

## **The Writing Skills in Second Language of Learners from a Rural Primary School in South Africa**

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**ABSTRACT** The school type in the South African context can act as an agent of cultural reproduction that influences learner outcomes. Well resourced schools are richer in social capital than others, depending, among other things, on the prevailing school culture and the strength of networks formed among teachers and between teachers and other stakeholders. High levels of social capital in the school will strengthen its intellectual capital and this, in turn, will benefit learners and they will excel academically. This paper examines the English writing performance of Grade 7 English Second Language (ESL) learners in a former Model C rural primary school that uses English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) and explores how good scores can be partly explained by the social context of both learners and school. Although South African education policy seeks to distribute and maintain the linguistic capital of the official languages through its support of multilingualism, the predominant preference for English as LoLT in schooling is one of the major factors which disadvantages most ESL learners and perpetuates inequality in learner outcomes. This situation is exacerbated in certain school contexts (for example, rural settings). The concept of social capital, including linguistic capital, is used as an explanatory framework. In this regard a critical comparison is made between the contributions of Coleman and Bourdieu. The findings indicate excellent learner performance in the writing performance test. This suggests that the current use of English as LoLT means that linguistic capital might be equally distributed throughout this school. Learners' academic performance can thus be influenced by the type of school that they attend.