

**THE INFLUENCE OF MOTHER TONGUE ON LERANERS' PERFORMACNCE
IN WRITTEN ENGLISH AT PRIMARY LEVEL: A CASE STUDY OF KAKIRA
TOWN COUNCIL, JINJA DISTRICT**

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Waniba Joseph Angostar, declare that this report is my original work and has never been presented to any other university for award of any academic certificate or anything similar to such. I solemnly bear and stand to correct any inconsistency.

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APPROVAL

This is to certify that this research was supervised and is now ready for submission to the academic board for consideration and approval.

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15/09/2011

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my beloved brother Malisi Michael for his support and understanding during my period of study not forgetting all those who constantly wished me success.

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ABSTRACT

This research is about the influence of mother tongue on learners' performance in written English at primary level: a case study of Kakira Town Council, Jinja district. It was guided by three objectives; establish how mother tongue affects the performance of learners in written English in Kakira Town Council, to find out the effects of mother tongue on the performance of learners in written English in Kakira Town Council primary schools and to analyse the strategies to minimize mother tongue affects on the performance in English in Kakira Town Council primary schools.

The study was carried from July to September 2011, it was descriptive where a sample of 50 respondents and the data collected was processed and recommendations were made and conclusion drawn.

It was found out that there is a very big significant relationship between mother tongue interference and learners' performance in written English at primary level. Lusoga was found to be having an impact on learner's performance in English.

ACRONYMS

L1	-	First Language
L2	-	Second Language
LAD	-	Language Acquisition Device
SPSS	-	Special Package for social Scientist

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

This chapter aims at introducing the problem under study. It is classified as background of the study, statement of the problem, study objectives, research questions, scope of the study and significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the study

Uganda as a country under the influence of the former British colony originally, used English as the major medium of communication. It is used as an official language. According to the ministry of education and sports, it is one of the compulsory subjects taught in the schools in the curriculum. In both private and government schools, English is used as a medium of instruction and communication in teaching and learning process of other subjects, the later statement is with an exception of the Thematic Curriculum programme in primary one up to primary six, 2011. In this respect one would expect to find a relatively better academic performance in English at primary level.

However basing on the general observations of the educational output in Uganda and most specifically Kakira Town Council Jinja district, a good number of pupils who crossover from government aided schools to estate primary schools, have proved a big problem in the performance of written English. This implies or shows that there are a number of factors which affect the learners' Performance in English and possibly or perhaps the creation of conducive learning environment in schools.

The major concern here is to investigate how mother tongue influences learners' performance in written English and how teachers including other factors contribute to this occurrence.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the government intervention in imposing the teaching and learning of English in all schools is to produce a comparatively more literate population with the basic language skills especially in reading and writing, ease communication, leading to the economic development of the country.

However experience shows that fewer learners were pursuing literature in English at secondary level.

The study therefore is to establish the influence of mother tongue on learners' performance in written English at primary level

1.3 General Objective

The study is basically intended to find out the impact of mother tongue on the performance of written English at primary school.

1.4 Specific Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows;

- (i) To establish how mother tongue affects the performance of learners in written English in Kakira Town Council
- (ii) To find out the effects of mother tongue on the performance of learners in written English in Kakira town council primary schools
- (iii) To analyse the strategies to minimize mother tongue affects on the performance in English in Kakira town council primary schools.

1.5 Research Questions

- (i) How does mother tongue affect the performance of learners in written English in Kakira town council?
- (ii) What are the effects of mother tongue on the performance of learner in written English in Kakira town council primary schools?

(iii) What are the strategies being laid to minimize mother tongue effects on the performance in Kakira town council primary school?

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study will be undertaken in Kakira Town council in Jinja district, eastern part of Uganda. The schools are located 96km from Kampala 16km from Jinja along Iganga-Malaba highway.

The study investigates on how the mother tongue influences the performance of written English at primary level in Kakira town council. It examines the written language and factors affecting writing. It also analyses the strategies to minimize mother tongue effects on the performance in written English. Then the summary, conclusion and recommendations will be given.

1.7 Significance

The study will help to;

Enable pupils to recognize and realize how mother tongue affects their written English

Help subject teachers to appreciate the relationship between pupils' mother tongue and English, and be able to design strategies that may enhance correct written English for better performance.

Foster headteacher and departmental heads to design and develop programmes which promote writing hence academic achievement in written English.

Benefit stakeholders such as parents to encourage their children to aim at both spoken and good written English.

The inspectorate department at the district education offices will have a blue print shaping and improving the academic performance of schools.

The study will act as a stepping stone for further research on the academic performance of primary schools, not only in Kakira town council primary schools but in Uganda as a whole.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with reviewing the literature related to mother tongue influence on learners' performance in English at primary level in Kakira town council, Jinja district.

Among other things it includes the theoretical basis for the study language writing, factors affecting writing and effects of mother tongue in written English.

2.1 Theoretical basis for the study

The first language acquisition is an unconscious process and according to mentalists theory they state that is a natural process which is limited to human beings only.

The acquisition of the first language (L1) involves two structural skills. These are the ability to produce speech in a spontaneous way and the ability to understand the speeches of others. After the mastery of the first language, a lot of people find it necessity to acquire a second language (L2).

It is clear that a person's mother tongue is distinguished from any other language that may be acquired. In this case foreign language is a language that is not a native language in a country like Uganda and the second language is commonly used in this way.

A number of languages have been advanced about the need for a second language. In the context of this study, English is the language stressed mostly.

English is a language which is widely spread and in Uganda it is the major medium of communication and instruction in a classroom situation with an exception of the Thematic Curriculum.

David (1997) in his encyclopedia of language says that; children learn to speak in a popular view by copying the utterances heard around them and by having correct responses strengthened by the repetitions, corrections and other reactions that adults provide.

Jean (1980) on his cognitive views of language acquisition says; linguistic structures will emerge only if there is an already established cognitive foundation for example before children can use structures of comparison, they need first to have developed the conceptual ability to make relevant judgment of sizes.

Second language learners should possess a series of rules and habits of target language. This may be natural to first language learners. Just as the first language acquisition process is second language learners too use the natural, process of language acquisition on top of using set rules of the language. The rules develop gradually as the child grows until he/she is able to internalize them. In order to be able to use English language, learners should know these rules.

Researcher in second language acquisition has always looked for the similarity in first and second language acquisition. They have usually looked for similar order of grammatical morphemes of English by second language learners. In their hypothesis testing, they felt that this would show that first language and second language acquisition were in similar process following the same development path and using comparative strategies.

Dick (1988) says; "Language" is more than a vehicle for communication because it has evolved in particular circumstances, it is also a rich cultural expression illustrated by its words, idioms and its whole orientations. When a person has mastered spoken language and written forms of language he can confidently communicate with others, every human being must undergo the stages of growth and development. Before language learning takes place, an infant uses its own mother tongue which is acquired unconsciously.

Two major schools of thought came up with different views about language acquisition. The behaviourists argue that language acquisition is just a form of behaviour. One of the proponents of this view is skinner. While the mentalists believe that language acquisition is not merely a form of behaviour but there is a complex system of rules and that an individual must have an innate capacity to a language which is called the language acquisition device (LAD).

Elman etal (1996) argues that "language emerges from mere cognitive abilities such as ones used in motor control and perception but even these theorists assume that at least some of these abilities are in built part of our genetic heritage.

The process of second language acquisition is independent to the first language comparison is always based on the child's learning in mother tongue and second language learners in light of the study it is Lusoga and English.

Steven in his book of psychology states that; "it is difficult without knowing exactly what language learning is, to estimate how much time a child spends some have argued that it is a pre-occupation of his whole working days others that he is also busy doing things which are not language.

Estimating the amount of time spent on a language depends on informal and formal learning structures if the first and second language acquisition have something in common in terms of language acquisition process, it is most likely that the learners will confuse, the rules and end up generalizing them. This automatically brings about mother tongue interference which can be in form of structures, pronunciation direct translation and spelling mistakes.

Other reasons have been advanced as to why errors are common. In error analysis, Wagner (1975) says; "persistent errors may be due to some inherent difficulty in the new language transfer from mother tongue, limited exposure to a good and consistent model of new forms, lack of penalty in form of communication, failure or laziness".

The reasons as to why errors occur within the learners remain the question most people ask.

Snow and Ferguson (1977) argue that; "the child says "me want milk and you" answer "I want milk". The problem here is that children have a way of ignoring or missing the point of the expansion.

Brown and Hanlon (1969) says, "Parents do however, alter the way they speak with their children learning a language which may possibly make language rules easier to acquire." This affirms that the parents are the models from which the children learn from the first language from homes.

2.2 Language Writing

According to Houghton Meffin Company (1972) he says writing is a collection of written or printed materials in a surface as a means of communication. In writing, words are used as a means of expression. The art of writing makes people to acquire the real worlds for expression as stated by David Crystal.

Writing helps one to communicate with the reader and to express ideas easily. Learners are therefore to learn the art of writing English words.

Huns P. Guth in his book of American English today (1980) says writing is generally more formal than speech. What we write down is generally more important than what we merely mention.

It is usually intended for a larger audience. Formal written language indicates that we are taking our subject and our audience seriously. The art of writing helps the learners to become conversant with the correct structures and grammar which the teachers reinforce. This leads to the development of new language within the learners in attempt to express meaningful ideas.

According to Henry (1981), for the most part, children come to school with the ability to speak in at least one language and occasionally more. In this case the teachers' job is not so much to teach the skill but to develop it. This does not apply to the teaching of as a second language which is not the mother tongue.

On the other hand the skill of writing may have to be taught in school at scratch from the very beginning.

There is a relationship between written and spoken language in ordinary life. We can listen to ideas and then be required to respond. As earlier discussed language is a means of communication.

According to Dick, language is however more than a vehicle for communication because it has evolved in particular circumstance.

It is much easier to learn how to speak a language than it is to learn how to write it. Learning to speak is a natural phenomenon but writing requires much

training and practice. pupils must be equipped with correct language structures like grammar, vocabulary and syntax. Written language doesn't have the benefit of using gestures and other non linguistic gestures, but needs proper punctuation, sentence patterns and correct spellings.

Writing is quite, different from speaking. It is logically presented. Written English is purposeful to the learners. It can be used for essay writing in classrooms, examinations or report writing and other work that may require written communication. In our school environment today, language usage is what most learners use to judge competence and performance.

This may be true to some extent but since language acquisition is more natural there is need to have lexical items in order to become a good writer. To write perfectly, one needs to have the structural concepts of the language like syntax.

2.2.1 Some other acceptable rules

These rules confuse most second language learners and in this study, it is most likely that pupils will be prompted to use the Lusoga structures to make English sentences. The study is set up to find out that relationship.

2.3 Factors Affecting Writing

It is very hard for a learner who is learning to write a foreign language to be perfect if teachers expect this from their learners, and they are nonrealistic. If perfection is to be attained, there must be a great deal of reinforcement. Tom and Elis (1990), we can not expect a pupil to speak or write English accurately until he has mastered the individual structures that make up that language.

For beginners, there is over generalization of rules and little exposure to written work, affecting writing. Yet in a classroom situation, there is a lot of individual

differences in form of age ability, intelligence and cognitive development. This plays a big role in writing performance. To be efficient in writing, learners have to do a lot of practice. It is very easy to forget lexical items which bring about errors. Environment also plays a role in the nature of a learners' competence in language writing.

In view of the study, learners are exposed to a society that uses Lusoga and it is the mother tongue of most of them. Some errors in English writing reflect the heavy use of Lusoga.

If the learners are not careful these mistakes may become part of them. There is a great need for motivation if effective writing is to take place. Learners are sometimes careless and they end up making unnecessary errors. Basing on the above note, teachers should try as much as possible to use better methods of teaching geared at making their learners competent writers. Poor teaching methods may deter writing competence.

2.4 Effects of Mother Tongue in Written English

It is quite difficult to separate the mother tongue from the second language. Learners always transfer some linguistic structures of their mother tongue and translate them directly in written English. Learners of the second language are already conversant with their mother tongue. In view of this research study, learners have a great grip of Lusoga and in trying to teach them English, problems are expected to arise. The first language interference may not be great but it should still be treated with great care.

The behaviourists say that language acquisition is first habit formation therefore in trying to learn new language, there must be mother tongue interference. The lexical structures of English are quite different from those of the mother tongue

and learners always try to make direct translations from them to English. We should however know that there is need to know and develop a language despite the fear of interference and there must be factors that lead to development of mother tongue or any other language.

Lennerberg (1967), first or second language does not develop in a vacuum. The most extreme or innate view about language development ascribe an important role to environmental factors while it is assumed that children have an innate capacity to acquire a language. It is also assumed that there exist at least two basic factors which contribute to success of the first or second language.

In this argument, Lennberg says that the first language is the accessibility of the learner to the social environment in which the language is used.

In view of the study, the learners are sampled from their social environment where Lusoga is most spoken. However, the second language learners have to use the language for communication so the learners of English in this study use it most of the time in a classroom situation which is quite different from their immediate environment.

It is therefore most likely that the learners will use Lusoga more as compared to English and at the end this will affect their language writing. According to Watt (1978), lasting mistakes of errors occur due to some inborn issues in the new language transmission from mother tongue and exposure in the environment.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the extent to which Lusoga as a mother tongue affects the performance of pupils at primary level with emphasis on writing language. It also gives a description of a number of items including the area of study, the sampled schools population subjects on which the study is conducted and the instruments used in data collection. Information about the criteria for subject sampling methods used for data analysis and the procedure for carrying out the study is also included.

3.1 Research Design

This study used qualitative methods to investigate the influence of mother tongue on learners' performance in written English at primary level.

3.2 Study Area and Population

The study was conducted in Kakira town council, Jinja District. The residents of Kakira town council are of mixture of a lot of tribes and races but the area of study is dominated by Lusoga speakers. A lot of immigrants from other tribes in the outskirts of Kakira estate are influenced to speak Lusoga and basing on this, their children adopt Lusoga as the first language.

Population considered were the samples from St. Stephen Primary School, St. Thereza primary school, Madhivani Primary School, Factory Primary School and private schools that are under management of Kakira Sugar Limited.

3.3 Sample framework

3.3.1 Sample Size

A total of 50 respondents were interviewed. These included pupils of 2011 primary six learners and these were chosen because the researcher thought that by the time of carrying out research primary seven would be busy preparing for primary leaving examination mocks.

3.3.2 Sampling technique and Procedure

According to Mutai (2001) in purposive sampling, the researcher handpicked the cases to be included in his sample on the basis of his judgment of their typical in terms of their current enrolments. It is through this method that would come up with sample that was satisfactory to his research problem.

Systematic sampling was used to select learners from each school by the use of class registers depending on the number of learners in the class register. Every third (or fourth) learners were selected for inclusion in the sampling depending on the number of learners in the class. Simple random sampling was used to select the respondents.

3.4 Methods

3.4.1 Instruments Used for Data Collection

In order to achieve the objective of this study, the researcher used the following methods of data collection to get information on the influence of mother tongue on learners' performance in written English at primary level. The methods enabled the researcher to generate enough information so as to make and draw conclusion appropriately to these issues.

Questionnaire

The questionnaires were administered on some children, parents and teachers in the rural and urban areas so that the researcher could compare and contrast data given on the influence of mother tongue on learners' performance in written English at primary level in the two regions. Questionnaires were given to local government and local leaders.

Interview

The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with some women, girls both illiterates and literates on issues pertaining to the respondents background, the school enrollment, the influence of mother tongue on learners' performance in written English at primary level.

3.4.2 Sources of data

Primary source of data

This was got through the use of self administered questionnaires and interviews.

Secondary data

Text books, Magazines, Written data sources included published and unpublished documents, agency reports, newspaper articles, internet sources and so forth were referred to so as to give more light on issues of the influence of mother tongue on learners' performance in written English at primary level.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data was analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. Different data sets were used in analyzing data collected, i.e. where necessary SPSS package was used. Bar graphs were used to give a clearer outlook about the influence of mother tongue on learners' performance in written English at primary level and they were done in Microsoft Excel. Recommendations were made using the outcome of the result of the analysis.

3.7 Ethical Consideration

Bearing in mind the ethical issues, the researcher provided the respondents with the necessary information as regards the main purpose of the research, expected duration, procedures followed, and the researcher was in position to keep privacy and not disclose the confidentiality of respondents and researchers responsibility.

3.8 Limitations

The research study was faced by a number of problems and constraints and hence may not adequately meet the intended objectives to the required level.

Financial constraints have limited the researcher from having a thorough research process for instance; undertaking pretexts and piloting studies had to be foregone.

Again data collection and processing was done in bits because the researcher could not raise the required fund in lump some as he had to find himself.

Problem of distance between the researcher and his supervisor while in the field did impede proper continuous assessment of research, thus research process could only be dictated when it's already late.

The researcher faced a problem of time constraints. The time allocated for the study was not enough for a through investigation because the research was conducted with academic urgency in the two years while also the researcher was required to attend to her academic work.

3.9 Delimitations

This research was facilitated by the following favorable factors;

Since the researcher was a resident of the area, he had accommodation, hence less expenditure.

The researcher being a resident was familiar to the people whom he obtained information. The researcher did not find problems in transport because the infrastructure is good.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Introduction

This deals with analysis and interpretation of the data collected. It includes discussion of the questionnaire and interview results.

The data was based on the two hypothesis stated at the end of the chapter two and are presented in tables.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Sex of the respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	40	80
Female	10	20
Total	50	100

The study covered 50 randomly selected respondents of whom 40 were males and 10 were females and these were teachers.

4.3 Analysis and Interpretation of Data for Hypothesis One

The first hypothesis which the study followed were teachers and pupils of Kakira sugar limited schools on the influence of mother tongue in writing English.

To test this hypothesis, two sets of questionnaires were administered for teachers or an interview schedule for pupils was provided.

The findings were presented as follows;

How mother tongue affects the pupils' performance in writing English.

Table 2: Does mother tongue affect the performance of learners?

Response	Yes	Somehow	No	Total
In writing English at school	5	2	2	9
In spoken English at school	3	6	0	9
In schools daily activities	3	3	3	9
Total frequency	11	11	5	27
Percentage	41	41	18	100

Table 3: Hypothesis how often teachers teach writing skills in English

Response	Everyday	Twice	Once	Total
When do teachers teach writing?	2	32	10	44
Do the teachers teach writing English effectively?	10	9	01	20
Are pupils always corrected when they go wrong?	03	11	16	30
Total	15	32	27	94
Percentage	16	55	29	100

From the teachers' questionnaire a number of observations were made by the researcher. Most teachers in the sample schools of study teach the writing skills once or twice a week. Among the methods used for writing the dominant ones were letter writing and composition writing based on set topics, used of comprehensions and the teaching of grammar.

It was also observed that text books topics for writing passages, chalkboard and pictures are major sources of materials during the writing of lessons. Learners are given sorted passages to read. They also write compositions on given topics by the teachers.

4.4 Discussion of Results

General Findings

From the observations Lusoga has an impact on the performance of pupils of English at primary level. The relationship between the two variables therefore exists. The evidence is clearly indicated from what the subjects wrote in their English language evaluation test.

In analyzing their work, some of the constructions made by the pupils were drawn from their experiences of their meaning in the compositions. This direct interpretation of words and sentences from Lusoga to English was very common.

One pupil in his composition wrote "When the prayer was about to enter the ball in." Such a sentence would sound grammatically correct but it is semantically wrong. In Lusoga the word "enter" is "okwingira" but it can be used under situations.

It can mean to go in or join, so the pupil transferred the word and meaning directly. In addition to that, pupils made errors in the use of prepositions. They were either wrongly placed or incorrectly used. That is to say, not the correct ones some of the prepositional mistakes arose from the fact that Lusoga accepts them and the pupils used them.

According to Dulay and Burt (1974), the first language lays the foundation when assessment on performance in a second language learning.

During the research about the topic understudy, it was important to seek necessary information from teachers and the respondents were qualified teachers.

The assumption that pupils did not have qualified teachers was inapplicable as far as English language writing and teaching was concerned. Most teachers who were involved in the research had spent over eight years in the field.

Some of the teachers depicted that teaching English was enjoyable whereas others revealed that it was difficult. Most of the complaints arose from lack of text books of English. Another serious problem was the heavily populated classes. The above mentioned reasons made some of the language teachers to lose interest in teaching the subject. They taught without considering all the skills. The four skills of English are listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The results in teaching English showed that some of the skills were taught either in isolation or irregularly. The writing and listening skills dominated and this was attributed to lack of reading materials and pupils' fear for self expression in English. The researcher discovered that the widely used language outside the classroom and school environment was Lusoga. This too greatly contributed to mother tongue interference in the government aided schools where explanations are not clear to pupils. teachers use "Lusoga" as a medium of instruction.

Besides lack of text books and dominance of Lusoga, teachers revealed that some pupils hate English language. This was attributed to the poor background they had right from lower levels of learning English language.

On this note, it has become difficult for pupils to perform well in written English and it has also given room to great mother tongue interference, rendering the null hypothesis significant.

In finding out possible resolutions the teachers expressed difficulty in solving the problem at hand because most pupils adopted Lusoga and Kiswahili. But the area

of study thus the surrounding environment was dominated by Lusoga speakers for easy communication. It brought about errors in writing English because pupils transfer the rules in the mother tongue to grammatical and lexical terms in written English.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Recommendation and Conclusion

5.0 Introduction

After a detailed discussion of the findings of the study a summary of the study, conclusion and general recommendations were made.

5.1 Summary

The researcher used both teachers and learners in four selected schools. The learners were specifically primary six pupils. They were given to write a composition in English. It was aimed at testing both the mother tongue and English language. The results expressed the relationship between mother tongue and English.

On the other hand language teachers were required to fill in a questionnaire. The results of the findings were presented and discussed in chapter four.

5.2 Conclusion

From the findings of this study the following conclusions about the impact of Lusoga/mother tongue on learners' performance in written English language at primary level were made;

There is a very significant relationship between mother tongue interference and learners' performance in written English at primary level. From the about conclusion Lusoga therefore has an impact on learners' performance in English.

As a mother tongue, Lusoga greatly affects the four main areas of written English language, that is semantics, syntax, lexis and morphology. The conclusion is based on Lusoga as a mother tongue but it is in line with research

findings from some researcher about mother tongue interference and second language learning like Dulay and Burt (1974).

5.3 Recommendations

Teachers should be strict and self conscious about the influence Lusoga has on learners written English. It can be done by teachers encouraging their learners to speak English and they themselves should avoid explaining certain expressions in their mother tongue during English lessons. Learners need to be motivated and educated about the dangers of mother tongue on their performance in written language, common errors should be identified and corrected immediately.

Pupils should be encouraged by their teachers of English to get used to the reading culture. They should be given extensive reading materials. Teachers can use the headteachers to encourage parents to buy personal textbooks for their children. This can enable children to develop a culture of reading and improve on their written English.

Activities such as writers' clubs, debates, drama and essay competitions should be encouraged to improve on effective writing. Learners should be motivated by teachers.

Teachers of English should hold workshops for language either at school level or countrywide. Refresher courses be organized to equip teachers with new innovations.

The headteachers should liaise with parents to make them follow up their children's performance. They should be sensitized to provide their children with materials such as text books, newspapers, magazines and supplementary readers.

The headteachers in conjunction with parents should give prizes like a dictionary to learners who perform well in English.

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APPENDIX B: BUDGET

ITEMS	COSTS
Stationary	30000
Printing / binding	50000
Facilitation /meals	20000
Transport	60000
Miscellaneous	40000
Total	200000

APPENDIX C: WORKPLAN

July 2011	1st week	Development of Proposal
	2 nd week	approval
August 2011	3 rd & 4 th week	Collection of data
	1 st & 2 nd week	Presentation, analysis of data collected
	3 rd & 4 th weeks	Submission