by 70% of the participants in the group). In the other case the D was omitted although it was obligatory in the context according to the expectations of standard English usage (produced more than once by 50% of the participants in the group). This is an example of co-occurrence of mature and immature forms, as described by Leonard, Miller and Gerber (1999) and Owens (1999:37) for children with SLI. However, it

could not be regarded as *typical* for this group of pre-school participants on the grounds of the present data.

Noun phrases - Middle group

The Middle group, like the Junior group, produced noun phrases consisting of one to three constituents (Table 6.18).

Table 6.18.   Noun phrase structures observed in Middle group

Conventional	Unconventional	N Participants
DN		9
	D (the) superfluous	5
	D (a) superfluous	2
	D omitted in obligatory context	1
PrepN		3
PrepDN		8

Key:
N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure *more than once.*

The production of DN (Determiner + Noun), which was noteworthy in the Junior group, could be regarded as *typical* of the Middle group of pre-school participants (produced more than once by 90% of participants in the group). The other *typical* noun phrase structure also included the Determiner and Noun, together with a Preposition (PrepDN). A *noteworthy* 50% of the participants in this group showed a tendency to produce superfluous determiner "the", together with a lower percentage of participants (20%) who tended to also produce determiner "a" superfluously. One percent of the participants, on the other hand, tended to omit determiners in obligatory contexts. The use of the determiner in English may not be quite established yet at this age for EAL pre-schoolers.

Noun phrases - Senior group

The Senior group was the only group that yielded participants who produced adjectives and NN (two adjacent nouns) in the noun phrases, although these two types

of noun phrase structures were only produced by the minority of the participants in this group (Table 6.19).

Table 6.19.   Noun phrase structures observed in Senior group

Conventional	Unconventional	N Participants
DN		9
PrepN		7
PrepDN		8
DAdjN		3
NN		1
DNN		3

Key:
N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure *more than once.*

As in the case of the Middle group, DN (Determiner + Noun) and PrepDN (Preposition + Determiner + Noun) were noted as *typical* noun phrase structures produced by pre-school participants in the Senior group. The noun phrase consisting of Preposition + Noun (as in "at home") was *noteworthy* for this group. The pre-schoolers in the Senior group did not produce any unconventional noun phrases.

In general, the three significant elements of the noun phrase for these three age groups of EAL pre-schoolers appeared to be the noun itself, determiners, and prepositions.

Verb phrases – Junior group

The basic structure of the verb phrase in English consists of the verb and its auxiliaries, including the modal and passive form auxiliary verbs (Brown & Attardo, 2005:358). Theoretically the verb may take up to four auxiliaries, but this rarely occurs. Multiple auxiliaries were not produced by the pre-school participants, but infinitive forms occurred from the youngest group onwards (Table 6.20).

Table 6.20.   Verb phrase structures observed in Junior group

Conventional	Unconventional	N Participants
Cop is, are, am		6
Aux is +V + suffix -ing (including forms *am*, *was*; also negative with *not*)		8
	AuxV is (*am, are* etc.) +V (no suffix –ing)	3
	Aux is (are, etc.) omitted in obligatory context (with –ing)	2
AuxVV is going to		2
AuxV must		1
Aux (neg)V, as in "don't know"		3
	Aux is + want	1

Key:

N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure *more than once.*

The verb phrase structure *Aux is +V+-ing* (for example "is looking") was found to be *typical* for this age group (produced more than once by 80% of the group members). The use of the copula (is, are, am) was *noteworthy* (produced more than once by 60% of the members of this age group). The verb *be* therefore appeared to be the first verb form to emerge in general use by these EAL pre-schoolers in addition to main verbs. It must be noted that although the *form* of the verb structure was grammatically acceptable, it was sometimes used in an unconventional way, for instance to indicate habitual events or activities.

Example: Me, I'm sick, because I'm sleeping late (J9)

Verb phrases – Middle group

The participants in the Middle group produced the same number of conventional verb phrase structures as the participants in the Junior group, and one more type of unconventional verb phrase (Table 6.21).

Table 6.21.   **Verb phrase structures observed in Middle group**

Regular	Irregular	N Participants
Cop is, are, am, was		4
AuxV is + -ing (including forms *am, are, was*; also negative with *not*)		3
	AuxV is (*am, are* etc.) = +V (no –ing)	1
	Aux is (are, etc.) omitted in obligatory context (with –ing)	4
AuxVV is going to		4
Aux (neg)V: don't +V		3
VV want to		1
	Verb stem alone used unconventionally	5
	Did + V for past	1

Key:
N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure *more than once.*

Although a variety of verb phrase structures (nine structures used more than once by at least two participants) was observed for the Middle group, no structure occurred frequently enough to be regarded as typical of this age group. The unconventional use of verb stem alone (for example "my mother *say...*"- M11) occurred frequently enough to be identified as *noteworthy* (used more than once by 50% of the participants in this age group).

Verb phrases – Senior group

The participants in the Senior group produced a wider variety of verb phrase types than those in either of the younger groups, but they also produced more unconventional verb phrase structures (Table 6.22).

Table 6.22. **Verb phrase structures observed in Senior group**

Conventional	Unconventional	N Participants
Cop is, are, am, was		7
Aux is +V +-ing (including forms am, are, was)		8
	AuxV is (am, are etc.) +V (no –ing)	1
	Aux is (are, etc.) omitted in obligatory context (with –ing)	1
AuxVV is going to		1
VV want to		2
Start(ed) + V-ing		2
AuxV will + V		2
Will be V + -ing		1
AuxV can + V		2
Aux V could + V		1
Have got		1
Is/are gonna + V		2
Vpart		6
	Use of -ing extended	1
	Verb stem alone used unconventionally	3
	Did + V to indicate past tense	2

Key:
N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure *more than once.*

As in the case of the Junior group, the verb phrase structure *Aux is +V+-ing* (for example "is looking") was found to be *typical* for this age group (produced more than once by 80% of the group members), while the use of the copula (is, are, am) was *noteworthy* (produced more than once by 60% of the members of this age group). An additional *noteworthy* verb phrase structure (produced more than once by 60% of the group members) was verb + particle (as in "fell down"). In comparison to the Junior group, though, the participants in the Senior group produced a wider variety of verb phrase structures. Seventeen structures were produced more than once by one or more members of the Senior group, whereas in the Junior group only eight verb phrase structures were produced more than once by one or more members.

The relatively low percentages of participants who demonstrated use of the various verb phrase structures may be indicative of the extensive range of verb phrase structures of English, and the diverse routes and strategies that young EAL learners pursue in their acquisition of the verb phrase structure of English.

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Pronoun structures

Pronouns are included in this section, though analysed separately, since they are used in the place of a noun phrase and are also described under phrase structures by Crystal, Garman and Fletcher (1989). For the purpose of this analysis, the two phrases *this one* and *that one,* as well as the words *this* and *that* when used in isolation, are counted as demonstrative pronouns.

The use of unconventional gender forms such as "he" to refer to "the girl" was not noted here, as this section is only concerned with the form aspect. The use of conventional pronoun forms and the unconventional resumptive pronoun will be discussed. Unconventional use of case form, such as nominative for accusative case ("me" for "I"), as well as unconventional use of gender forms (such as the use of "he" to refer to "the girl") was counted in the form analysis, but these unconventional forms did not appear more than once in the language sample of any participant. The only exception is the use of *she* to refer to a masculine person, which occurred respectively twice and three times in the samples of two participants, both of whom produced more than 60 examples of conventional pronoun use in their language samples. Unconventional case and gender forms are therefore not regarded as significant for the analyses (see Chapter 5 section 5.8 *Data analysis*).

In the tables included in the following discussion the term *N participants* refers to the number of participants producing more than two examples of a specified pronoun structure.

Pronoun structures – Junior group

The variants of *this/this one* and *that/that one* accounted for almost half of the types of pronoun produced more than once by the participants in the Junior group (Table 6.23), but the number of participants was generally low. Table 6.23 provides a list of all the pronoun structures observed in the Junior group.

Table 6.23.   Pronoun structures observed in Junior group

Conventional	Unconventional	N Participants
That one (subject/nominative)		1
This one (subject/nominative)		4
This one's (possessive)		1
This (subject/nominative)		2
These (subject/nominative)		1
This (object, complement/accusative)		1
That (object/accusative)		1
I (subject/nominative)		7
Me (object/accusative)		1
My (possessive)		4
He (subject/nominative)		1
It (subject/nominative)		2
They (subject/nominative)		2
We (subject/nominative)		1
You (subject/nominative)		2

Key:
N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure *more than once.*

No typical pronoun usage (produced more than once by more than 80% of the participants in the group) was found, and only one *noteworthy* (70%) example, namely the nominative/subject form of the first person pronoun ("I"). It is interesting to note that no unconventional forms of the pronoun were produced more than once by any participants in the Junior group.

Pronoun structures – Middle group

The participants in the Middle group displayed a wider variety of pronoun use (Table 6.24) than the participants in the Junior group. Table 6.24 presents a list of all the pronouns observed in the Middle group.

Table 6.24.   Pronoun structures observed in Middle group

Conventional	Unconventional	N Participants
	Resumptive pronouns	1
I (subject/nominative)		9
Me (object/accusative)		6
My (possessive)		7
He (subject/nominative)		3
She (subject/nominative)		2
It (subject/nominative)		3
They (subject/nominative)		7
We (subject/nominative)		1
Other one/ (object)		1
Others/the others		1

Key:
N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure *more than once*.

The use of the first person nominative pronoun ("I"), which was noteworthy for the Middle group, was found to be *typical* (used more than once by 90% of participants) for the Middle group. The members of this group also made *noteworthy* use of two additional forms of the first person pronoun, namely the accusative form ("me") (used more than once by 60% of group members) and the possessive form ("my") (used more than once by 70% of group members), as well as the third person plural nominative form "they" (used more than once by 70% of group members). The resumptive pronoun was the only unconventional form noted, but only for one participant in this group.

Pronoun structures – Senior group

The participants in the Senior group not only used more types of pronouns than the members of the younger groups, the number of participants producing these pronouns

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was also generally higher than for the younger groups. Table 6.25 provides a list of all the pronouns observed in the Senior group.

Table 6.25.   Pronoun structures observed in Senior group

Conventional	Unconventional	N participants
	Resumptive pronouns	4
That one (subject/nominative)		1
I (subject/nominative)		9
Me (object/accusative)		9
My (possessive)		9
He (subject/nominative)		7
Him (object, complement/accusative)		1
His (possessive)		1
She (subject/nominative)		5
It (subject/nominative)		6
They (subject/nominative)		8
We (subject/nominative)		5
You (subject/nominative)		4
Your		1
Her (possessive)		2
One		1

Key:
N participants = number of participants who demonstrated the use of the indicated structure *more than once.*

The use of the following pronouns by the members of the Senior group can be regarded as *noteworthy:*

- Third person nominative "he", "she", and "it" (respectively 70%, 50% and 60%)
- First person plural nominative form "we" (50%)

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The pronouns that were used *typically* (that is, used more than once by 80% or more of the participants in the Senior group) also fall within the first and third person categories:

- First person singular "I", "me", "my" (all produced more than once by 90% of the participants)
- Third person plural "they" (used more than once by 80% of the participants).

The relatively high frequency of occurrence of first person pronouns in all three groups of pre-school participants, and also of third person pronouns in the Senior group, may be related to the nature of the narrative that was elicited, namely a personal narrative concerning something that happened to the child.

It should also be noted that there was no typical or noteworthy instance of any unconventional use of pronouns, specifically not of the resumptive pronoun form, which was produced more than once by only 10% of the participants in the Middle group and 40% of the participants in the Senior group. This seems to be contradictory to the findings of Nxumalo (1997:16). A closer scrutiny of the raw data showed, however, that the use of resumptive pronouns seemed to occur frequently in the language samples of certain *individual* participants, notably S25 and S26 (participants 25 and 26 in the Senior group). Examples of their use of resumptive pronouns are provided below.

S25:   And this one, he want the cake

The cat, he sit in this girl his chair

And my, my here, he was sore.

S26:   That girl, he blow it (candles on birthday cake)

My stomach, it was sore

My father, he give me a Simba chips

Developmental trends observed in the phrase level productions of the pre-school participants are depicted in Figures 6.3 to 6.5.
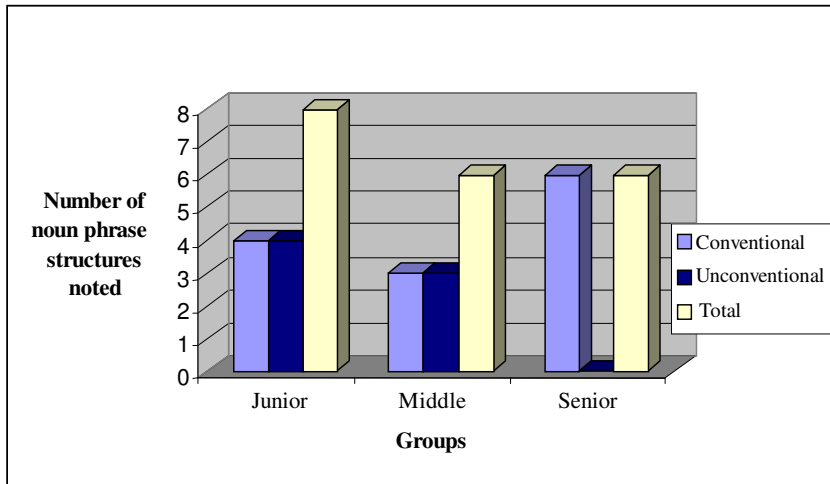
Figure 6.3.   Developmental trends observed for the production of noun phrases by the three groups of pre-school participants

A developmental tendency for the production of noun phrases appeared in the decreasing number of unconventional noun structures produced, and also the overall increase in the number of conventional noun phrase structures produced by the participants in the Senior group when compared to the participants in the Junior group (Figure 6.3).
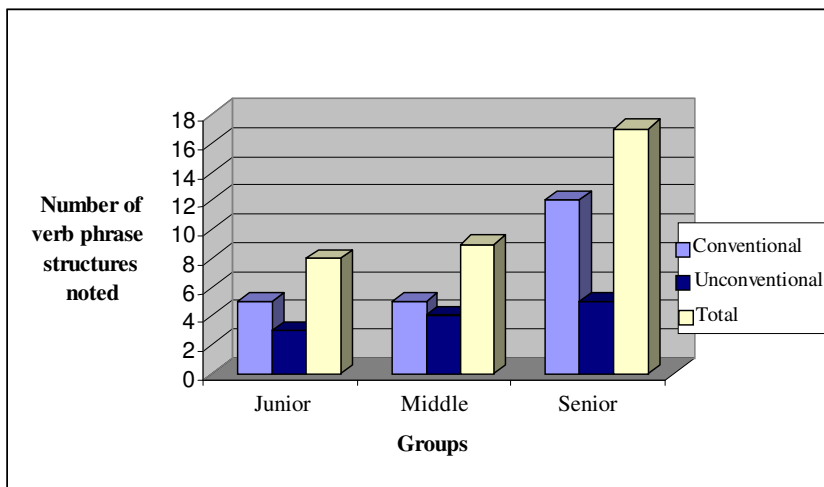

Figure 6.4.   Developmental trends observed for the production of verb phrases by the three groups of pre-school participants

There appeared to be a gradual increase (Figure 6.4) in both the irregular and the regular forms of verb phrases with the increase of age in the three groups of pre-school participants, but with a steeper gradient for the conventional forms. Since the verb

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phrase in English is acknowledged to be considerably more complex than the noun phrase (Brown & Attardo, 2005:34), the increase in both conventional and unconventional forms is to be expected as young EAL speakers increasingly assimilate more verb forms into their language use.
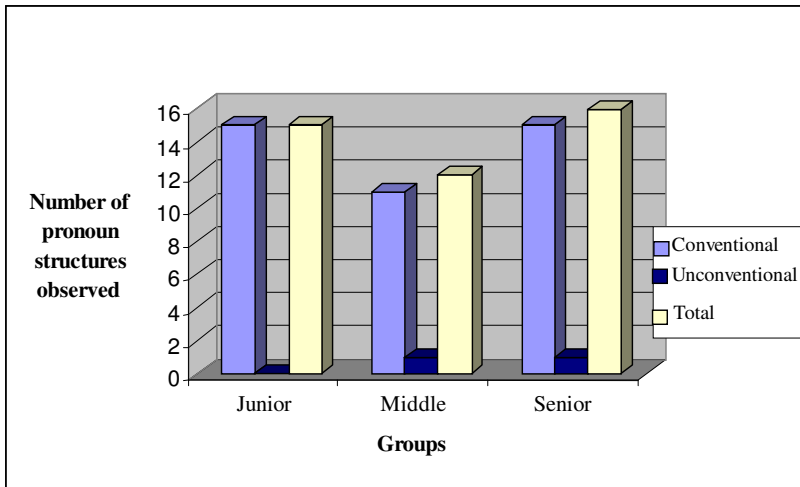

Figure 6.5.   Developmental trends observed for the production of pronoun phrases by the three groups of pre-school participants

No clear developmental trend for the production of pronoun forms can be deduced from Figure 6.5. The only sign of development over age is the slight increase in the total number of pronoun structures produced.

With regard to noun phrase structures, verb phrase structures, and pronoun phrase structures, the information to be carried over to the *Profile* will be the following:

Profile summary 3: Noun phrase structures

Group	*Noteworthy behaviour (50-80% of group)*	*Typical behaviour (80%+of group)*
Junior group (4-0 to 4-11)	1. **DN** **Example (from J1): the cake** 2. **N only, D omitted in obligatory context** **Example (from J5): (is) umbrella**	*No typical behaviors could be identified*
Middle group (5-0 to 5-11)		1. **DN** **Example (from M11): a car** 2. **PrepDN**

		Example (from M12): in the shop

Senior group (6-0 to 6-11)	**PrepN**
	
	  Example (from S25):
	  at school
		1. **DN**
		Example (from S24):
		This picture
		2. **PrepDN**
		Example (from S26):
		In that thing

Profile summary 4: Verb phrase structures

Group	*Noteworthy behaviour (50-80% of group)*	*Typical behaviour (80%+of group)*

Junior group (4-0 to 4-11)	**Copula is, are, am**
	  Example from J4:
	  That*'s* a nice present
	  Example from J9:
	  Me, I*'m* sick
		Is/was/am + verb + -ing (also negative with *not*)
		Example from J10:
		  The sister is washing
		Example from J9:
		  I'm not playing outside

Middle group (5-0 to 5-11)	**Verb stem alone (unconventional)**
	  Example from M11:
	  My mother say I don't play ball
		No typical behaviours could be identified

Senior group (6-0 to 6-11)	1. **Copula is, are, am, was**
	Example from S21:
	Maybe it*'s* a dog present
	Example from S30:
	…I*'m* Superman
	2. **Verb + particle**
	Example from S30:
	They pick me up
		Is/am/are/was + verb + -ing
		  Example from S21:
		  One*'s* sitting
		  Example from S27:
		  They are praying

Profile summary 5: Pronoun phrase structures

Group	*Noteworthy behaviour (50-80% of group)*	*Typical behaviour (80%+of group)*
Junior group (4-0 to 4-11)	**"I" as subject** **Example from J2:** I don't know	*No typical behaviours could be identified*

Middle group (5-0 to 5-11)	1. **"Me" as object**
	  Example (from M12):
	  My father take me to the doctor
	2. **"My" (possessive)**
	  Example (from M12):
	  My father take me to the doctor
	3. **"They" as subject**
	  Example (from M12):
	  They give me medicine
		"I" as subject
		  Example from M11:
		  I got a car

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| Senior group (6-0 to 6-11) | 1. "He", "she", "it" as subject
Example (from S21):
<u>She</u> invited them
2. "We" as subject
Example (from S21):
<u>We</u> just keep the cat in the house | 1. "I" as subject
Example (from S21):
<u>I</u> was sick
2. "Me" as object
Example (from S24):
The stove blood <u>me</u> here
3. "My" (possessive)
Example (from S25):
I did give children <u>my</u> cake
4. "They" as subject
Example (from S26):
<u>They</u> go away |

6.5. Morphology

For the purpose of this research, *morphology* refers to the *structure and form of words,* the way words vary or are inflected (words and parts of words are combined) to show grammatical relationships (Crystal, 1981:98; Owens, 2001:21; Hoff, 2005:3).   This section is concerned with the morphological structures produced and omitted by each pre-school participant.   Data was obtained from the elicited conversation (see Table 5.2, Chapter 5) and from Subtest 9 – Grammatic Closure, from the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities (ITPA) (revised edition.) (Kirk, McCarthy & Kirk, 1968).

6.5.1. Verb morphology

The term *verb morphology* as it is used here refers to the inflections for tense and person carried by verbs in English (Brown & Attardo, 2005:342). The types of verbs (main verbs, copula, and auxiliaries) were counted separately for the analysis of verb morphology appearing in the expressive language of the pre-school participants.

Main verbs

For the sake of clarity, examples of the verb morphology sought and identified in the language samples of the EAL pre-school participants are provided in Table 6.26.

Table 6.26.   **Examples of verb morphology in language samples of pre-school participants**

Use of (aspect)	Way in which it was used	Notes and examples
Verb stem	Grammatically acceptable	Appropriate use of verb stem alone or with auxiliary verb Example: (Q: How do you play that game?) You *throw* the ball in that thing (S26)
	Grammatically unacceptable	Grammatically unacceptable use of verb stem alone Example: (Q: What will the water do?) It *do* a cold (M13)
Past tense form	Irregular	Grammatically acceptable use of irregular past Example: They *gave* me medicine (S21)
	Regular (grammatically acceptable)	Grammatically acceptable use of regular past form of verb Example: Then they *finished* (S24)
	Regular (grammatically unacceptable)	Grammatically unacceptable regular past form, as for a verb requiring irregular form. Example: They *eated* (S24)
Past substitute: Various unconventional verb forms used to indicate past tense	*Did* + verb stem	Use of *did* + verb stem to indicate past Example: He *did do* me an injection (M17)
	Present progressive	Use of present progressive to indicate past Examples: (Q: What happened?) I'm *coughing* (J6) (Q: What was wrong with you?) I'm *sicking* (J9)
	Am/is/are + verb stem	Use of *am/is/are* + verb stem to indicate past Example: (Q: What did she do?) *Is hit* them (M18)
	Was + verb stem	Use of *was* + verb stem to indicate past Example: And there was the balloons, up, and that man, he *was blow* it (S26)
	Must + verb stem	Use of *must* + verb stem to indicate past Example: And my mommy was finishing and *must go*, *must call* me (J4)
	Forms of *be* + *-ed*	Use of *am* + *-ed* to indicate past Example: *I'm coughed* (J7)
Progressive	Grammatically acceptable	Appropriate use of present progressive or past progressive aspect Examples: *Is raining* water (J5) She *was drinking* beer (S23)
	Extended	Use of progressive aspect extended to non-typical verb structure. Example: (Q: What are you going to do in your class now?) Gonna *eating* (J1)

Use of (aspect)	Way in which it was used	Notes and examples
	Omitted	Progressive aspect required but omitted. Example: This one is swinging and this one is *fall* (J6)
3rd s present	Grammatically acceptable	Grammatically acceptable use of 3rd person singular form of verb Example: This one *has* present (J4)
Unconventional forms of present tense	*Is* + stem	Use of *is* + verb stem to indicate present tense Example: (Q: Why are all these people here?) Because *is want* the cake (J10)
Infinitive	Grammatically acceptable	Grammatically acceptable use of infinitive form of verb. Example: I told my mommy *to hit* others (M13)
	Grammatically unacceptable	Grammatically unacceptable use of infinitive form of verb. Example: When I finished *to sick,* my medicine all finished (M14)

Aspects analysed and counted in this section include all productions of main verb structures except the copula.   Auxiliary verbs and the copula were examined in separate sections. Results for the main verb are displayed in Table 6.27.

Table 6.27.   **Morphology of main verbs produced by pre-school participants**

Aspects	Utilisation	N using twice or more		
		Junior group	*Middle group*	*Senior group*
Verb stem	Grammatically acceptable	4	8	9
	Grammatically unacceptable	2	8	8
Past tense	Irregular	3	5	7
	Regular grammatically acceptable	0	1	4
	Regular grammatically unacceptable	0	0	0
	did+ stem	0	1	2
	Present progressive	3	2	1
	be + stem	2	1	0
	was + stem	0	0	0
	must + stem	1	0	0
	be + -ed	0	0	0
Progressive aspect	Grammatically acceptable	5	7	9
	Extended	4	3	5
	Omitted	2	0	0
3rd singular present	Grammatically acceptable	2	0	3
All forms of present	is + stem	1	0	0
Infinitive	Grammatically acceptable	2	2	3
	Grammatically unacceptable	0	0	0

Auxiliary "be" and Copula "be"

All forms of copula *be* and auxiliary *be* were counted. Notes and examples with regard to copula and auxiliary "be" sought and identified in the language samples of the pre-schoolers appear in Table 6.28.

Table 6.28.   Examples of copula and auxiliary "be" produced by pre-school participants

Use of (aspect)	Way in which it was used	Notes and examples
All forms of copula be (is, am, are, were)	Grammatically acceptable	All accurately used forms were counted together Examples: There is a party (S27) It was a nice birthday (S30) I'm Superman (S30)
	Omitted in obligatory context	Example: Who birthday? (M13)
	Grammatically unacceptable tense markers	Example: (Q: Why did you need a plaster?) Because is sore (M15)
	Inaccurate person markers	None noted for copula
All forms of auxiliary be (is, am, are, were)	Grammatically acceptable	All accurately used forms were counted together Examples: It's raining (J6) I was crying (M12)
	Omitted in obligatory context	Examples: That people sitting in the chairs (J1) We playing (J5)
	Grammatically unacceptable tense markers	Example: My mommy is put me to doctor (J4)
	Inaccurate person markers	Example: These and these and these is drinking (J8)
	Superfluous	Example: I'm coughed (J7)

The results obtained from the count of auxiliary and copula "be" appear in Table 6.29. Because so few instances of grammatically unacceptable productions of copula and auxiliary *be* were found, the data for unacceptable productions was not analysed further. In general the forms that appeared were accurate (grammatically acceptable)

Table 6.29.   Auxiliary and copula "be" produced by pre-school participants

Production of copula and auxiliary, all forms of be	N from each group using a structure more than once		
	Junior group	Middle group	Senior group
Copula be			
Grammatically acceptable	6	2	8
Omission	1	0	0
Unacceptable form	0	0	1
Auxiliary be			
Grammatically acceptable	6	9	9
Omission	1	1	2
Grammatically unacceptable tense markers	2	1	1
Inaccurate person markers	1	1	1
Superfluous	2	0	0

Other auxiliaries used

Other auxiliary verbs used were also counted to obtain information on general use of auxiliaries. Notes and examples concerning the auxiliary verbs sought and identified in the language samples of the pre-school participants appear in Table 6.30. The expression "has got" to indicate possession (as in "He has got a nice house") is a fixed expression in South African English and was therefore not included in the count of auxiliaries.

Table 6.30.   Examples of auxiliary verbs produced by pre-school participants

Will: auxiliary will used to indicate future tense or intention Examples: Then he'll run, get to their house (S24). …and then the dog will be looking for the cat to eat (S30)
Have/has: auxiliary have used to form perfect tense Examples: I've been to hospital, yes (S21) The dog has seen the present (S27)
Can/could: use of modal auxiliary can/could Examples: They can open the presents and they can play (S21) (Explaining game)…twenty-nine is very far, you could get there quickly
Did: use of auxiliary did for question forms Example: Why did the baby cry? (J10)
Must: use of modal auxiliary must. Examples: And my mommy was finishing and must go (J4) (Explaining game) You must do like this (S30)
Don't/didn't: use of auxiliary do to express negative forms Examples: I don't know (J2) I said, "I was running, and I didn't see it, and she blood me" (S24)

The results from this count are displayed in Table 6.31.

Table 6.31.   Auxiliary verbs produced by pre-school participants

Auxiliary verbs	N from each group using structure more than once		
	Junior group	**Middle group**	**Senior group**
will	0	0	2
have/has	0	0	0
can/could	0	0	3
did	0	0	0
must	1	0	1
don't/didn't	3	3	5

As in the case of the copula and auxiliary *be,* relatively few participants used grammatically unacceptable forms of the other auxiliaries. Substitution of auxiliary verbs occurred only once in the language samples (is/do – participant J10: "Because is not want the baby"). However, in general few of the participants used the auxiliaries and no typical language behaviour in this regard could be identified.

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The information to be carried over to the *Profile* concerning morphology of main verbs produced by the pre-school participants will be the following:

Profile summary 6 – Morphology of main verbs

Group	Noteworthy behaviour (50-70% of group)	Typical behaviour (80%+ of group)
Junior group (4-0 to 4-11)	**Progressive aspect (Grammatically acceptable)** Example (from J1): That one <u>is sitting</u> in the chairs	*No typical behaviour could be identified*
Middle group (5-0 to 5-11)	1. **Irregular past (grammatically acceptable)** Example (from M11): I <u>got</u> a car 2. **Progressive aspect (grammatically acceptable)** Example (from M15): They <u>are playing</u>	1. **Verb stem (grammatically acceptable)** Example (from M14): When I <u>go</u> like this, it's sore 2. **Verb stem (grammatically unacceptable)** Example (from M15): He <u>give</u> me a medicine
Senior group (6-0 to 6-11)	1. **Irregular past (grammatically acceptable)** Example (from S21): They <u>gave</u> me medicine 2. **Extended use of progressive aspect** Example (from S27): Nomsa <u>is hitting</u> us	1. **Verb stem (grammatically acceptable)** Example (from S27): We <u>play</u> school 2. **Verb stem (grammatically unacceptable)** Example (from S27): And then he <u>check</u> my ears 3. **Progressive aspect (grammatically acceptable)** Example (from S27): They <u>are praying</u>

The information to be carried over to the *Profile* concerning the production of copula and auxiliary "be" by the pre-school participants will be the following:

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Profile summary 7 – Copula and auxiliary "be"

Group	Noteworthy behaviour (50-70% of group)	Typical behaviour (80%+of group)
Junior group (4-0 to 4-11)	1. **Copula *be* used appropriately** Example (from J4): Is this one's birthday 2. **Auxiliary *be* used appropriately** Example (from J6): It's raining	No typical behaviour could be identified
Middle group (5-0 to 5-11)		**Auxiliary *be* used appropriately** Examples (from M15): They are playing I'm going home
Senior group (6-0 to 6-11)		1. **Copula *be* used appropriately** Example (from S27): There is a party Examples (from S30): It was a nice birthday I'm Superman 2. **Auxiliary *be* used appropriately** Example (from S21): One's sitting, one's playing and the other one is also playing

The information regarding the use of auxiliary verbs other than *be* to be carried over to the *Profile* will be the following:

Profile summary 8 – Auxiliary verbs other than *be*

Group	Noteworthy behaviour (50-70% of group)	Typical behaviour (80%+of group)
Junior group (4-0 to 4-11)		No typical behaviour could be identified
Middle group (5-0 to 5-11)		
Senior group (6-0 to 6-11)	**Use of auxiliary *do* in negative form (*don't, didn't*)** Example (from S21): I don't cut my cat's nails Example (from S24): I said, "I was running, and I didn't see it, and she blood me"	

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For all verb forms: subject-verb agreement

The agreement between subject and verb is an aspect of the grammar of English that often proves difficult for both EAL speakers and children with language impairment (Owens, 2004:203, 197; Nxumalo, 1997:25; Van der Walt, 2001:11).   Table 6.32 provides information on the agreement between subject and verb found in the language samples of the pre-school participants.

Only *evidence of* subject-verb agreement was counted. Regular and irregular past tense without auxiliary verb was not counted (for example I/he/they played, went) because subject-verb agreement is not demonstrated. Indefinite/generic verb responses were not counted either, for example elliptic response to questions giving only the participle (what is he doing? Eating).

Table 6.32.   Subject-verb agreement displayed in the language of EAL pre-school participants

Subject-verb agreement: N from each group demonstrating more than one instance										
	Agreement					Non-agreement				
Group	1st s	1st pl	2nd	3rd s	3rd pl	1st s	1st pl	2nd	3rd s	3rd pl
Junior	5	0	1	7	1	1	0	0	2	3
Middle	8	1	2	5	3	0	0	0	3	1
Senior	9	5	4	10	8	0	0	0	9	4

Key to table:
N = number of pre-school participants in each age group
1st, 2nd, 3rd = first, second, or third person subject
s = singular, pl = plural

The two parts of Table 6.32 (*Agreement* and *Non-agreement*) have to be considered together before any conclusions can be drawn. When looking at *agreement* only, the use in English of a plural-like verb form together with the pronoun *you* seemed to present a problem for this group of young speakers as a whole. However, no actual instances of *non-agreement* were noted. It is important to bear in mind that the purpose of this analysis is only to *record those occasions when specific behaviours occurred* and not to draw conclusions from the absence of any behaviours.

The significance of the data in Table 6.32 seems to lie in the co-occurrence of *typical* agreement and *typical* non-agreement in the case of singular subjects not of the first and second person, as demonstrated by the members of the Senior group. Although

subject-verb agreement in this type of construction is *noteworthy* for the two younger groups, the older pre-school participants still have not yet quite resolved the matter of grammatically acceptable verb morphology. This phenomenon appears to attest to the intricacy and even obscurity of the verb system in English when it is approached from the perspective of a young EAL learner.

The subject-verb agreement referred to in the column relating to first person singular correlates with the use of the verb stem as well as the use of the appropriate form of the verb *be* both as copula and as auxiliary verb. By the age of 5-0 to 5-11 (Middle group) the pre-school participants in this study appeared to have mastered these two facets, as no instances of non-agreement were noted for either the Middle or the Senior group.

The information regarding subject-verb agreement to be carried over to the *Profile* will be the following:

Profile summary 9 – Subject-verb agreement

Group	Noteworthy behaviour (50-80% of group)	Typical behaviour (80%+of group)
Junior group (4-0 to 4-11)	1. **Subject-verb agreement for 1st person singular** Example (from J4): I'm falling down 2. **Subject-verb agreement for 3rd person singular** Example (from J4): Mommy is taking a cake	*No typical behaviour could be identified*
Middle group (5-0 to 5-11)	**Subject-verb agreement for 3rd person singular** Example (from M11): Other one takes the Simbas	**Subject-verb agreement for 1st person singular** Example (from M15): I'm going home
Senior group (6-0 to 6-11)	**Subject-verb agreement for 1st person plural** Example (from S21): When we watch TV, it doesn't bother us	1. **Subject-verb agreement for 1st person singular** Example (from S21): I have 'flu now 2. **Subject-verb agreement for 3rd person singular** Example (from S21): That was a cruel dog

		3. **Subject-verb non-agreement for 3rd person singular**
		Example (from S21): His head go up and down
		4. **Subject-verb agreement for 3rd person plural**
		Example (from S21): They're having a birthday

6.5.2. Noun morphology

This aspect, like verb morphology, is regarded as indicative of SLI (Leonard, Miller & Gerber, 1999; Owens, 1999:38). Owens (1999:32) also reports that grammatically unacceptable noun forms have been identified as possible indicators observed for language learning disorder (LLD) in English. The specific aspects of noun morphology that were investigated in the current research are forms that develop in the preschool stage for normal language development (Hoff, 2005:200).

The analysis of noun phrase structures included an indication of grammatically acceptable/unacceptable productions of
> possessive forms of nouns
> plural forms of nouns
> pronouns
> articles and quantifiers
> adjectival forms.

Adjectives rarely appeared in the language samples of the pre-school participants and were therefore not considered for further analysis. The *form* aspect of pronouns was discussed under 6.4.2 (Phrase structures) and will consequently not be included in this section. The same applies to the use of articles and quantifiers. Additional counts of instances of non-agreement between determiner and noun, and of cases where "the" was used as filler/substitute for other word types, revealed no examples for more than two participants per group. The related data is therefore not displayed in this section.

The results for possessive and plural forms of nouns appear in Table 6.33.

Table 6.33.   Noun morphology produced by pre-school participants

Noun morphology		N from each group displaying twice or more		
		Junior group	Middle group	Senior group
Possessive	s	0	0	1
	of	0	0	0
	unmarked	0	0	0
Plural	regular	3	4	8
	irregular	1	0	2

Plural marking of non-count nouns did not occur, nor was plural marking omitted when a count word occurred, as observed by Owens (2001:419-429) for African American speakers of English. The regular form of the plural appears to be *typical* (produced more than once by 80% of participants) in the Senior group, but this group does not display typical or noteworthy production of irregular plural forms.

Possessive suffixes for nouns did not occur more than once in the language sample of any of the pre-school participants except for one participant in the Senior group. This does not imply that possessives were generally unmarked, since examples of unmarked possessives or possessives indicated by "of" (the dog *of* my friend) did not occur more than once in any language sample. The possessive form did, however, occur for pronouns (see Tables 6.22 to 6.24).

Morphological saturation

Morphological saturation of noun phrases was investigated as a possible developmentally sensitive measure of morphological development in multilingual EAL pre-schoolers who may exhibit some idiosyncratic morphological rules.

Data for this analysis was obtained from two sources: the conversation language sample and the responses of the pre-school participants to Subtest 9 – Grammatic Closure, from the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities (ITPA) (revised edition) (Kirk, McCarthy & Kirk, 1968). Where relevant, the two data sources will be distinguished by referring to *conversation sample* or simply *sample* and *test sample* or simply *test.*

The mean morphological saturation scores computed for the three groups of pre-school participants appear in Table 6.34.

Table 6.34.   Mean morphological saturation obtained from two sources for three groups of participants

Group	Source	Mean	SD	Suggested norm (-2SD to +2SD)
Junior	*Sample*	70%	37.39	No representative range could be determined.
	Test	38%	20.61	Scores for Junior group were too widely distributed to allow for use of the formula
Middle	*Sample*	81%	16.61	47.8 – 100%
	Test	53%	18.85	14.3 – 90.7
Senior	*Sample*	96%	24.83	46.3 – 100%
	Test	61%	13.06	34.9 – 87.1

Key:
SD = standard deviation
Sample = conversation sample
Test = test sample

Although the scores were more widely scattered for the Junior group than for the two older groups, the most salient finding from this analysis was that all the groups of pre-school participants obtained a higher morphological saturation score for the conversation setting than for the test.

This finding should be interpreted in the light of the content of the specific subtest regarding noun morphology. The items of Subtest 9 – Grammatic Closure, from the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities (ITPA) (revised edition) (Kirk, McCarthy & Kirk, 1968) involving *nouns* require the respondent to provide *plural* and *possessive* forms. From Table 6.32 it was obvious that the pre-school participants in the current research were not inclined to produce possessive forms of nouns during their conversations with the research assistant, while the production of regular plural forms was *typical* for the members of the Senior group only.

The fairly high morphological saturation score, then, demonstrates that although the pre-school participants in the Middle and Junior groups did not *typically* produce plural forms, these forms were mostly correctly produced when they did appear.

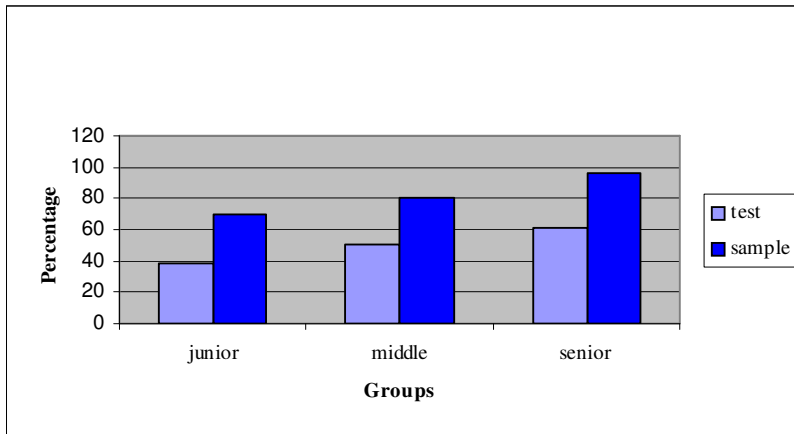The clear developmental trend observed in the morphological saturation scores is illustrated in Figure 6.6.

Figure 6.6. **Mean morphological saturation for three groups from two data sources**

Inspection of the raw data provided interesting insights into the various aspects of saturation displayed in the noun phrases produced by the pre-school participants. Besides the *saturated* noun phrases where the required compulsory marking was evidenced, noun phrases were also marked as *saturated without marking* where marking was not compulsory (noun phrase consisted of noun/pronoun alone). Noun phrases were marked as *unsaturated* where some unspecified compulsory item was omitted, and as *incorrect* when incorrect marking was present. A further possibility was noted in the conversational samples of the participants, namely *superfluous marking*, for example:

drinking the juice (no previous reference to juice) (participant M16).

Figure 6.7 demonstrates the developmental trends observed for these various possibilities. The mean number of instances produced by the participants in each age group for each possibility is displayed.
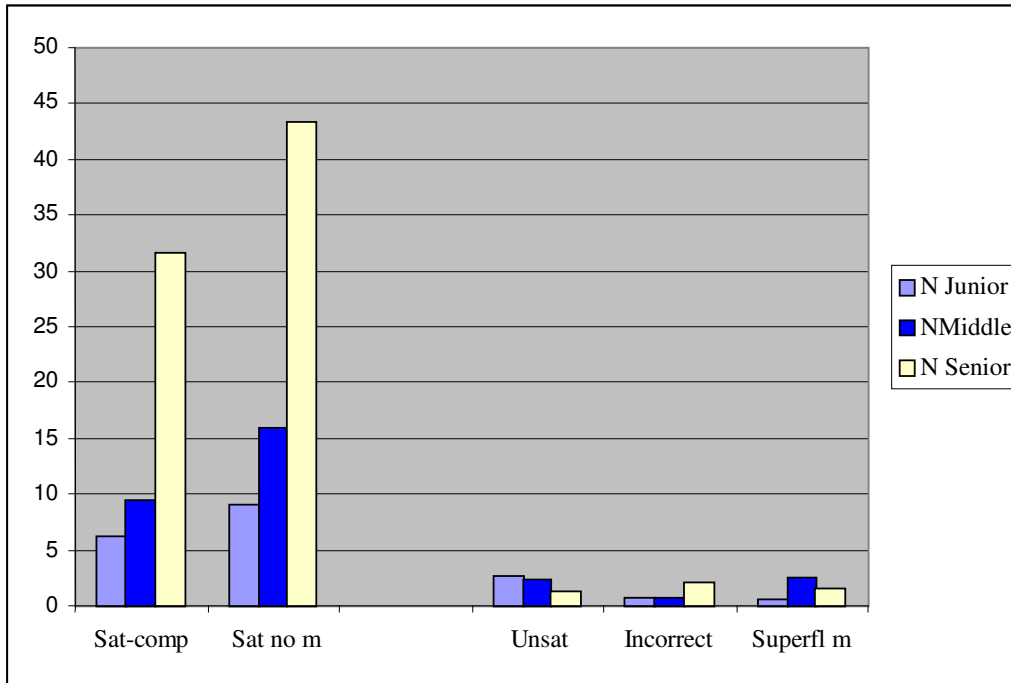
Figure 6.7.   Developmental trends for aspects of morphological saturation

Key:
N Junior = mean number of instances produced by Junior group
N Middle = mean number of instances produced by Middle group
N Senior = mean number of instances produced by Senior group
Sat comp = saturated noun phrase with compulsory marking
Sat no m = saturated noun phrase with no marking required
Unsat = unsaturated noun phrase
Incorrect = incorrect marking of noun phrase
Superfl m = superfluous marking of noun phrase

Whereas a clear developmental progress was noted for the saturated noun phrases, both marked and unmarked, the unsaturated noun phrases demonstrated a diminishing trend that can also be interpreted as a developmental tendency. The noun phrases with incorrect or superfluous markings showed no clear trend. However, their production demonstrated a low frequency of occurrence.   The pre-school participants did not appear to find the noun phrase structure of English a formidable obstacle.

The information regarding noun phrase saturation, although informative for interpreting the data regarding noun morphology, does not contribute sufficiently to warrant inclusion in the *Profile*. The information regarding noun morphology to be carried over to the *Profile* will be the following:

Profile summary 10 – Noun morphology

Group	*Noteworthy behaviour (50-70% of group)*	*Typical behaviour (80%+of group)*
Junior group (4-0 to 4-11)		*No typical behaviours could be identified*
Middle group (5-0 to 5-11)		*No typical behaviours could be identified*
Senior group (6-0 to 6-11)		**Regular plural used appropriately** **Example:** **I opened my <u>presents</u> (S21)**

6.6.   Mean length of utterance (MLU)

As in the case of syntactic complexity, two sets of data were utilised for computing MLU. The term *conversation sample* will be used to refer to the language sample from the elicited conversation, and the term *test sample* will refer to the language sample obtained by means of the picture cards, as well as additional response utterances to Items 11-14, from the KLST-2 (Gauthier & Madison, 1998).

The MLU for the three age groups was calculated in morphemes and in words, for each of the two sets of data (conversation sample and test sample). Results are displayed in the tables and graphs to follow.

Table 6.35.   Mean MLU in words and in morphemes from 2 sources for 3 groups of participants

Groups	Sample MLU-w	Test MLU-w	Sample MLU-m	Test MLU-m
Junior	2.7	3.6	3.1	3.9
Middle	3.3	4.4	3.6	4.9
Senior	4.4	6.2	4.9	6.8

Key to table:
Sample: conversation sample as source
Test: language test as source
MLU-w: mean MLU for group, calculated in words
MLU-m: mean MLU for group, calculated in morphemes.

A clear developmental trend was observed for MLU calculated in both morphemes and words. This trend is graphically illustrated in Figure 6.8.
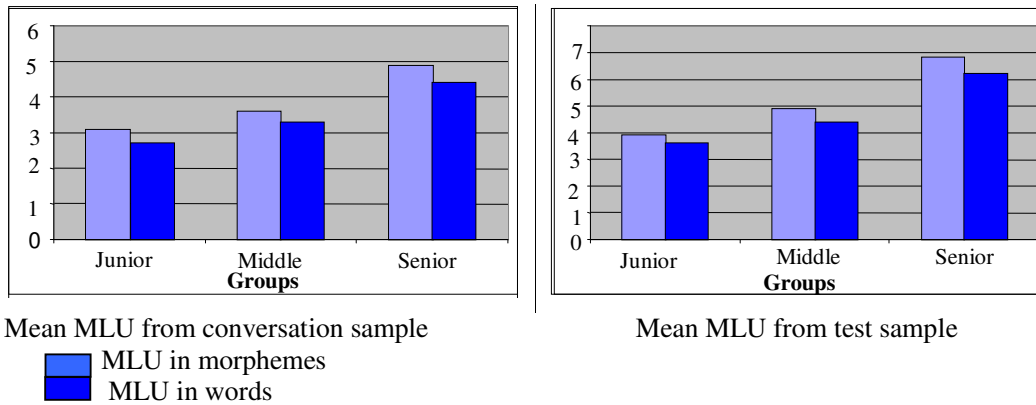
230

Mean MLU from conversation sample

Mean MLU from test sample

■ MLU in morphemes
■ MLU in words

Figure 6.8.   Mean MLU from two samples for 3 groups of participants

Both Table 6.35 and Figure 6.8 portray a steady increase in MLU with increase in age, as reported in the literature for typically developing children (Hoff, 2005:29). The MLU as calculated from the test might have been inflated because although all of the utterances produced in response to the sequence cards were utilised, the additional utterances from Items 11-14 of the KLST-2 (Gauthier & Madison, 1998) included only those that were clauses (i.e. contained verbs). Nonetheless, the two sources of data demonstrated similar growth curves, which indicated that the MLU increased as the children grew older.

Table 6.36 displays the range of MLU for the three age groups when calculated in morphemes and in words. The longest MLU (calculated in both morphemes and words) for the conversation sample was noted for a member of the Middle group, and the shortest for a member of the Senior group. Two alternative solutions presented themselves. These two extreme values could be removed (Ehlers, 2005) and the formula *mean +/-2SD* reapplied, or the typical range could be calculated as between the 10th and 90th percentiles (Steyn *et al.*, 1994:127). The results for both of these alternatives are illustrated in Table 6.36.

Table 6.36.   Adapted range of MLU from conversation sample for three age groups (in morphemes and in words)

Group	Min	Max	Size of range	SD	Mean MLU-m	Suggested norm (mean -/+ 2SD)	Range of occurrence representative of group (10th to 90th percentile)
Junior	1.8	4.6	2.6	1.0	3.1	1.1 – 5.1	1.9 – 4.4
Middle	2.2	4.5	2.3	0.8	3.6	2 – 5.2	2.5 – 4.5
Senior	3.1	6.6	3.5	1.2	4.9	2.5 – 7.3	3.1 – 5.8
Group	Min	Max	Size of range	SD	Mean MLU-w	Suggested norm (mean -/+ 2SD)	Range of occurrence representative of group(10th to 90th percentile)
Junior	1.5	4.3	2.8	1.0	2.7	0.7 to 4.7	1.6 – 4.2
Middle	2	4.1	2.1	0.7	3.3	1.9 to 4.7	2.1 – 4.1
Senior	2.9	6.1	3.2	0.9	4.4	2.6 to 6.2	2.9 – 5.4

Key:
Min = minimum MLU noted for age group
Max = maximum MLU noted for age group
Mean = mean MLU for age group as a whole
SD = standard deviation

The adapted group MLUs for the Junior and Middle groups of participants were all less than 4 and therefore may be regarded as a significant measure of language development for these two age groups (Pan, 1994:28). If the MLUs in Table 6.36 are accepted as being typical for the three age groups, then a MLU of either *less than two standard deviations below the mean* or *below the 10th percentile* would be an indication of discrepancy (Steyn, Smit, Du Toit & Strasheim, 1994: 138, 127). The suggested *minimum norm values* for the three groups would then be as indicated in Table 6.34. Since the typical range indicated by the application of *10th to 90th percentile* is somewhat smaller than that indicated by the application of the formula *mean -/+2SD,* this more conservative suggested norm was adopted.

For the conversation sample, a marked similarity was found between the MLU for morphemes and for words in each of the three groups of participants. It would appear, therefore, that for a conversation language sample teachers could use MLU as calculated in words as a measure of language development, especially for the age groups 4-0 to 4-11 (Junior group) and 5-0 to 5-11 years (Middle group).

For a language sample collected by other means, the situation was somewhat different. For the test sample, one member of the Junior group produced a MLU (calculated in both morphemes and words) that was far longer than that of the rest of the group, and a member of the Middle group produced a MLU (calculated in both morphemes and words) that was far shorter than that of the rest of the group. When these two extreme values were removed (Ehlers, 2005) and the formula *mean +/-2SD* reapplied, or alternatively the typical range calculated as between the 10th and 90th percentiles (Steyn, Smit, Du Toit & Strasheim, 1994:127), the results obtained are illustrated in Table 6.37.

Table 6.37. Adapted range of MLU from test sample for three age groups (in morphemes and in words)

Group	Min	Max	Size of range	SD	Mean MLU-m	Suggested norm (mean –/+ 2SD)	Range of occurrence representative of group (10th to 90th percentile)
Junior	1.4	6.8	5.4	1.9	3.7	X	2-6.8
Middle	3.5	7.1	3.6	1.5	5.2	2.2 – 8.2	2.8-6.9
Senior	5.1	9.2	4.1	1.4	6.8	4 – 9.6	5.3-8.6
Group	Min	Max	Size of range	SD	Mean MLU-w	Suggested norm (mean –/+ 2SD)	Range of occurrence representative of group(10th to 90th percentile)
Junior	1	6.3	5.3	1.7	3.2	X	1.2-6.3
Middle	2.2	6.7	4.5	1.5	4.7	1.7 – 7.7	2.2-6.1
Senior	4.7	8.8	4.1	1.4	6.2	3.4 - 9	4.8 - 7.8

Key to Table:
Min = minimum MLU noted for age group   Max = maximum MLU noted for age group
Mean MLU-m = mean MLU for age group as a whole calculated in morphemes
Mean MLU-w = mean MLU for age group as a whole calculated in words
SD = standard deviation
X = no representative range could be determined

It was not possible (Table 6.37) to determine a suggested minimum norm for MLU with the formula *mean-/+2SD* for the Junior group for a language sample elicited by means of the KLST-2 (Gauthier & Madison, 1998). The application of *10th to 90th percentile* inevitably produced a representative range. As in the case of the conversation sample, the representative MLU range suggested by this application is more conservative and was therefore adopted.

In contrast to the MLUs calculated from the conversation language sample of the pre-school participants, the MLUs for the test sample calculated in words and in morphemes differed. MLU in words and in morphemes therefore had to be considered separately for the samples collected by means of the test stimuli. The data indicates a greater measure of morphological complexity for the test sample than for the conversation sample, as reflected in the finding that, for the test sample, the MLU calculated by mean -/+2SD in *morphemes* is 0.5 to 0.6 longer than the MLU calculated in *words*, whereas the difference was 0.1 throughout for the conversation sample.

range of mlu (morphemes)

range of mlu (words)
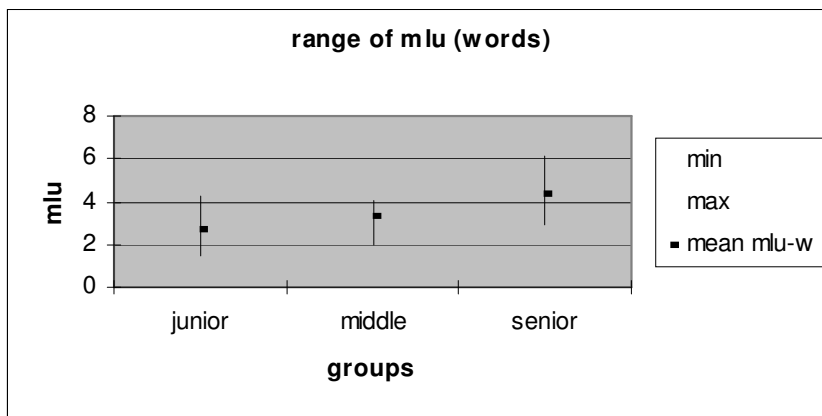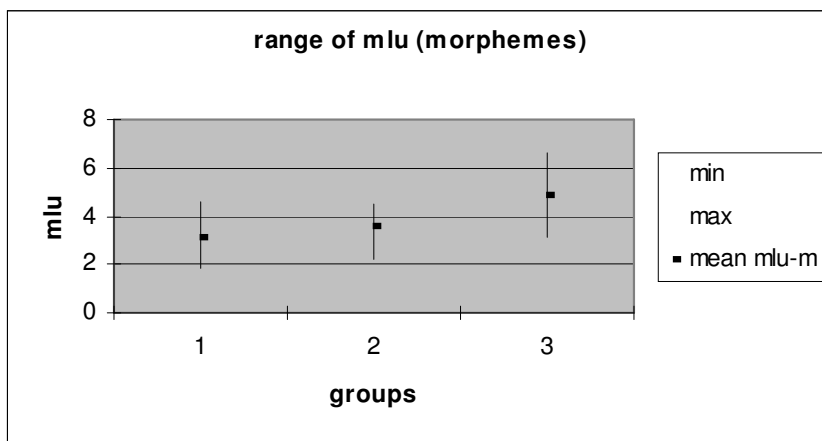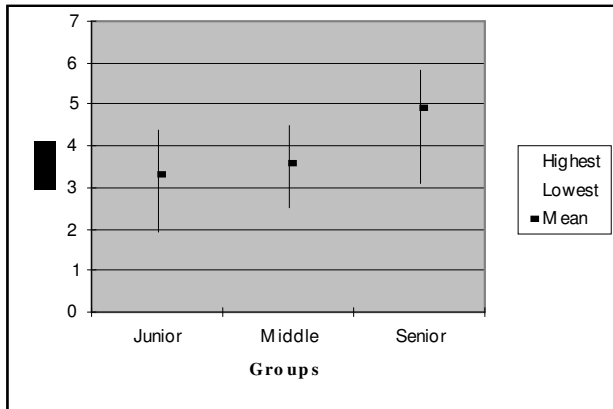
The MLU (calculated in morphemes) for young American English speakers reported in the literature is approximately 1.99 at age 21 to 31 months, ranging to 4.5 at age 41 to 52 months (adapted from Hoff, 2004:208). The MLU in English (calculated in morphemes) for the EAL pre-school participants in a conversation setting ranged from 1.9 at age 48 months, to 5.8 at age 72 months and older, with a MLU of 4.5 appearing at 60 months and older. It would seem that the participants in the current research attained MLUs comparable to those of their American English counterparts aged approximately 20 months younger.

Information to be carried over to the *Profile* regarding the typical MLU range for EAL pre-schoolers will be the following:

Profile summary 11 - MLU

MLU calculated in morphemes		
	Conversation	**Test**
Group	**Range of occurrence representative of group (10th to 90th percentile)**	**Range of occurrence representative of group (10th to 90th percentile)**
Junior group (4-0 to 4-11)	**1.9 – 4.4**	**2-6.8**
Middle group (5-0 to 5-11)	**2.5 – 4.5**	**2.8-6.9**
Senior group (6-0 to 6-11)	**3.1 – 5.8,**	**5.3-8.6**

MLU calculated in words		
Group	**Conversation**	**Test**
	Range of occurrence representative of group (10th to 90th percentile)	**Range of occurrence representative of group (10th to 90th percentile)**
Junior group (4-0 to 4-11)	1.6 – 4.2	1.2-6.3
Middle group (5-0 to 5-11)	2.1 – 4.1	2.2-6.1
Senior group (6-0 to 6-11)	2.9 – 5.4	4.8 - 7.8

6.7. Conclusion

The investigation of aspects of language *form* has yielded diverse results. In some cases there were clear indications of typical language behaviours and developmental trends. In other instances no typical language behaviours could be found. A *representative range* of MLU was identified for all three age groups.

However, it cannot be assumed automatically that the list of typical behaviours relating to language form is necessarily *meaningful*. In a certain sense, there is value in the finding that some assumptions, for example those regarding the use of unconventional gender forms of pronouns, appear to have been discounted. On the whole the true utility of the data will have to be proven in practice. The main value of the results from this section lies in the initiation of a database on English language form (syntactic and morphological structures as well as length of utterances) typically found in the language production of EAL pre-schoolers.

6.8. Summary

This chapter provided a schematic representation of the presentation and discussion of the research results. The various methodological phases were related to the stated objectives of the research, and an indication was provided of the respective chapter where each aspect is to be put forward. The aspects of the language dimension of *form* that were identified in Chapter 4 as significant on account of their relationship to either language impairment or EAL, were investigated as they appeared in the language behaviour of the pre-school participants

In order to obtain some impression of the overall *potential utility* to be obtained from this section, the results that showed typical language behaviours for any of the three groups of pre-school participants were collated (Table 6.38).

Table 6.38. **Typical language behaviours relating to *language form* identified in EAL pre-schoolers**

Aspects/ structures	Typical behaviours identified		
	Junior group	*Middle group*	*Senior group*
Syntactic complexity	Simple sentences	Simple sentences	Simple sentences
Syntactic structures		SVO	"Yes" SV (subject-verb) SVA (subject-verb-adverbial) SVO (subject-verb-object)
Noun phrase		DN PrepDN	DN PrepDN
Verb phrase	Is/was/am + verb + -ing		Is/was/am + verb + -ing
Pronoun phrase		"I"	"I", "me", "my" "They"
Morphology of main verbs		Verb stem (grammatically acceptable/unacceptable)	Verb stem (grammatically acceptable/unacceptable) Progressive aspect
Subject-verb agreement		Subject-verb agreement for 1st person singular	Subject-verb agreement for: 1st person singular 3rd person singular 3rd person plural Subject-verb non-agreement for 3rd person singular
Noun morphology			Regular plural
MLU morphemes:	Conversation 1.9 – 4.4 Test 2-6.8	Conversation 2.5 – 4.5 Test 2.8-6.9	Conversation 3.1 – 5.8 Test 5.3-8.6
MLU words: Conversation	Conversation 1.6 – 4.2 Test 1.2-6.3	Conversation 2.1 – 4.1 Test 2.2-6.1	Conversation 2.9 – 5.4 Test 4.8 - 7.8

It is apparent from Table 6.38 that a number of *typical language behaviours* appeared in the Senior group of pre-school participants, somewhat fewer in the Middle group, and only two forms of typical behaviour occurred in the Junior group. It is likely that the results regarding language form will be useful in planning assessment of English

language behaviours in EAL pre-schoolers aged 5-0 to 5-11 and especially in those pre-schoolers aged 6-0 to 6-11.