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The Writing Workshop, a process approach to teaching writing, is used widely in US education. However, strategic adaptation is needed for classrooms with non-native speakers. This study identified two techniques common to both Writer's Workshop and ESL best practices, and tested the efficacy of their daily use in an urban second grade comprised of 75 percent English language learners. The techniques, employed prior to writing, were teacher-modeling and oral discussion. Four Hmong and Somali students participated in this six-week study, which relied on qualitative and quantitative data. All students increased in writing quality and quantity between the pre- and post-assessments. In addition, students showed growth in writing confidence and writing enjoyment. The study suggests the usefulness of both techniques for English language learners when teachers incorporate them systematically and explicitly.

The student who was living one life becomes a writer and lives twice, thrice, a multiplication of lives, each life of words reassembling the lived life into new meanings.

Donald M. Murray
What Happens When Students Learn to Write

Give yourself tremendous space to wander in, to be utterly lost with no name, and then come back and speak.

Natalie Goldberg
Writing Down the Bones

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GRADE TWO ESL WRITERS: TEACHER-MODELED WRITING
AND ORAL REHEARSAL

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the most important skills of the twenty-first century. Business, academic, and personal communications now face instantaneous and global possibilities. Clarity in one's writing as well as familiarity with writing processes and conventions are—and will continue to be—essential skills for survival in the modern world.

Because of its importance, writing needs to be addressed early and explicitly in a child's educational career. Cunningham, Hall and Sigmon identify writing as one of four "building blocks" of school literacy, along with guided reading, self-selected reading and working with words (1999). Moreover, in her book, *Literacy Lessons, Designed for Individuals, Part One: Why, When and How?* (2005), researcher Marie

Clay stresses that no time should be lost in beginning academic literacy. She cautions that slow rates of progress initially can severely impact ultimate achievement in school learning, thereby reducing the efficacy of adult reading and writing.

However, many teachers who recognize the value of early reading and writing are faced with teaching literacy skills to a growing population of US students with limited English. Demographic data from such sources as the Migration Information Service website (Batalova, 2006) show a sixty-five percent increase in Limited English Proficiency (LEP¹) students enrolled in American schools between 1994 and 2004. This is an increase of 65 percent. The United States Department of Education expects these numbers to rise. Predictions at its *What Works Clearinghouse* website show that an expected one in four students will be an ELL by the year 2025 (2006).

While immigration has never been an unusual phenomenon in the United States, it is drastically different today than it was at the turn of the century, when the first flood of immigrants arrived. One hundred years ago, immigrants were primarily Europeans, coming from agrarian cultures similar to those existing in the US at the time. Today, immigrants arrive from such a wide range of countries, educational and experiential backgrounds, and speak such a wide variety of languages, that it is difficult to generalize about them. Further, the term “literacy” itself means something much different than it did in the 1900’s, when a higher education for most meant a high school diploma.

¹ In this thesis, “ESL” (English as a Second Language) is used as an adjective. “ELL” and “ELLs” are used as nouns, referring to English Language Learners. “LEP” is a US government term, and is used only when quoting US data.

Today's high-stakes testing can determine the future of a school, since the AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) ranking system is based on the scores of all students. This includes ELLs, tested in English, often after only one year of residency.

Minnesota, the state in which I live, is no exception. Recent demographics show that Minnesota's foreign-born population began increasing in 1970, when there were approximately 100,000 foreign-born residents. By 2004, there were more than 300,000 foreign-born people residing in Minnesota. For the first time, a majority was under age thirty-five and many of them were of school age (State of Minnesota Demographic Center, 2008).

In the urban district in which I teach ESL, the percentage of non-native speakers climbed by 270 percent between 1990 and 2006. Compared to their native English-speaking peers, ELLs are three times as likely to be low achievers, twice as likely to repeat a grade level, and often come from homes linked to poverty and hardship (Saint Paul Public Schools English Language Learner website, 2008).

The challenge of educating students who are not fluent in the language in which they are taught and tested leads to the question of how to accomplish this task. Traditional pedagogical methods may not be appropriate for students who have little English language proficiency, little understanding of US culture, and who may never have attended school in any country. Even with educational reform underway, and the schools' use of research findings, brain studies, standards-based teaching and best

practices, ELLs need new types of programmatic responses (McKeon, 1994). In addition, these programs must not assume that all ELLs have identical needs (Freeman & Freeman, 2002)

Capstone Question

The goal of this thesis is to examine the results of implementing two instructional techniques, and their effects on the writing of ELLs. The techniques are teacher-modeled writing and student oral rehearsal. These techniques are two of several that my collaborating classroom teacher (whom I will call “Andrea”) and I have adapted or relied upon over the years, in order to make Writer’s Workshop (hereafter referred to as WW) accessible to ELLs. Thus, the question I have specifically chosen to answer in this thesis is: How does teacher-modeled writing and student oral rehearsal affect grade two ESL writing?

In this capstone, teacher modeling will take the form of read-alouds from teacher personal notebooks (that is, from entries created earlier by me), or from composing samples before students on a large chart. Student oral rehearsal will consist of guided practice which consistently includes discussing the upcoming day’s work with teachers, partners or in small groups prior to writing.

I chose to examine these techniques because I have often felt a greater “pay-off” for ELLs with their use, as compared to other techniques. In my experience, not only does incorporation of my own writing provide a tangible example specifically tailored to the

activity at hand, it also seems to forge a teacher-student connection which can help lower the student's "affective filter" (Krashen, 1981) thereby enhancing student performance.

Oral rehearsal has a multi-level pay-off as well. Nina Mosser, a literacy and content coach in my district, points out that peer discussion is crucial in all content areas for ELLs because it helps them build relationships in the classroom, gives them the opportunity to link new knowledge to their already-existing schema, and practice language development. However, when students orally rehearse their writing in a guided discussion, they are centering their dialogue on language itself. They must select, practice with, and sometimes defend the actual words they want to use in their written pieces. This brings a metacognitive aspect to language learning (Mosser, personal communication, December, 2006).

As I stated earlier, I have often relied upon these two strategies while teaching Writer's Workshop. However, I have never used them in a controlled situation, or documented the results formally. This thesis gives me the opportunity to do so.

A Mini United Nations

Over one hundred languages and language dialects are represented in the urban school district where I teach. This includes the majority groups of Hmong, Somali and Spanish. Other significant student populations speak Vietnamese, Burmese/Karen, Amharic and Oromo. A recent list also showed small pockets of students with such home languages as Brahui, Cutchi, Ewe, Telugu, Nuer, Oromiffa, Twi, and Tigrinya (Saint Paul Public Schools English Language Learner website, 2007).

According to the district's demographics, 40 percent of my district's students currently come from homes where a language other than English is spoken. Some schools, like my own, have an ESL population of almost 60 percent (2008). The classroom in which I am conducting my research for this thesis contains 75 percent ELLs. A percentage like this cannot be viewed as a sub-population but rather as a significant demographic segment--one that has an impact on, and triggers changes in, the schools and surrounding communities.

ESL Teaching Methods Past and Present

Over the years, instructional methodology for ELLs in my district has ranged from isolating them in their own "sheltered" classrooms, sometimes called TESOL rooms (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) to "pull-out," in which students are members of grade-level classrooms, but are taken out for a limited time in order to address language and content. These approaches can be ineffective or impractical for many reasons. Isolation marginalizes ELLs and deprives them of English-speaking peer models. In addition, there is the challenge of finding instructional space to accommodate ELLs who may comprise more than half the class.

A newer method of instructing newcomers used in my district—and the type of classroom in which I am doing my research—is the "Language Academy." In this model, up to ten English speakers ranked as "level-one" (see Appendix A) are clustered

in grade-level classrooms. The ESL teacher supports these students (as well as the ELLs more familiar with English) within their classrooms for up to two hours daily. He or she collaborates with the classroom teacher for both planning and lesson delivery. This “collaborative inclusion” model benefits native and non-native speakers alike because the teacher-student ratio is cut in half, and both teachers can support all learners. This also exposes the ELLs to grade-level content with their peers.

Language Theory

Today, language theorists stress the importance of “content-based instruction.” This refers to the teaching of language through--and intrinsically related to--academic content, because language is acquired more easily when one must use it in authentic circumstances or for an authentic purpose (rather than in a practice situation or as a topic of study on its own) (Krashen, 1983; Samway 1992). Some research also points to the necessity of explicitly addressing the rules of English such as grammar and syntax, termed “form-focused instruction,” so that students can practice with linguistic features they will eventually encounter, but which may not come up frequently in the classroom (Lightbown & Spada, 1999).

If the teacher subscribes to the philosophy that ELLs are as ready developmentally for academic content as their English-speaking peers, and teaches the vocabulary and language necessary for a task, ELLs will have a greater chance of success. There is no point in holding up their education while they learn basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS), which can take three or more years, or the

more challenging cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), which can take five or more years (Cummins, 1979).

Since there can be educational gaps as well as language gaps, elementary collaborative teams in my district begin academics with newcomers using techniques such as scaffolding (high teacher support that is gradually withdrawn) and differentiated instruction (matching the teaching to the specific needs of the student) without delay. They continue until ELLs reach more independent levels of English competency.

Literacy Framework and Best Practice

The workshop method described more fully later is a widely used process approach to teaching. My district currently requires elementary teachers to use this methodology when teaching both reading and writing. Workshop methodology dovetails with the guiding principles contained in the handbook my district has published for teachers, the *Literacy Framework Grades K-3* (Saint Paul Public Schools Office of Instructional Services, 2005). In WW, as in the *Literacy Framework*, teachers are expected to establish clear expectations, use modeling and “accountable talk” (communication within a discipline that relies on established norms, and is based on evidence and sound reasoning), require students to manage their own learning, and view learning as apprenticeship. The workshop format also allows teachers to differentiate for every student.

While the general workshop model benefits all students, it is important to keep in mind that WW itself was developed by native speakers for a native-speaking population. Many parts of WW are effective for ELLs. However, some are less effective and need thoughtful adaptation and modification. This adaptation has been the trend recently, but it has been slow. Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) state that there is ample research on second language *acquisition*, but second language *writing* currently lacks one cohesive and comprehensive theory. To date, it relies on theoretical frameworks based largely on first-language research. This explains why, until the last few years, district teacher trainings for all three WW levels, with their video demonstrations, student work samples, and discussions, were focused mostly on native English speakers. Also, until recently, teacher-support texts have been aimed primarily at native speaking students.

Writer's Workshop Overview

WW will be discussed in depth in chapter two. Generally it is an approach to teaching writing that utilizes practices of authentic writers. As part of a writing community, students write daily on self-selected topics and move through the process of drafting, revising, conferring and publishing (Saint Paul Public Schools Office of Instructional Services, 2005).

Those WW aspects supportive of ELLs include an environment in which students choose their own topics, discuss ongoing work, and elicit responses from each other. These all help motivate writing and lower anxiety. WW also contains within its framework predictable rituals and routines--a comforting asset to individuals who must

rely on environmental cues rather than language to navigate the classroom. Mosser points out that the language of the specific rituals and routines themselves are language-learning opportunities because they are tied to explicit modeling (Mosser, personal communication, December, 2006).

Writer's Workshop Concerns

In my years of teaching, I have found WW to be organic, pithy, meaningful, and academically rigorous because of its self-sponsorship, its philosophy of apprenticeship to quality writers, and its identification and exploration of writing techniques. Writer's Workshop requires not only higher order thinking skills in its participants, but also the ability to select which skills and processes are appropriate for which task.

However, as I stated earlier, some aspects of WW trouble me as an ESL teacher. Linguistic adaptations, a conscious effort to build or connect to background knowledge, and a slower pace for ELLs, address only some of these issues. There are cultural concerns as well, largely unarticulated, but critically important.

One issue is that Hmong and Somali, the languages which a majority of my students speak, have only been written since the latter half of the twentieth century. For this reason, there will probably be less emphasis on writing in these cultures than in western society. However, teachers must not be deceived into thinking students from these societies have no (or minimal) literacy. Hmong and Somali are two cultures that rely on oral story-telling, a rich tradition which predates reading and writing and

contains commonly understood “literacy” techniques such as elaboration, pregnant pause, theatrics, ineffability, and mystery.

Storytelling, by its nature a social act (because it is conveyed to a live audience), contains a critical immediacy not present in the much more solitary acts of reading and writing. In fact, Joseph Sobol, director of the storytelling graduate program at East Tennessee State University, stated in a radio interview that he sees reading and writing as interventions which distance the story-receiver from the story-teller (2007). By necessity, reading and writing must be compact and economical. To students from story-telling cultures, this means that important oral elements such as magic, immediacy and authenticity are diminished or lost (Denning, 2007). It is no surprise then, that someone from an oral story-telling culture will question the value of sitting down alone to record thoughts.

Another issue is that the constructivist philosophy found in WW has a strong reliance on independence, self-determinism, and open-endedness. Form, historically stressed in ESL instruction (often over content), is downplayed initially in WW as writers collect and experiment with their own ideas. Because of this self-sponsorship, there are no wrong responses. These features can be disconcerting to students of other cultures who are trained to produce the “one right answer.” Ferris and Hedgcock state that many minorities and non-native speakers “have not been socialized into adopting, let alone embracing, the non-directive, discovery-based instruction precepts and practices of process-writing” (2005, p. 7). In fact, I witnessed this firsthand in one of

my former students, a Nigerian newcomer, who approached me after each mini-lesson for many weeks, saying uncertainly, “Teacher, what do I copy from the board?” Additionally, Ferris and Hedgcock caution that many of these open-ended elements found in process-based instruction may communicate to the non-native speaker that the finished product is unimportant.

One more critical consideration when teaching process writing is that it focuses on non-fiction. The point of entry is always the clear-hearted self, which Natalie Goldberg terms “the dark, rich center” (*Wild Mind* writing workshop, 1990). This is the only place a writer can begin, because if writing is to be truly authentic, it must originate in known territory.

This can be a problem for two reasons. First, I have noticed in classrooms I serve that cultures vary in what one might term their “level of reserve.” The Hmong seem to exhibit a strong cultural modesty, have a higher group allegiance and place less emphasis on individualism than do westerners. Talking about one’s exploits is seen as bragging. In my experience, the Somalis are generally slow to disclose private matters also. Thus, ELLs may be reticent to feature themselves during the sorts of exercises WW entails, such as writing about proud moments (designed to lead to personal narrative and memoir), or listing things they know how to do well (intended as pre-writing for a “How-to”), etc. Self-disclosure can be daunting to anyone. It takes courage to mine that rich core, and bring what is there into the light. ELLs, often thrust into a new land and new school--in short, a bewildering state of affairs--may find it

difficult to trust the situation enough to take the sort of risks WW asks of them.

Furthermore, they may want to leave nightmarish memories behind, not intentionally revisit them.

I also have noted over the years that many beginning writers--including native speakers--lack objectivity when it comes to writing. They have a tendency to take themselves out of the story altogether and write huge, fictional narratives in the third person, often based on movies or canned television adventure shows. None of the preceding issues are unique to ELLs. However, I feel they constellate frequently enough in this population to warrant sensitive and strategic adaptation of the WW curriculum.

The concerns I have expressed above are too numerous to address in one study. However, my hope is that the techniques I amplify will help allay some of the linguistic and cultural concerns that arise. Composing a piece before the class, or reading aloud from my own writer's notebook will model explicitly the sorts of entries I am expecting as well as present an open invitation to write. Daily oral rehearsal will allow students to plan and develop their writing before a listening audience, and practice with the English they are going to use. I hope both will boost the confidence levels of the ELLs enough for them to take more writing risks.

Student Participants

The male and female ELLs in this study represent a spectrum of writing abilities and attitudes, from reluctance to write and/or difficulty starting, to self-confidence, enthusiasm for writing, and regret when it is time to stop. I have not analyzed each

student's preference. I recognize that knowing why someone loves to write and another has trouble starting is important for teachers to understand. However, in this study, I concern myself with whether the amplified techniques will move the writers from where they are to a place of greater understanding, confidence, self-reliance and output.

Why I Chose to Examine Writing

There are many reasons I have selected the area of writing for my thesis. One is its close and reciprocal relationship to reading. Marie Clay's definition of each skill illustrates their interrelatedness, for she describes reading as a "message-getting, problem-solving activity" and writing as a "message-sending problem-solving activity." Both, she says, similarly connect "invisible patterns of oral language with visible symbols" (2005, p. 1).

In his book, *A Writer Teaches Writing* (2004), Donald M. Murray argues that there is a stronger correlation between the ability to write and the ability to read than the inverse. In other words, writers can read, but readers cannot necessarily write. Thus, if we want students to be able to read well, they need to be able to write well.

Furthermore, writing is a quick and reliable diagnostic tool for assessing what the student understands about reading. Adria Klein, my district's national reading consultant, states that if students are not using punctuation, paragraphing, phonemics and phonetics as they write, chances are they are not recognizing them as they read, either (Reader's Workshop Lecture, June 2006). I would add that writing further demonstrates what students are *hearing*. A colleague tells the story of an ELL's written

narrative, containing the expression “chre” in several places. It was obviously an important element in the story, so the teacher probed further. When the student described an injury that resulted in a fall from a tree, the teacher was able to correct both the misspelling and mispronunciation to the proper “tree.” Identifying these issues in student writing is particularly important for teachers of ELLs, who can then use them to personalize teaching points for each learner.

Another reason I chose to examine WW techniques is personal interest. I am a writer, and writing has become my passion in the curriculum. Knowing this, the classroom teachers I work with often request my (ESL) service in their rooms during WW. This means I co-teach writing almost all day, which has given me ample opportunity to notice what seems to work for ELLs and what does not.

My Background

I am currently licensed in elementary classroom teaching as well as ESL. I have been a classroom teacher longer, but an ESL teacher most recently. It is the position I have held since 2001. I hold no degrees in writing. However, for more than twenty years, I have explored writing in classes, workshops, and conferences, both locally and nationally. I have also completed all three levels of WW sponsored by my school district and have finished a novel.

My published work includes newsletters, articles on both writing and teaching, as well as restaurant reviews and a family lifestyles column for two Belgian periodicals when I lived overseas. In the past, I sat on a committee of five educators who revised

the Language Academy Handbook for the district. I feel I have a strong grounding in writing. This fortunate situation has allowed me to combine teaching and writing in my daily professional life, and now in this thesis.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I addressed the importance of writing to the individual entering the twenty-first century job market and examined demographic data pertinent to the ESL population I teach. I described historic teaching methods for ELLs and why they are no longer effective. I also discussed general research on language teaching and current classroom trends. I then provided an overview of Writer's Workshop and explained my interest and concerns leading to the Writer's Workshop techniques I will study.

In chapter two, I will define Writer's Workshop in depth and examine research and data related to my topic. I will also discuss the second grade learner, and review grade-level writing standards. In chapter three, I will describe the methods I will use and how I will gather information on student writing. In chapter four, where I analyze the data, I will discover if I have succeeded. In chapter five, I will reflect on how I can use my data to shape future Writer's Workshops I teach, discuss the limitations of the study, and list recommendations for further study on similar topics.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

As I stated in chapter one, I am the collaborating ESL teacher assigned to a second grade classroom, comprised of 75 percent ELLs. Our challenge, like the challenge of many schools across the country with ESL populations, is to present language through--not apart from--grade-level instruction. In the district where I teach, grade-level instruction includes a comprehensive daily writing curriculum called Writer's Workshop, or WW, which we began using in the 1990's.

My purpose here is to answer the question: How does teacher-modeled writing and student oral rehearsal affect grade two ESL writing? I chose these techniques because they are both WW methods and best-practice techniques for ELLs.

As I proceed through the study, I will note specific and identifiable changes in classroom writing behavior and products. My hope is that students will have a better idea of teacher expectations, that they begin and sustain writing soon after they return to

their seats, that they incorporate the mini-lesson into their writing, and that writing output will increase quantitatively as well as qualitatively.

I stated earlier that I chose writing because of its interrelatedness to reading, its alignment with my district's pedagogical philosophy, and because of my own personal interest. While I will not be surveying the work of native speakers or newcomers in this thesis, it is my belief that they will profit from these best-practice techniques as well.

In this chapter, I would like to define the Writer's Workshop model my district uses and identify where in the daily writing activities my adaptations will take place. The remainder of the chapter will discuss research and theories of ESL writing, examine the relationship between oral language and literacy, consider the characteristics of grade two writers, and review the writing standards which my district uses.

Writer's Workshop: History

Since this thesis concerns itself with two specific techniques I will employ for ELLs during WW, I feel it is important to describe the general history, philosophy and pedagogy of WW here for those who are not familiar with it. The following will be an in-depth treatment.

For many generations, writing instruction was based on a traditional paradigm of discrete, prescribed compositions such as an analysis of canonical literature or writing to a prompt. The emphasis was customarily on the product or outcome, with a great deal of teaching attention paid to mechanics and correctness.

The critics of traditional writing instruction, such as Pritchard and Honeycutt, refer to a lack of direct instruction in these methods as well as a tendency to merge functions such as proofreading and editing, instead of viewing them as separate processes (2006). Ferris and Hedgcock point out the irony in the fact that, although very little instructional time was devoted to pre-writing activities such as planning, drafting, peer critique, or revising written products, teachers expected students to master a wide range of school-based written genres (2005).

In the 1970's, researchers began to study how writers worked in an attempt to bring authentic writing to the classroom. What resulted was an expressive approach to writing in which the writer is viewed as the individual creator of ideas, and proceeds through the process of discovering or selecting ideas, expressing them in writing, and finally editing and revising the texts (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). This has been broadly labeled the "process" or "workshop" method of writing. Process writing does not discount the mechanics and correctness of earlier programs. It simply views them as the final steps in a cyclic and recursive creative process.

Roles: Teacher, Student, Community

The teachers' role in WW is significantly different from previous writing programs. As Ray states in *Wondrous Words* (1999), teachers do not teach *writing*, they teach *writers*. Teachers are also encouraged to become part of the writing community by maintaining a writing notebook, and attempting the techniques themselves.

The students' role in WW is central. They begin not by writing, but by first establishing a writing community. Samway, addressing this distinct environment, points out that writing requires a time to talk and watch other writers work (1992). Fay and Whaley, in the book *Becoming One Community*, corroborate this idea. They quote James Britton, who says that a good writing classroom "floats on a sea of talk" (2004, p. 153).

The writing community is vital because it is a microcosm of the students' writing universe. For many, peers will be the first readers of a work, and will give a great amount of feedback and support during the writing process. This is good for everyone, but especially critical for ELLs because language and vocabulary development are built into the heart of the instruction. The situation also provides immediacy, authenticity and holistic talk. Fay and Whaley note that storytellers relate whole stories, not isolated bits. Interested others can probe for specifics, which helps move the story toward a sense of unity (2004). Because this "community" idea addresses the lack of oral-story-telling elements familiar to children coming from non-western cultures (discussed in chapter one), it is important to set up areas of the classroom for the critical activity of oral discussion as well as quiet writing.

Writer's Workshop: Apprenticeship

Another WW activity is the unit of study entitled *Living the Writerly Life*. It comes from Calkins' *The Art of Teaching Writing* (1994). In it, students emulate writers

by engaging in exercises to hone their senses. This amounts to close observation of the world, then recording and responding to what is observed.

As the year progresses, all go on to “apprentice” themselves to quality writers, by reading, discussing and attempting “writerly” techniques, such as describing small moments, practicing enticing leads, or using repetition or rhyme. Students also complete (publish) work in selected genres, such as personal narrative and poetry. Here again is another example of intrinsic language development, because understanding and building craft elements contributes to oral proficiency through discussion and practice.

Since the 1970’s, WW has evolved from non-directive approaches where process was valued over product, and which appeared to have very little impact on writing quality, to today’s model which includes procedures, genres and strategies that are directly taught and thoughtfully practiced (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006).

Writer’s Workshop: Making Meaning

Writing as a way of discovering meaning is also an idea that resulted from the research on process approaches. Samway views WW as both a theory-building and theory-testing process that aids in meaning-making (1992). Donald M. Murray, often cited as the inventor of the term “writing workshop,” describes writing as an act of thought, and notes that writers are often surprised by what materializes on the page (2004). The preceding views oppose the earlier belief that writing is a linear progression, which begins only after the thinking is done. Samway believes writing is a two-way process, citing Perl’s 1979 description of it as a retrospective structuring. That is, writers

move forward by looking back, and readjusting earlier passages to align with current ones, all the while keeping an eye on where they want to go (1992).

In my district, even kindergarteners and first graders participate in WW because primary students profit from it as much as older students. Bayer's 1999 study illustrates that a dramatic attitude-change occurred in first graders who actively participated in WW just two to three times per week. By the end of the study, the number of students who looked forward to WW had doubled. The percentage of those who liked to write increased from 25 percent initially to 70 percent.

In a recent WW lesson I co-taught, a seven-year-old boy described the stringy membrane inside a pumpkin as "orange spider webs." The same student later observed that, when he tapped the pumpkin, it sounded like a drum. These are meaningful, writerly, poetic and intimate observations—the kind WW fosters.

Writer's Workshop: Format and Philosophy

My school district's WW is based on the Columbia University Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project, begun over 20 years ago. Chief consultant has been Susan Radley, one of the original members in Columbia's writing "think tank." Other members included Lucy Calkins, Joanne Hindley, Katie Wood Ray, and Ralph Fletcher (Radley, personal conversation, August 23, 2004). These early participants have spawned a body of work that addresses the myriad considerations of teaching WW. District teachers and students rely on these resources heavily.

Together, Radley and the district have developed a program aligned with grade-level, district and national writing standards. According to these 1999 NCEE (National Center on Education and the Economy) standards as well as my district's *Literacy Framework Grades K-3* (2005), students are expected to participate in a daily Writers Workshop of approximately sixty minutes, in which they:

- maintain a notebook or folder specifically dedicated to this purpose
- generate their own topics, and choose which to work on over time
- write for a variety of audiences
- extend pieces of writing (turning a narrative into a poem, for example)
- read extensively (or listen to read-alouds) from quality “mentor texts,” in order to scrutinize and discuss writing techniques
- experiment with and emulate different types of entries, techniques, and genres
- edit/critique their own and peer work using commonly agreed-upon criteria and rubrics
- select, polish and publish at least ten pieces of work per year
- participate in a culminating event of finished work, which includes reading from the author's chair.

Writer's Workshop: Daily Activities

The architecture of WW follows Calkins' and Mermelstein's three-part plan, recommended in *Units of Study for Primary Writing: Launching the Writing Workshop* (2003a), is comprised of the following three components:

- a seven to ten minute teacher-led mini-lesson, student-driven and tied to previous work
- a “try-it,” in which the class works for a sustained amount of time with a specific idea or technique
- a follow-up share.

During the sustained writing period, the teacher conferences with individual students. Each student will be at a different place in the publishing cycle. Personal conferences and group shares both clarify and reinforce the mini-lessons.

Adapting the Mini-lesson

The daily mini-lesson, taken from *Units of Study for Primary Writing: Nuts and Bolts of Writing* (Calkins L. & Mermelstein, L., 2003b), consists of:

- a brief statement that connects to previous work and sets the new work within the context of ongoing work
- a teacher-led lesson on a specific aspect of writing, mechanics or organization
- active engagement, a pre-writing activity while the group is still gathered, such as guided practice
- a link from the mini-lesson to the independent work for the day.

It is in the mini-lesson portion of WW where I will rely on my two selected teaching techniques through amplified use of modeling from teacher notebooks, and abundant oral rehearsal (guided practice) and discussion.

General Literacy Development

Reading, writing, listening and speaking are the four language domains which education targets. None are acquired monolithically; all are interrelated. Writing--like reading, listening and speaking--is a developmental process. From the early literacy activities of scribbling and writing individual letters, to writing their names from left to right, and finally stringing words together and initial attempts at spelling, children begin to extrapolate and experiment with more advanced ideas (Clay, 2002). Barone, Mallette, and Xu caution, however, that early literacy behavior varies widely. It is dependent on factors such as children's interest in environmental text, as well as their opportunity to interact with it. Early literacy awareness also has to do with the emphasis a culture places on reading and writing (2005).

ESL Writing Development

In her studies in a bilingual classroom, Samway found that ELLs develop writing in idiosyncratic ways, just as their English-speaking peers do (1992). Peregoy and Boyle note that second language writers employ what they know about English in creating texts for different audiences and purposes in the same way that first language writers do (2001). I have observed this as well. Like their native-speaking peers, ELLs will imitate

the left to right, top-to-bottom flow of prose, the vertical format of a list, or the distinct configuration of a friendly letter once they begin to notice these singularities.

Samway concluded that writing is a process accessible to all children no matter what their relative proficiency is in English. That is, children acquiring English can communicate their thoughts and experiences in writing without high levels of language development or a mastery of English syntax and semantics (2002).

Among Hudelson's similar findings (1988) are the following:

- ELLs can create their own meanings while learning English
- ELLs can respond to the work of others and can use another learner's responses to their [own] work to make substantive revisions in their creations
- Texts produced by ELLs look very much like those produced by young native English speakers. These texts demonstrate that the writers can make predictions about how the written language works. As the writers' predictions change, the texts change
- Children approach writing and develop as writers differently from one another
- The classroom environment has a significant impact on ESL children's development as writers.
- Culture may affect the writer's view of writing, of the functions or purposes for writing, and of themselves as writers.

- The ability to write in the native language facilitates the child's ESL writing in several different ways. Native language writing provides learners with information about the purposes of writing. Writing ability in the native language provides second language learners with both linguistic and non-linguistic resources that they can use as they approach second language writing. In addition, second language learners apply the knowledge about writing gained in the first language settings to second language settings.

From the above research, it is apparent that ELLs not only can express themselves effectively through writing, but they should be expected to do so. Hudelson goes on to recommend the use of Writer's Workshop model for ELLs, because she feels that process writing helps them become comfortable with the various phases of writing progression.

It is interesting to note that Hudelson's final point addresses what is called "literacy transfer." This is the phenomenon of applying what one knows about literacy conventions in one language to the literacy conventions of another. If a student understands that "print bears a systematic relationship to spoken language...carries meaning, and that reading and writing can be used for many purposes," then they do not need to relearn these concepts when learning a new language (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001, p. 15).

ELLs and Process Writing

Other researchers support process writing for ELLs. Co-authors Herrell and Jordan (2004) see benefits stemming from the verbal interactions and cognitive tasks

needed during group discussions, sharing ideas, partner work and peer help with revising and editing. They also point out that a self-selected topic can validate each learner's experience. Further, the community environment can lower anxiety and motivate students to write. Among the "adaptations" they list for ELLs is modeling each step of the process, one of the techniques I use in my research.

Peregoy and Boyle (2001) corroborate the above, noting that the response groups found in process writing enhance personal relationships as well as provide numerous opportunities for reader feedback on expression and correctness. They also state that, "by setting editing aside as a separate phase, process writing frees English language learners to elaborate their ideas first and make corrections last. Yet, through the editing process they grow in their awareness of English grammar, punctuation and spelling" (p. 211).

Chamot and O'Malley (1994) believe one advantage of process writing for ELLs comes from the fact that, when children write from their own experiences and then share through group work and publishing, teachers and peers get to know and value them, which enhances classroom relationships. They also state that ELLs benefit from cooperative assistance during revising and editing because these occasions provide opportunities for oral discussion and language development on authentic topics. This meaningful and contextual embedding is in opposition to teaching a prescribed sequence of discrete grammar or vocabulary skills, and aligns with Vygotsky's social theory (addressed later in this thesis). The foregoing are outcomes that the student writer would probably not experience in traditional writing programs.

Special ESL Considerations

While Peregoy and Boyle support process writing for ELLs, stating that many of the processes of English writing are similar for both native speakers and ELLs, they also caution that there are some key differences. For example, many students who have full expressive ability in their home language may be limited in their English vocabulary, syntax and idiomatic expressions (2001). This can lead to frustration on the part of the students.

Teachers also can feel overwhelmed by problems such as a student's lack of English mechanics, and easily overlook his or her other writing strengths (for example, organizing and communicating ideas, or a richness of expression). Hernández cautions teachers to avoid this "deficit model" which concentrates on writing deficiencies rather than writing richness. Like Samway and Hudelson, Hernández discovered that ELLs do not need to be in control of the basics of writing (spelling, punctuation, and grammar) before employing the larger processes (ideas, organization, and audience) (2001).

Cautionary Note

It is important in educational discussions that the word "literacy" is not strictly interpreted as reading and writing, nor as reading and writing *in English*. Many ELLs come from countries where they have gone to school and are able to read and write. However, as stated earlier, there are other students with less formal education coming from cultures with strong emphasis on oral tradition. Another consideration is that many ELLs may not have been exposed to read-alouds in English as have their native-speaking

peers, an activity Perego and Boyle view as vital for ESL literacy (2001). Thus, ELLs may not be familiar with the written conventions or a “story grammar,” such as the fact that stories have a beginning, middle and end, a problem and solution, characterization, action, details, etc.

It is important to note here that, unlike other writing approaches, WW emphasizes reading aloud as a major and indispensable component of the approach. Teachers and students rely a great deal on the use of “mentor texts” which are selections that exemplify a genre or certain aspects of the writer’s craft. So all students, including ELLs, hear not just any texts in English, but the carefully chosen, quality literature of accomplished writers. One advantage of the read-aloud is that it gives all students a common experience and background knowledge from which to operate.

Teachers must also understand that the writing task can be especially difficult for newcomers and level one speakers who

- may not be familiar with how to hold/use a writing tool
- are in the process of moving from spoken to written language at the same time they are moving from a first language to a second language.

These newcomers will not immediately be capable of the sustained writing expected in Writer’s Workshop.

One final point is that, although students in the upper grades are generally using less picture support in their writing, the newcomers and limited English speakers at all

grade levels must rely on illustration a great deal. In fact, my newcomers' first entries are usually pictures, which I then begin to help them label.

General Research on Modeling

My first amplified strategy during WW, modeling from teacher writer's notebooks, is based on two of the principles found in my district's *Literacy Framework: Grades K-3* (2005). Principle number two lists "Clear Expectations" which include modeling and displayed criteria that meets standards. Principle number nine lists "Learning As Apprenticeship" and incorporates modeling and analyzing complex thinking.

As stated in chapter one, "modeling teacher writing" in this thesis refers to both reading aloud from an already existing entry in the notebook or thinking aloud while composing a piece before the students on chart paper. In some cases, it will also refer to a teacher-led, group-generated piece. These group-generated writings have several advantages. One is that they are invitational and inclusionary. Students feel welcome to contribute ideas. In doing so, they can claim some ownership. Another advantage is that, when completed, the large chart paper can be posted in the room as an example. These activities help to lower the affective filter, benefiting all learners (Krashen, 1981). All "teacher modeling" I rely on will be writing that meets a criteria, initiates discussion, and/or demonstrates a teaching point.

The book *Strategies That Work* (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000) is a resource for teaching reading. But the advice in it can be extrapolated to any subject area, including

writing. The authors strongly advocate modeling, stating that much of teaching is about making *explicit* what is *implicit*. They define “explicit” as showing learners how we (as proficient readers and writers) think, so that students can use these strategies to help themselves construct meaning and move toward independence. Fountas and Pinnell advocate modeling writing as a general teaching strategy also, (2001) and Lucy Calkins (1994) and Lois Bridges (1997) both refer to modeling as a “best” teaching practice.

ESL Research on Modeling

ESL researchers and advocates support the strategy of modeling as well. Fay and Whaley (2004) suggest that teachers model for ELLs, being mindful that the language used is both accessible and understandable. Chamot and O’Malley encourage the idea of teacher “think-alouds” as tools for increasing student awareness, because in doing so, teachers provide a window on their own metacognitive processes. Teachers can also refer to past experiences and useful known strategies that will help students cope with the task at hand (1994).

I believe modeling is particularly important for this age (seven and eight year-olds), because many grade two students are still in Jean Piaget’s pre-operational and concrete-operational stages. They can perform mental functions tied to actual observations and concrete experiences, but they do not yet easily understand abstract or hypothetical concepts (Nairne, 2003). Thus, if they can see an entry being created, or hear a teacher thinking aloud about an already existing one, they will have a better grasp of what is expected of them. These writing “moves” applied to their own work are what

Katie Wood Ray calls “envisioning” (*What You Know by Heart: How to Develop Curriculum for Your Writing Workshop*, 2002).

Another reason I find teacher writing important is that it demonstrates to students how to “write small,” a technique Ralph Fletcher espouses as the single most important lesson a writer can learn (1996). Writing small means recording the important little details that express the essence of something, thereby bringing a piece to life. Writing small also compels student writers to slow down so they can give greater weight to the particulars, instead of rushing through a grandiose and superficial account.

Oral Language and Writing

During the “active engagement” segment of the mini-lesson I will ask students to rehearse what they will write for the day before going off to get started. It may be a simple check-in on the status of previous work and how they intend to proceed, or a response to a teacher prompt. This is the second technique I chose to amplify. It requires that students think and make decisions as well as articulate their thoughts in a social context. Oral discussion aligns with the district’s *Literacy Framework Grades K-3* (2005) number five (Academic Rigor in a Thinking Curriculum), number six (Accountable Talk), number seven (Socialized Intelligence), and number eight (Self-Management of Learning) (2005).

Variations of the above principles are also found in other research on best practices. The federally funded Center for Research on Education, Diversity and

Excellence (CREDE) lists its *Five Standards for Effective Pedagogy* (2002). Standards one, three and five address some aspect of collaborative learning, such as arranging classroom seating to facilitate communication and working jointly, encouraging students to use content vocabulary, and ensuring that all pupils feel included in conversations.

How is oral language related to literacy? More specifically, why is oral rehearsal an important strategy found in both WW and in ESL teaching? Many of the resources I consulted referred to the importance of the socio-cultural theory, particularly to Vygotsky's writings found in the 1978 publication, *Mind in Society*. In it, Vygotsky discusses the relationship between speech and action. He maintains that a child's ability to problem-solve evolves, through a series of developmental events, from initial social dialogue about a problem with significant adults (an *interpersonal* function) into an internalized problem-solving dialogue (an *intrapersonal* function). To rephrase this in current educator language, meaningful discussions with others (external discourse) lead to quality self-talk (internal discourse). If this is true, then the discussions in the classroom must be numerous, and the vocabulary, rich and robust.

However, limited English speakers will not be able to take advantage of this meaningful discourse if they do not receive what Krashen calls "comprehensible input" which comes from his "Input Hypothesis" (1983). Comprehensible input is pertinent, contextualized information that is not yet part of the learner's second language schema. Effective use of comprehensible input requires the learner to "stretch" in order to integrate it. Learning will occur only when new schema is introduced in manageable

increments since a level too far beyond the individual's current understanding will not be comprehensible. Krashen calls these new, manageable chunks of information the "i+1." In this model, the "i" represents the individual's current competence level. The "+1" represents the new learning that will naturally follow the learner's current competency.

Krashen's i+1 is similar to Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" or ZPG, defined as the tasks a child can carry out currently with help, but will be able to carry out immanently in an independent fashion (1978). While Krashen addresses the "input" a child receives from his or her environment, he does not emphasize the importance of the social interaction and negotiation as Vygotsky does. Much of the ESL literature currently combines both theories. For example, Haag and Williams contend that, because many ELLs are shy or reticent to participate in classroom discussions, the language in the classroom must not just be comprehensible but invitational as well (2004).

In the book *Writing Sense: Integrated Reading and Writing Lessons for English Language Learners K-8*, authors Kendall and Khuon state that opportunities for ELLs to interact and negotiate for meaning are essential (2006). And among Echevarria's teaching strategies for ELLs are teacher language that allows for comprehensible input, the use of activities that provide ample opportunity for discussion and activities that involve ninety to one hundred percent of the class (2000). It is worth noting here that cognitive input does not need to be in English initially. Input in the students' home

language actually allows for cognition at the highest developmental level possible for the student. Appropriate English vocabulary can be supplied afterwards.

Shanahan theorizes that children who have well-developed oral language do better with writing because both depend on similar underlying cognitive abilities. These include such things as working memory, linguistic cohesion and morphological knowledge. He also posits that as the child progresses through the stages of literacy, there appears to be a closer and more reciprocal link between oral language and writing (*Relations Among Oral Language, Reading and Writing Development*, 2006). Peregoy and Boyle believe that oral discussion prior to writing “represents one kind of scaffold to literacy,” helps students organize ideas, and provides essential vocabulary (2001, p. 224). It also offers a safe and informal arena for practicing language. Clay defines oral language as a rich resource that serves both reading and writing (2005) and bemoans the fact that teachers do not include it enough in lessons (1998).

Calkins also believes that oral discussion before writing is critical, especially for ELLs. She advises that classroom teachers support oral storytelling from the first day of school and allow children to talk to each other in their respective home languages. She also suggests that children write in a home language initially. This supports the child’s first literacy and aids in literacy transfer (2003b).

Oral Rehearsal Guidelines

From the preceding, one can conclude that oral rehearsal for writing, if used in manageable chunks, grounds new learning and language in a social and cultural context.

It also leads to the follow-up activity of writing with intent, because it expands vocabulary and extends language. However, unless students understand their role in peer or group conversation, oral discussion can dissolve into non-specific, dead-end statements such as “I like your ideas,” or “That sounds good.” Since the goal is to help the writer clarify ideas in order to move the learning, students at my school are coached in accountable talk early on. In writing, for example, teachers model probing for specifics, then circulate during student discussion, steering peers toward fruitful conversation. After the discussion, students are expected to share what transpired in their groups with the class. Some teachers further check for listening skills by asking students to repeat, not what they themselves said in their discussion, but what someone else said. This practice of rephrasing provides information on participation levels as well as what students are actually learning from the process. The TESOL Organization points out the richness these students bring to the classroom. TESOL also notes that native languages and cultures are the foundation upon which to begin teaching English literacy, and that success will be greater when students are able to maintain their home languages as they learn English literacy (2006).

Second Grade Writing Descriptors

The NCEE standards (1999) include a general description as well as general expectations of the second grade writer. The standards state that while kindergarten and first grade consist of learning reading and writing skills, second grade is the time to begin applying these early skills. As they read, second graders are expected to use what they

have learned about phonemics, how words work, context clues and what makes sense, to figure out new words. They also begin mastering English spelling patterns. By second grade, students should be able to recognize and compare not only features of different genres, but also of authors within a genre. In grade two, many will begin to read widely and develop favorite authors or topics.

The NCEE goes on to state that second grade writers can and do use prewriting techniques that employ visual organizers (concept maps, Venn diagrams, etc.), verbal planning with peers, and creating interesting leads. The organization recommends the use of graphic organizers for ELLs of all ages, because they systematize ideas in comprehensible formats, approximate standard English grammar and syntax, model vocabulary and clarify which parts of English speech go where (1999). For example, using a T-chart to compare US and French paper money will keep similar *concepts* opposite each other on the chart (color on one line, size on another, symbols on a third) as well as use similar *parts of speech* (adjectives or nouns). If the teacher includes a middle column for functional words such as conjunctions (for example, American money is green and white *but* French money is multi-colored) students will see how lexical elements relate to one another.

According to the NCEE (1999), second graders are able to understand the need to rewrite, make additions, and delete extraneous details. Generally, they will write longer and more independent texts than first graders, creating lists, letters and thank-you notes. Unless they are ELLs, they will rely on picture and drawing support less. Most of them

are also able and willing to emulate the genres of poems, reports, and memoirs, and will adapt their writing for specific audiences and purposes.

Writing Standards

Second grade writing standards listed in the district's 2005 *Literacy Framework: Grades K-3* (2005), and aligned to national writing standards, include the following:

- writing habits (i.e., write daily, on a variety of topics)
- writing purposes and processes, such as creating believable situations, using dialogue and literary language, and the production of literature (such as poetry and memoirs), reports and functional writing
- responding to literature, through such things as retelling, letters to the author, and rewriting an ending

The state and national standards, which define the ongoing work of the second grade writer, must be applied to all students whether they are native English speakers or not. Often when teachers at my school display student products (with the standards posted beside them), they note somewhere in the posting that the class is "Working Towards Standards." Many educators feel this is acceptable because it signals that, although some students may not yet have achieved the standard, the class is on track, aware of, and striving for the final goal of a standards-acceptable product.

ESL Standards

The TESOL *Pre-K-12 English Language Proficiency Standards* (2006), referred to earlier and used by my district, also align with national and state standards. These standards

address the four domains of reading, writing listening and speaking in all content areas, and incorporate communication for social, intercultural and instructional purposes. The writing component stresses experimenting with a variety of genres for a variety of purposes and audiences. This includes drawing, symbols, or text. TESOL cautions teachers to be aware that ELLs may use writing styles influenced by their home cultures which are not necessarily common to westerners.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I defined Writer's Workshop, and how it can be effective for English language learners. I also provided some cautionary notes when teaching and assessing their written pieces. I examined both general and ESL research that supports the two techniques I will use in my study, teacher modeling and student oral rehearsal before writing. Finally, I looked at the second grade writer, and the standards that drive the teaching of writing in my district. In the next chapter, I will describe the methods I used to research the two WW techniques, including surveys (interviews), observations, and examination of student work.

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

In the previous chapters, I cited studies which found that a type of writing taught in US education (a process approach often called Writer's Workshop), can benefit English language learners. However, many ELLs will not profit from Writer's Workshop (WW) without scaffolding and strategic differentiation, because WW was created for the native English speaker. Since part of my ESL service took place in a second grade WW, I had the opportunity to answer the following specific question and document the answers in this thesis: How does teacher-modeled writing and student oral rehearsal affect grade two ESL writing?

I selected teacher modeling and student oral rehearsal because they are suggested WW techniques, they are listed as a best practice in my school district's *Literacy Framework: Grades K-3* (2005), and they are also one of the methodologies recommended for ELLs. During my study, I employed these techniques consistently. As stated earlier, teacher modeling came from either notebook read-alouds or modeled think-alouds before the class (which included some student input). Student oral rehearsal was comprised of discussions with peer partners, peer groups or teachers prior to writing, in order to help students through the process of selecting a writing topic and deciding on writing vocabulary. My goal was to suggest that consistent and predictable use of these techniques would positively affect student writing in both quantity and quality.

The remainder of this chapter will explain the research method I selected, action research. I will also describe my research classroom as well as the student participants, and discuss the study parameters, including the five techniques I used to gather data.

Action Research: Definition and Rationale

The research method I chose for this thesis is Action Research. According to Mills (2003), action research is a layperson's disciplined examination of himself or herself, carried out in his or her environment, with the idea of solving a problem or improving a situation. Action research is especially suited to the classroom because it involves techniques already familiar to educators: observation, the willingness to solve a problem, discussion, reflection and decision-making. In action research there are no outsiders in the classroom recording data. The "scientists" are ordinary teachers who use quantitative

and qualitative methods in the laboratory of their own workplace to answer a question or address a challenge. Once they see the results, teachers can then take immediate action for themselves.

Action research has many strengths. One is that it can be cyclic in nature. Newly discovered information, if systematically logged, can be implemented, evaluated after a self-determined period of time, and a new plan can be created. This holistic process can continue indefinitely as teachers analyze, refine and integrate new procedures. Another strength of action research is that it is immediate. Findings can be put into practice without delay (Mills, 2003).

My School: Description and Demographics

The school in which I teach (I will use the pseudonym “Highview Elementary”), has an average enrollment of about 450 students, enough to warrant at least two classrooms of each grade, kindergarten through sixth. Highview’s population during the year in which I did my study (2005-2006) was comprised of approximately 24 percent Somali, 20 percent Hmong, and almost 8 percent Spanish speakers. About 59 percent of the student population was ESL, serviced by an ESL team of five teachers and three bilingual aides. That year, Highview made AYP status (Adequate Yearly Progress).

Research Classroom Description

The student composition of the classroom in which I did my research is shown in Table 3.1. There were seventeen students representing four language groups. For my study, I selected the four students who spoke English at level three (considered

Intermediate level on the *Minnesota Modified Student Oral Language Observation Matrix*). The students are identified by the shaded cells appearing in Table 3.1. I selected the level threes because I felt that the classroom teacher and I were already doing a great deal to give the level one and two English speakers a solid writing start. For example, while one teacher conferenced with students working independently, the other lead a small beginning English group which generated an entry together based on the

Table 3.1.
Student Composition of Grade Two Research Classroom

Language	Fluency Level	Gender	
		Boys	Girls
Somali	1	2	2
	2		
	3	1	
	4	1	
Hmong	1		1
	2	1	
	3	2	1
	4		
Phillipine	1		
	2		
	3		
	4		1
Native English	Fluent	4	1
	Total Students	11	6

shaded cells indicate student participants			
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mini-lesson. We also sometimes paired newcomers with other students who spoke the same language and had been in the classroom longer, or worked one-on-one to help label illustrations. Even though I do not refer to them in my study, Andrea and I adapted and modified WW accordingly for the level ones, as we did for all ELLs. For us, what remained was to wait, watch, and guide the level ones. However, the level three English speakers were at a place in their learning where they could profit from acceleration strategies. All of them had been in school for several years, had more familiarity with English conventions, knew WW rituals and routines, and were reading and writing with more ease. Yet, they still had many ESL challenges. I hoped that more frequent oral rehearsal and teacher modeling would give these level three English speakers a boost of confidence and increase their comfort-level in writing. If they left the mini-lesson with ideas solidly in their minds, sitting down to put them on paper might be easier.

Of the four students I selected, three were male and one was female. One child spoke Somali as a home language. The rest spoke Hmong. All were approximately seven years of age. In my study, I used the pseudonyms Abdirahman (male), Choua (female), Vang (male), and Thao (male).

Study Parameters

My study took place over approximately six weeks and included introductions to some new techniques and genres as well as on-going “just-writes” (free writing). In this study, I did not include finished, published student work. My goal was not to follow a piece to completion, but rather to see if the footprints of the mini-lessons and the use of oral rehearsal were evident in the daily work.

Before the study, I sent out parent-permission slips so the four level-three ELLS would be able to participate in the study. Then during the first week, Andrea and I taught writing as usual, employing various techniques common to WW and ESL. At that time, I gathered baseline data using the procedures I describe in the next section. During the ensuing five weeks, Andrea and I presented mini-lessons that consistently employed teacher modeling and student oral rehearsal through guided practice. I again gathered data, in order to compare it to the earlier figures. I hoped to document positive, measurable change.

Five Methods of Gathering Data

During both the baseline lessons and the study, I measured changes both quantitatively and qualitatively using the following tools:

- pre- and post-study surveys, administered approximately six weeks apart
- daily anecdotal notes on lessons
- a daily tally sheet recording how many students were actively engaged in the writing process over two different intervals

- an adapted checklist based on the 1999 NCEE performance standards for elementary school, used once at the end of the study
- word counts comparing baseline output to study output, calculated once at the end of the study.

Pre- and Post-study Surveys

The first set of data came from pre- and post-study surveys (Appendices B and C), which contained approximately ten questions. These were given as verbal interviews with individual students, rather than as written questionnaires, for two reasons. First, I felt the information would be more accurate if the seven- and eight-year old participants did not have to wade through several pages of written questions. Second, I hoped the one-on-one discussion with a teacher would encourage them to elaborate.

The first survey was given before the study began. A second was administered at the end of the study, approximately six weeks after the first. I would like to point out here that, in order not to bring undue attention to the four students in the study, I did not restrict the interviews just to those four but interviewed every student in the class. These seventeen interviews provided useful information for general teaching.

Both surveys contained similar questions and therefore had similar goals. The first four questions were designed to rate affect. They asked how students felt about WW (and why); and which entries in the notebooks students felt positive about (and why). Questions five through eight measured students' cognitive and metacognitive understanding of the WW process. These questions queried such things as what students

felt they were good at in WW, what teachers did or could do to make writing easier, as well as solicited advice about WW for new students.

The post-study survey had two additional questions directly addressing the effects of teacher modeling and oral rehearsal. A final question on both surveys invited students to add anything else they felt was important. After the final interview, I compared both surveys and noted any changes. These changes will be analyzed in chapter five.

Daily Anecdotal Notes

In addition to surveys, a second data-gathering technique used is informal general observation notes on the daily mini-lessons that Andrea and I gave. These served as an important reference point for other data I collected. That is, if questions or anomalies arose as I looked at certain data, I simply checked the writing tasks for the day as clues to possible explanations. The data includes:

- the mini-lessons we used
- the forms of teacher modeling we used (reading from our notebooks or creating an artifact before the class)
- the type of oral rehearsal (turn-and-talk, small group share, whole group share) students engaged in before independent writing time
- notes on how the lessons were proceeding

Daily Tally Sheet: Students On-task at Five and Fifteen Minutes

A third source of data came from an observation of student writing behavior at two different intervals during each writing period. Once students returned to their seats after

the mini-lesson, I set a small timer for five minutes. When it sounded, I counted how many students appeared to be actively engaged in writing. Then, I set it for ten minutes later, and once again checked on active engagement. I considered students on-task if they were writing, conferencing with another individual about writing, or appeared to be quietly reflecting about their writing. The data for the two periods were combined for each day. I then took an average number of words for the baseline period and again for the study so that I could compare on-task writing behavior.

Adapted Checklist

The fourth set of data came from a one-time examination of individual student notebooks at the end of the study, using a checklist which I adapted from the 1999 NCEE standards (see Appendix D). My desire in using the checklist was to note the amount and quality each child wrote, and to see how what was written related to mini-lessons. The adapted checklist addressed information in the following areas:

- Evidence of mini-lesson: Here, I noted if students incorporated the current mini-lesson into their daily “try-it.” I also looked for evidence of prior mini-lessons, since any students finished before writing time was over needed to continue on some other legitimate and acceptable writing work.

- Evidence of author's craft: Here, I looked for poetic language, rhythm, rhyme, repetition, etc., as well as attempts at specific formats. I included formats in the study because I believe that being able to distinguish and select written architecture specific to a genre (such as that found in lists, poetry and letter-writing), is a way of using author's craft in second grade.
- Depth of focus: Here, I addressed the following questions: how did the writing develop from the beginning of the entry to the end, as well as from entry to entry? For example, did the writer select a topic and introduce new ideas without repetition of thought? Did the writer vary sentences style and length such as longer, claused sentences, questions and exclamations? Was there evidence of, or potential for, an inner story? Did the writer try two or more formats on the same topic? Did the writer use first, second or third person when it made sense?

I rated the above-described areas on the checklist according to a three-point scale: *Yes*, *Somewhat* and *No*. The scale individualized for each student and demonstrated how each performed, using the following percentages:

- *Yes* - students met the criteria 85 to 100 percent of the time
- *Somewhat* - students met the criteria 60 to 84 percent of the time
- *No* - students met criteria 0 to 59 percent of the time.

As stated before, I did not examine finished, polished work in this thesis. Nor did I address mechanics and punctuation. According to WW, these are separate, later (editing) issues. Once I completed the checklists, I then compared baseline and study writing data.

Word Counts and Comparison

My fifth and final set of data came from word counts. I noted the average number of words each child wrote during the pre-study as well as the average number of words he or she wrote during the study. I then compared the averages and calculated the increase or decrease over time. This comparison of pre- and post-study word counts appears on the bottom of the adapted checklist.

Conclusion

In this chapter I outlined five different methods I employed to measure the effectiveness of a greater reliance on two selected best-practice teaching techniques for ESL writers. In chapter four, I will present and analyze the data I collected.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

In the previous chapter, I detailed five different data-gathering techniques I used in a second grade WW to attempt to answer the question: How does teacher-modeled writing and student oral rehearsal affect grade two ESL writing? In this chapter I will review the results of my six-week study on four ELLs in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the selected techniques.

I have chosen to frame the four other data gathering techniques with the pre- and post-study surveys. That is, I will list the pre-study survey results first (in a general discussion here) and examine other data. Then, in a final section, I will discuss the post-study survey. I feel that listing the data in this order follows the study's logical chronology, and the student comments in the post-study survey also impart a feeling of closure.

Survey Results: Baseline

Responses to the pre-study affect questions (one through four) generally showed that prior to the study, three out of four students thought WW was "great." One said it was "okay." All were able to identify their favorite entries or activities specifically and catalogued many things they were good at.

Thao, the child who said WW was "okay" mentioned apprehension about spelling, which WW views as a (later) editing issue. It is worth noting that he referred to his spelling concerns both in the pre-study interview as well as during conferencing. Andrea and I discussed the fact that his general affect seemed slightly more raised than the others because of it.

Responses to the metacognitive questions (five through eight) showed that all students were able to identify things the teachers did which helped them. They listed teacher activities such as writing daily tasks on the board or a chart for easy reference, and giving them specific ideas during conferencing.

Student advice for new pupils included Abdirahman's, which was to continue with writing until the period was over, starting a new entry when finished with the day's work, and using the chart or "looking at other people" for help and ideas. Choua expressed frustration at being asked to help newcomers because she wanted to work on her own writing and could not. These assertions allude to an amount of pre-study understanding already in place, such as:

- the knowledge of what a day in WW looks and feels like
- the fact that writing is enjoyable and challenging
- the fact that writing is a continuous process
- the fact that it is important to use classroom tools and artifacts when creating a writing product
- the fact that it is important to rely on peer input when creating a writing product

The final question regarding how teachers could improve WW elicited a list of formats one student wanted to try in the future. The remaining students said they could not think of ways teachers could improve WW.

In the next sections, I discuss the baseline and study data side by side. For ease of comparison, I also list the results in tables side by side. Specific details on the techniques, including scoring, can be found in chapter three.

Mini-lessons and Anecdotal Notes: Baseline

The five mini-lessons we used as baseline data (Table 4.1) included an introduction to poetry terms as well as kinds of poetry (for example, concrete poetry). As we taught the five lessons, we used a variety of teaching techniques, which included teacher modeling and oral rehearsal.

My notes show that, over the course of the five pre-study lessons, students were engaged and worked diligently. However, Andrea and I noticed that during lesson two, students spent more time creating a visual to go with a particular poem (part of the task that day) than the actual writing itself. Illustration is important both for young writers and for ELLs, but it must be used to support, not supplant, the writing. We felt it was our mistake as teachers to assign this illustrating task too early in the writing and made a mental note to use it judiciously during the actual study (near the end of the poetry unit),

Table 4.1.
Five Mini-lessons Used for Baseline Data

Lesson number & date	Topic	Content	Procedure	Miscellaneous Notes
#1 4/21	Rush-write	Intro to a rush-write; guidelines	Group-generated list: "things that are red." Send-off for "things that open and close."	Began immed. Listed hands, buildings," etc. Verbal check-in expanded lists to deeper metaphors: "minds, hearts," etc.

#2 5/3	Concrete Poetry	Intro to concrete poetry/guidelines;	Pick something from previous day's work, create figure of it (such as an apple) using the word "apple." Modeled "Tree."	All engaged/stayed engaged. Too many turned it into art project, needed to be reminded to try several shapes using writing.
#3 5/4	Continue previous work	Review of previous day's work; attempt several concrete poems	Using notebooks, partner share what they are working on. Send-off to continue	Still spending too much time on the "art" part of it and not enough on the writing. General talking. In a stall--did not want to make more than one. Next time will wait until end of unit for this activity
#4 5/5	Rhythm in poetry	"Click Beetle" and other rhythmic poems	Students used variety of rhythm instruments (or clapped) to beat	Used entire class period. Visual checks of students in study showed all engaged.
#5 5/8	Rhythm in poetry (cont'd.)	More rhythm: Alligator Pie, Beans, beans, beans, etc.	Same as above	Shortened time due to activities with another grade

Table 4.2.
Eleven Mini-lessons Used for Study Data

Lesson number & date	Topic	Content	Procedure	Miscellaneous Notes
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#1 5/9	Rhyming poems	Intro to rhyming poems	I generated sample rhymes on chart paper; partners came up with more.	Pairs contributed 2 rhyming words. Good thing to revisit. Many ELLs having trouble with hearing rhymes. Much writing time spent trying to locate art paper for project. Frustrating.
#2 5/11	List	Create list of things I am grateful for, to put into thank you card to mom or someone special	Read letter to my mother, thanking her for things she did for me when I was small; Turn-and-talk with seed ideas	Made connection to memory necklace from several weeks earlier. Turn-and-talk helped students list ideas
#3 5/12	Arts integration: Thank you cards, beaded bracelets	Turn list into thank you cards; make beaded bracelet as gift to go with it	I created thank you on chart paper to give them ideas to use. Turn-and-talk with more specific ideas for thank-you's. Class-room teacher modeled making bracelet.	Turn-and-talk helped students get ideas. Teachers listed ideas on separate piece of paper and posted it. <i>Note: this activity not in notebooks as students took finished products home with them.</i>
#4 5/15	List	Sing along with Hoodoo-Voodoo; create nonsense words	Teachers created list of silly words on chart paper. Partnered kids to create some more.	Too abstract. Turn-and-talk was the only thing that carried the lesson, as they would have been lost without it. At indep. time, many stumped by spelling of their silly-words
#5 5/16	List (cont'd.)	Sing along with Bibbity Bobbity Boo.	Read my list of silly words; created one together. Oral rehearsal as whole group.	So productive, we couldn't stop! After song, kids contributed to class list on chart paper. After difficulty on 5/15, they finally got it. All engaged!

Table 4.2. (cont'd.)

#6 5/19	Intro to cumulative poem and how to use silly words	Show how to select words and put them into a poem.	Read aloud my cumulative poem with silly words. Use Turn-and-talk with note-books to help each other select words and start cumulative poems	Songs helped students see that silly words are okay, even fun to use. Worked very independently.
#7 5/22	Finish cumulative poems	Status of the class	Check-in for progress and brief partner share only to leave time to finish work.	Very engaged. Wanted to share poems as soon as they finished.
#8 5/23	Arts integration: cumulative poems and paper sculptures	Build a 3-D "Bling-blang" paper construction to go with silly poem	Teacher models building a Bling-blang and reads poem to go with it. Kids share poems with each other.	Students seemed to love the activity; had to be reminded to talk quietly, although all talk was centered on project.
#9 5/24	Finish silly poems and Bling-blangs.	Author's Chair. Post finished products in hall.	No teacher-modeled activity—all focused on student work.	Applause, questions, comments. Students did "museum walk" in hall to see and comment on each other's work.
#10 5/30	Webs or lists	Create a web or list of helpful staff at school	Classroom teacher made sample web of people to thank at end of year and why. Students contributed orally to it in whole-group.	They have done this so much, they knew what to do, and worked independently so teachers could help level 1's.
#11 5/31	Friendly letters	Intro to friendly letter format	Classroom teacher wrote chart-paper sample letter. Students orally rehearsed what they would write, and to whom.	General air of lethargy. Students did not seem as interested in this as they were in poetry.

making students accountable first for the writing before they move to the visual art component.

Mini-lessons and Anecdotal Notes: Study

The following week, which initiated the study, we began a series of eleven lessons primarily using modeling and student oral rehearsal (usually turn-and-talk to a prompt). During the five lessons, I recorded that we discussed the elements of poetry such as rhythm and rhyme, listening to and singing songs with silly words, as well as generating lists of nonsense words in preparation for several art/literacy integration projects. For every lesson or set of lessons, Andrea and I either read aloud from our notebooks or generated the day's work on chart paper before the class, such as the lesson on writing a thank-you letter. As usual, we posted it for reference. We also included guided practice that included oral rehearsal.

The next week, we began the actual study. Table 4.2 contains anecdotal notes from those eleven lessons. From the daily notes, it appears that, generally, students knew what was expected and produced to expectations (for examples of student work during the study, see Appendix E). However, in two out of the eleven lessons, students found it difficult to complete the tasks. Even though I modeled rhyming some words in lesson one and student pairs generated more during oral rehearsal (guided practice), they had difficulty completing the task independently. The same was true during lesson four, in which I asked students to create silly words. Again, even after modeling and guided practice through oral rehearsal, students did not complete the task independently.

Table 4.3.
Number of Students Engaged in On-task Behavior

Time Frame	Average number of students on-task/those present
Baseline	33/40
Study	52/70

The following day (lesson five), Andrea and I approached the same lesson with more scaffolding. Students were then able to complete the task.

Lessons seven through nine appeared more successful. We witnessed enhanced peer support as well as several student-initiated discussions during the writing time. The final “author’s chair” celebration seemed to engender enthusiasm as well as a strong sense of community. Students cheered and congratulated each other. My conclusions will be discussed in chapter five.

Data Comparison of On-task Behavior

This section details the results of students engaged in daily writing behaviors at five and fifteen-minute intervals, shown in Table 4.3. Since not all four students were present at all times, I assigned separate independent values to students on-task as well as students present. For example, if the data presented itself as 4/4 (four students on-task out of four present) at the five-minute interval on a Monday, and 2/3 (two students on-task out of three present) at the fifteen-minute interval the same day, I added the numerators, getting a sum of six. Then, I added the denominators, getting a sum of

seven. Thus, the data for that hypothetical Monday would be that students were on-task six out of seven times.

I collected and combined the data from both the five-minute and the fifteen-minute intervals for all five lessons in the baseline data. Then I performed the same procedure for the eleven lessons within the study. When I was finished, I compared the baseline data with the study data. In the baseline, students were on-task thirty-three out of forty times (82.5 percent of the time) compared to the study of fifty-two out of seventy (77 percent of the time). This is a decline of 5.5 percent, which seems inconsistent with data from other sources. The drop may be due to the lesson in which we withdrew scaffolding too soon (discussed previously). These unexpected results are considered further in chapter five.

Adapted Checklist

This set of data addresses information in four areas on the checklist found in Appendix D: evidence of mini-lesson; evidence of author's craft; evidence of depth of focus; and average number of words. Each is discussed below. For details on how I determined whether a student scored a *Yes*, *Somewhat* or *No*, see chapter three.

Area One: Evidence of Mini-lesson

Here, I assessed if students incorporated either the day's mini-lesson or prior mini-lessons into their writing work. Table 4.4 compares baseline and study data.

Baseline

Some students tried several entries of the same sort, such as webs with different subjects. One creatively used a green crayon to web things that are green. The two who received a

Table 4.4.
Number of Students Showing Evidence of Mini-lessons

Time frame	Yes	Somewhat	No
Baseline	2	2	0
Study	4	0	0

Somewhat were not consistent, or did not produce enough to be counted as *Yeses*. One often included unrelated items, such as drawings of toy action figures. There is slight evidence of labeling in his drawings, which actually alludes to an early second-grade mini-lesson, but not enough to warrant a *Yes*.

I also found that some writing was unreadable. Although readability is not one of the criteria in this study, Andrea and I stress legibility as an aid to extending an entry. If students cannot read their work, they cannot use it as a seed idea for later. Sloppiness also speaks to impatience with a task, and imparts superficiality to the work.

Study

This data, as in the baseline data, showed evidence of teacher modeling in all four students' work. All had a marked gain from the baseline. One student increased from 60 percent to 100 percent. Another improved from 71 percent to 100 percent. Much of what they all wrote was based closely on the modeled lesson, but still showed individuality and experimentation.

Table 4.5.
Number of Students Showing Evidence of Author's Craft

Time frame	Yes	Somewhat	No
Baseline	3	1	0
Study	2	1	1

Area Two: Evidence of Author's Craft

As stated in the previous chapter, I view author's craft primarily as a way of using beautiful, dramatic or poetic language, incorporating techniques like repetition, rhythm, or rhyme, and proper use of format and genre. Table 4.5 compares baseline data to study data in this area.

Baseline

I saw general use of author's craft sprinkled throughout all the student's notebooks. One child repeated the word "sun" several times for emphasis, attempted rhyming, and created an involved concrete poem. Another tried several formats on the same topic, such as webs, lists, and a prose poem. He also used repetition. A third made a concrete poem using appropriate shape and vocabulary. The child who received *Somewhat* made attempts, but they were brief, superficial and dissolved into drawings that didn't apply to the lesson.

Study

All students experimented with repetition and used poetic expressions, some of which were very unique, such as "The moon is full of stars, the stars is full of sun." I also saw evidence

of cumulative poems and task-extension. The child receiving the *Somewhat* in this area had a difficult time staying with the task, using the time for drawings unrelated to the task.

I believe the *No* in this study data is an anomaly. The child who received it (Choua) had earlier expressed frustration (in the survey) at being asked to help and translate for newcomers. She often produced as much as her native English-speaking peers, and had received a *Yes* in the baseline. I believe the incongruity came from assisting newcomers, and therefore being unable to finish her work. I also would like to note here that the child who received *No* in the baseline moved to a *Somewhat* in the actual study.

Area Three: Depth of Focus

This area addresses thought development and consistency, expression and existence/possibility of an inner story, and voice. The calculations are in Table 4.6.

Baseline

Only three of four student entries revealed focused writing or displayed related details. One illustrated and labeled a prose poem. The child who received a *No* used writing time to draw and would not be redirected.

Study

Student scores were four *Yeses*. However, there was a wide variation within the *Yes* range. Two children who received what I call a solid *Yes* showed long, developed entries, even for a first try. One “extended” his work by starting with a list of his mother’s positive attributes, then moved into a letter thanking her for all she had done. The other two were in

Table 4.6.
Number of Students Showing Evidence of Depth of Focus

Time frame	Yes	Somewhat	No
Baseline	3	0	1
Study	4	0	0

the low *Yes* range. One showed marginally more output and depth than the baseline. The other had brief, superficial entries, and fell just within the *Yes* range.

Comparing Totals

In comparing the first three areas which measure evidence of mini-lesson, author's craft and depth of focus, there is change (see Table 4.7). The study shows a total of ten in the *Yes* column, as opposed to eight in the baseline. The *Somewhat* column shows a change by two. *No* has remained at one for both the baseline and study. I believe the *No* in the study to be an incongruity, which I have already discussed in the Author's Craft section above.

Area Four: Average Number of Words

Table 4.8 compares average number of words written per entry during the baseline (column one) to the number of words written during the study (column two). All four students increased in output. Column three shows the increase in average number of words overall. Abdirahman increased his writing output by 36 percent, Choua by 18 percent, Thao by 82 percent and Vang by 54 percent. The average amount of increase

Table 4.7.
Total Number of Students Showing Evidence of Mini-lesson, Author’s Craft and Depth of Focus

Time frame	Yes	Somewhat	No
Baseline:	8	3	1
Study:	10	1	1

among the four students was 47.5 percent. It is interesting to note that, although Vang was writing more overall compared to the other students, it was Thao who showed the largest percentage of increase over time.

Data Comparison: Pre- and Post-study Survey Results

The final data I collected was from the post-study survey (which can be found in Appendix C). Like the pre-study survey six weeks earlier, I administered it orally. The questions on this survey were identical to the pre-study survey except for the last two, which specifically addressed whether the students thought modeling and oral rehearsal helped with their writing and asked if students got ideas from teachers and other students. I did not ask these on the baseline survey because I felt the students might try to answer in a way they thought would please the teachers. Analysis follows.

Question 1: Look at the faces and point to how you feel about Writer’s Workshop.

Answers: Three out of four students said they loved it. This time Thao, who said it was “okay” six weeks earlier, ranked it as “good.”

Table 4.8.
Comparison of Average Number of Words Per Entry

Student Name	Baseline average	Study average	Increase (in words)
Abdirahman	24.6	33.5	8.9
Choua	38.75	45.7	6.95
Thao	15.57	28.42	12.85
Vang	37.8	58.3	20.5

Question 2: Why do you feel this way?

Answers: Responses to this question were similar to those in the pre-study survey.

Students addressed choice and enjoyment.

Question 3: Which entry in the writer's notebook [specifically not a finished product] was the easiest for you to write or are you proudest of?

Answers: As before, each had favorites. Unlike before, not all were memories. Vang chose one of his later entries (from the study), a list of all the things they had done in second grade. Abdirahman chose poems. So did Thao, who said they had words he liked (perhaps referring to the silly poems). Choua chose her entry about seeing a scary movie. She gave some advice. “[You can write about] any new entry that you like. The first thing is, I’m stuck. It’s easier for D. and L. [two classmates] to write because they know how to spell. Once I know what I’m going to say, it’s easier.

Question 4: Why do you feel this way?

Answers: Abdirahman said his poems made him laugh. Vang stated that handwriting was easy. This is not as unusual a response as it may seem. One of activities the class

participated in was using large, fancy scripted letters. By doing this, the students became aware of fonts as art and began to create their own. Choua stated how surprised she was that the idea for writing about the movies “just popped up.” Thao said he did not know why, he “just liked it.”

Question 5: What in Writer’s Workshop are you good at?

Answers: Each had a ready answer, and covered the gamut of activities we had done all year. Several focused on handwriting, again in reference to the fancy-font cut-and-paste activity discussed earlier.

Question 6: Is there anything the teachers do in the mini-lesson that makes your writing easier?

Answers: Here, I was hoping indirectly to elicit comments on the two amplified techniques. And indeed, three children spontaneously addressed them. Vang said, “Turn-and-talk. Friends give us more ideas.” Choua gave a specific example of relying on peers when she noted, “In the first step, I can’t think. I ask Vang [classmate] and he says, “Think about being at home.” He helps, and I start writing when I’m stuck.” Regarding teacher modeling, Thao replied that the teachers say things that give him writing ideas.

Question 7: What could the teachers do differently to help you write more or better?

Answers: Three responders could think of nothing. Choua thought writing was easy. But Thao, somewhat anxious about his writing all year, stated, “Timelines is hard. There’s nothing to make it better.”

Question 8: Do you have any advice can you give students coming to our school about

Writer's Workshop?

Answers: This metacognitive question elicited much more focused thought at the end of the study than the earlier baseline survey. Each student addressed an aspect of the process that we had been teaching all year. Abdirahman reminded new students to “add a little bit to your writing.” Vang, the student who probably relied most on peers, said “Look around at what people are doing.” Choua and Vang often worked together. She said, “Ask each other for ideas.” And Thao stated that you can “write anything.”

Question 9: Did you get writing ideas from your classmates?

Answers: This and the next question directly addressed teacher modeling and oral rehearsal. Abdirahman remarked that turn-and-talk helped give him “more ideas. I just can’t get them down at super speed. They come fast.” Vang noted that “reading aloud from our own (that is, sharing from student’s) notebooks...helped.” Choua discussed her own process when she said, “Turn-and-talk helped. I like when A. [classmate] and I talk together. It helps. [Or] I ask S. [classmate], and she’s almost done, so we start again, a new entry.” Thao requested more turn-and-talk.

Question 10: Did you get writing ideas from the teachers?

Answers: Abdirahman, Choua and Thao stated that “reading from [the teacher’s] notebooks gives ideas.” Vang specifically noted that we showed how to fold things [probably a response to creating visual organizers or art projects].

Question 11: Do you want to add anything else?

Answers: None of the four had anything to add.

It is interesting to note that while I did not solicit specific examples of how teacher notebooks and peer practice helped, the students often supplied their own examples, which are distributed throughout the interviews.

Conclusion

This chapter described the results of the data I collected on lessons involving teacher modeling and student oral rehearsal before writing. The data came from five different sources described previously. My belief, based on the data listed in this chapter, is that the strategic and focused use of two WW and ESL techniques by a team of committed adults (here, the classroom and ESL teachers) appears to have an impact on second grade ESL writing. The students in this study incorporated the mini-lessons, writing output increased, and focus deepened. The baseline and post-study surveys revealed students who felt self-confidence in both process and product. Students also showed a metacognitive understanding of process and product, evidenced by greater discussion and a deeper understanding of WW during the post-study interview. The only area where there was a decrease in performance was on-task behavior, perhaps due to teacher error (this will be discussed in chapter five).

In the next and final chapter, I will reflect on my data, examine major learnings, and discuss implications and limitations of the study. I will list my goals for incorporating my new knowledge into current and future work. I will also specify how

I will share my data with colleagues and administration. Chapter five will also contain recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

In chapter four, I examined and compared data in five areas pertinent to my thesis question: How does teacher-modeled writing and student oral rehearsal affect grade two ESL writing? I concluded that there appeared to be definite, positive changes in student writing behavior and output. These findings parallel the research findings in chapter two: teacher modeling and student oral rehearsal and discussion are two practices that strongly support ELLs.

In this final chapter, I discuss results and concerns. I also present my overall impressions of the study. I address the implications of the data and how I will share it with colleagues and policy-makers. And since all studies have limitations, I will note them here as well as recommendations for further studies.

General Impressions

In general, both baseline and post-study student surveys seemed to reveal the importance of teacher-modeled lessons and peer oral rehearsal prior to writing. Student notebooks disclosed an increase in both writing quantity and quality. Daily anecdotal notes, which served as an invaluable reflection on completed lessons as well as a planning tool for future instruction, appeared to show that affect was low when teachers

modeled the task explicitly and helped students solve specific issues (such as Thao's spelling concerns).

It seemed higher when scaffolding was withdrawn too early. The only area that showed no increase was on-task behavior. As I stated in chapter four, this seems inconsistent with other data. My expectation was that the numbers would increase.

The drop in on-task writing behavior may be due to two factors. The first is simply the way I collected this particular data. It was apparent to me from the beginning that timing intervals and counting students on-task would not appropriately reflect writing behavior. Students are accustomed to people moving about and conferencing with each other, as well as other general classroom noises. I thought the timer, with its small beeping noise, would not be a distraction. However, when it went off, it interrupted some of students already on-task and they looked up. I hoped that eventually students would get used to the beeping, but they did not. I was not sure how to record the data when it interrupted them. I finally concluded that I needed to wait an additional minute before I took a count. I did this by watching the sweep hand on the classroom clock, not by setting the timer again.

In addition, my counts came from students who *appeared* to be on-task. Without getting into students' minds, there is no way to know for sure what they were truly reflecting on when sitting quietly. They could have been considering their next sentence or daydreaming about their next birthday party.

Another problem I had with the timer is worth noting here. After each mini-lesson, I needed to conference with students. Consistently, during conferences, the timer would sound at both five and fifteen minutes. I would then have to stop working with a student in order to take my counts. The timer became an irritant to me. I also believe it detracted from the quality of my teaching. In the future, if I must collect data in this way, I will video-record the class sessions and use the timer only as I watch the video. This would eliminate a distracting noise and allow uninterrupted conference time with students. I could then watch the video later, rewinding if I wanted to scrutinize instruction or behaviors more closely.

The second factor that may have caused a drop in on-task writing behavior is teacher miscalculation. As I mentioned in the mini-lesson anecdotal notes, two of the lessons during the study seemed challenging to students and they had difficulty staying with the task. One was a rhyming activity. The fact is that many ELLs do not hear rhymes in English. Another was the silly word lesson. While students seemed engaged during the mini-lesson and guided practice, it was apparent that they were confused once they returned to their seats. I concluded that students needed more scaffolding than the teachers initially gave. The later lesson was more successful when Andrea and I retaught it and intentionally sustained scaffolding, as evidenced by the data of 4/4 at both intervals.

What the Surveys Show

As I became more involved in the study, I was often amazed at the grasp these second graders had on WW. The surveys in particular presented a window on their thinking. Students were able to address their own metacognitive understanding of the process and provide incisive comments even beyond what I asked for in the survey. They could speak thoughtfully on both process and procedure, knew what a day in WW looked like, took risks and generally enjoyed the work that was before them.

Much of their knowledge was already in place before my study began, due to several factors. One is the school's ongoing commitment to professional development. Currently, all teachers at Highview have been trained in WW. Because of this, most of the second graders in my research classroom had been exposed to WW since Kindergarten. Another factor is the sustained presence of human resources. The school employs a literacy coach. In addition, many teachers in the building also act as sounding boards and support for each other as they try new ideas. A third aspect is the fact that Highview is committed to stocking a professional library with hundreds of up-to-date resources. This includes practical guides and research as well as classroom sets of mentor texts. Finally, the particular students in my study found themselves with a classroom teacher devoted to a peaceful, cooperative, safe environment. Her demeanor is kind and she is a thoughtful listener. In addition, the two of us have had a successful collaboration, planning weekly and working through difficulty successfully.

Interestingly, until I began the study, I did not recognize the broad underpinnings that support WW in my district, school and classroom. When I began to notice it, I realized that student learning cannot help but mirror it. This practical fact can inform decisions about WW. If teachers understand that it is a successful program district-wide, they do not have to reinvent the wheel. They can employ all the resources available—or request others--in an economical, purposeful and strategic way.

If administrators and policy-makers understand that WW is already a successful program, they can move toward additional measures that support it. For example, many teachers who teach writing do not write themselves. Sponsoring teacher writing groups or supporting workshops in which teachers simply write (as opposed to a methods class on how to teach writing) would impart a metacognitive understanding of the task that cannot be learned in any other way. This is a teacher factor that could additionally move student learning.

A Final Word About Affect

While I used the baseline and post-study surveys and anecdotal notes to measure affect directly, I believe it is worth noting that affect can also be *indirectly* observed through other means. For example, if students feel a heightened affect, peer discussion and notebook writing might seem constrained or be reduced. Students would appear needy, constantly checking with teachers to see if they were “doing it right.” This was clearly not the case.

Generally, students in this classroom became animated and noisy when they were in the midst of something they enjoyed. The noise mostly came from the desire to share what they were doing and discover what others had done. Some were cheerleaders for each other during author's chair, others provided substantial support during the actual composition process. Individual students also found a core of peers with whom they worked consistently. My conclusion on affect in the classroom during mini-lessons is that students seemed generally comfortable with the daily procedure, curious about what others were doing, and respectful and appreciative of each other's work.

Affect specifically seemed heightened during two lessons in which students were confused by the tasks (rhyming and silly words), and where scaffolding was withdrawn too early. However, this seemed to be temporary. Confusions appeared to dissolve when the lesson was repeated with more scaffolding (as evidenced in lesson five, by the data of 4/4 at both intervals).

This group gave each other ideas and solved dilemmas. They sought out their writing peers often, without teacher prompting. (Note that in the study, Choua and Vang both referred directly to how much they relied on peer help.) As a result, student notebooks showed an ease and facility with writing. Students also experimented with many types of entries. This included free writing that openly addressed important issues in their lives. All of these behaviors reflect a comfort level with the atmosphere.

A Last Look at Each Student

Of the four students in the study, Thao appeared to have the highest affect, due to spelling concerns. As I stated earlier, spelling is considered a final draft issue in WW, because trying to spell every word correctly initially is prohibitive of getting first thoughts onto paper. Yet, we still want students to include any words they desire without feeling intimidated.

Spelling strategies, such as saying the word slowly and writing what one hears are more useful to native speakers than to ELLs. Native speakers have more ease with both the phonemics and conventions of English. Often, if they reread their work and cannot figure out what their writing means, there are phonemic, semantic and contextual clues.

Spelling can be a major issue with non-native speakers like Thao, however. ELLs have much less experience with phonemic awareness and phonics in English. This makes it difficult for them to cycle back in subsequent drafts for fix-ups. Instead of harvesting those first powerful thoughts, they can irretrievably lose them. Once we identified Thao's challenges--which he articulated several times during conferences and the surveys--Andrea and I made a concerted effort to create daily word banks, asking for student input. We also attempted to conference with him daily near the end of each lesson to help with difficult spellings. In addition, we referred to mini-lessons on what to do if students encountered a word they could not spell, such as using resources in the room such as texts, charts and the word wall. We also allowed Thao to illustrate and label more freely. This was important scaffolding for him, because when we addressed

his issues in these ways, he seemed satisfied. His illustrations and labels became more detailed over time and his writing output increased. In fact, Thao's output in the study (82 percent) was 28 percent higher than the next highest student's (Vang, who increased his output by 54 percent). I believe this is why his response to how he felt about WW changed from "okay" in the baseline survey to "good" in the post-study survey.

As I worked through the study, I noticed changes in other students' writing behavior as well. Vang, who applied himself consistently all year, deepened his writing as he made closer observations and experimented with format and genre. In one entry, he wrote, "...gold is the color of a radiating sun threw the shadowing tree." This is a prime example of Fletcher's "writing small" (1996). In my opinion, writing small frequently precipitates a dramatic transformation. As one of the most organic of processes, it forges a connection between the uniquely personal and the utterly universal. I believe it is here that individuals begin to trust the process, and here that the writer's voice is born.

Choua, who generally enjoyed writing, did not realize that the purpose of the charts we created together in class was for student reference. She often had questions about what we had already covered, so we began to remind her to use classroom resources. Once she recognized the tools at her fingertips, her writing became more independent and began to improve.

Abdirahman's writing was unpredictable. He needed to like the task or he wanted nothing to do with it. When he liked it, he applied himself, which is the reason for the increase in his writing from the baseline to the study. Of the four of them, he was able to

articulate most what WW entailed, evidence that he knew what was expected. This he produced sometimes. I believe he did improve in his writing quality and output, but not to the same extent as the others.

Limitations

During the study, the careful introduction of certain tools and the knowledge of individual students' writing processes and habits allowed me to access specific information that revealed a heightened quantity and quality of writing. To attribute this outcome solely to the study would be foolish, however. There are important environmental and human factors to consider, the first of which is that my research classroom is an active, dynamic, changing environment, not a sterile scientific laboratory. Many variables altered over six weeks of data collection. Students moved in, moved out, argued, made up, felt tired, and were interrupted by fire drills, standardized testing, days off, substitute teachers, and illness. There was no way to isolate my two study techniques—nor did I intend to.

Andrea and I relied primarily (that is, systematically and explicitly) on teacher modeling and peer oral rehearsal through guided practice. But we always used them in concert with other supportive techniques, such as posting charts as examples, listing the day's activities so students knew what to do, maintaining an active word wall and integrating writing thematically across content areas.

The positive increases in writing that I document during the study were also the result of other contributing influences. For example, once I sent parent permission letters

home, I administered baseline surveys to *all* students in the class (this was for my own information).

Once they took the survey, it was apparent to me that students knew something was afoot. They sensed Andrea and I were teaching in a new, focused way, and that we were observing their writing behavior more carefully than usual. I do not think they felt scrutinized or threatened by this. Rather they appeared to feel more supported. Students responded to this by increasing their output in a focused way. Also, because the whole class felt involved (not just the four I was observing) they all seemed intuitively to keep each other within certain writing parameters. It became, in some ways, a self-regulating student-student and student-teacher partnership.

I also believe the two surveys gave students a rare opportunity to talk about themselves and their concerns in a comprehensive way. Due to the number of required school-day tasks, there is often little opportunity for prolonged personal interaction with a teacher. When these students realized that we wanted their opinions and intended to respond to their information, they were quite detailed about their concerns. When individuals feel understood, their affect is lower and they are more willing to produce what is expected. All these factors amounted to the awareness that something new was happening in the classroom. In my opinion, this had an effect on the entire class, not just the four students in the study.

Another consideration which I did not measure (but which may have had an effect on the results) is how a team of two teachers, trained in WW and committed to both the

students and the collaborative model, might impact student learning. In this case, the teachers consistently planned weekly and co-delivered lessons almost daily. Since the student-teacher ratio was reduced to (approximately) eight students per teacher during the year for WW, it was not difficult for each child to conference daily with a teacher. This scenario is significantly different from a classroom containing one teacher and/or a larger student population.

As an aside, it is interesting to note that the collaborative teaching partnership itself did not go unnoticed. Andrea and I frequently checked in with each other when I walked into the room, or as we were teaching a lesson, spontaneously discussing and tweaking plans. For lack of other words, Choua called this “making deals.” She stated, “You and Ms. B. always make deals, and have great stuff about writing poems.”

One other variable in the study is the fact that the study was restricted to four students, representing two languages, observed over six weeks. It is impossible to generalize the results from such a limited study. Further inquiry would cast more illumination on the subject if it included:

- a larger population
- students of a different age group
- students of different language groups
- longitudinal data. For example, how would dedicated second grade writers perform in sixth grade? High school? College?

- data on newcomers, and how lessons can be modified/adapted to them.

Andrea and I freely alter WW when we feel the level ones need it.

However, we have not formally measured the results of our hunches regarding the preference of some techniques over others.

In addition, ELLs in elementary school appear to respond well to writing without worrying too much about form (spelling, syntax and grammar). A question arises concerning how older ELLs would respond to the workshop model. Would they be more concerned about form than a younger child and ask for more form-focused lessons?

Conclusion

Writing about writing is an interesting exercise and I am grateful for the opportunity to be able to deepen my understanding of it through this capstone. My own process in writing it paralleled the process which the WW model espouses. It included both solitary and social aspects, from gathering seed ideas, researching texts, recording and interpreting data, to peer review, final edits and publishing. It included the “retrospective structuring” which I referred to in chapter two of this thesis. That is, as I moved ahead in the work, I was aware that I always needed to look back, adjust, reread, revise and edit so that the writing which followed would make sense. Because my process was the same as the process I teach, I am able to validate its authenticity. I also have a greater understanding of the tasks I ask my students to perform daily.

There is a maxim in writing: the “I” that goes into the writing is not the same “I” that comes out the other side. This has been true for me in writing this capstone. What I

have learned from professors, coaches, colleagues, researchers, writing peers, my collaborating teacher, my students and the writing process itself has been transformative.

While writing is never really finished, there paradoxically arrives a moment when writers must say, “I am finished,” and move on to the next phase of the work. This is that moment for me. The next phase will include passing on my findings to my colleagues, principal, literacy coach and ESL advocates in the district. One specific item I would like it to include is helping to create a teachers’ writing group for the district, in order to bring genuine, hands-on understanding of the writing process to those who are teaching it. But most of all, the next chapter for me will include clear and thoughtful writing decisions regarding the people I admire most, my students.

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APPENDIX A

Minnesota Modified Student Oral Language
Observation Matrix

Minnesota Modified Student Oral Language Observation Matrix: MN-SOLOM

		1	2	3	4	5	Score
Listen	Academic Comprehension	Understands little or no simple grade level content terminology or academic discourse.	Has difficulty following grade level content terminology and academic discourse, even when spoken slowly and with frequent repetition and rephrasing.	Understands most grade level content terminology and academic discourse when spoken at slower than normal speeds with some repetition and rephrasing.	Understands most grade level content terminology at normal speed, although occasional repetition and rephrasing may be necessary.	Understands grade level content terminology and academic discourse without difficulty.	
	Social Comprehension	Understands little or no social conversation.	Has great difficulty following what is said. Can comprehend only social conversation spoken slowly and with frequent repetition and rephrasing.	Understands most of what is said in social conversations at slower than normal speed with some repetition and rephrasing.	Understands social conversation, although occasional repetition and rephrasing may be necessary.	Understands social conversation in a variety of settings, including classroom directions.	
Speak	Fluency	Speech is so halting and fragmentary that conversation is virtually impossible.	Usually hesitant, often gives up due to language limitations; gives mainly one or two word answers.	Speech in social conversation and classroom discussion frequently disrupted by student's search for correct manner of expression. Uses short phrases and sentences.	Speech in social conversation and classroom discussion generally fluent, with occasional lapses while student searches for the correct manner of expression.	Speech in social conversation and classroom discussion fluent and effortless; approximates that of a native English speaker.	
	Vocabulary	Vocabulary limitations are so extreme as to make conversation virtually impossible.	Difficult to understand because of misuse of words and very limited vocabulary.	Frequent use of wrong words; conversation somewhat limited because of inadequate vocabulary.	Occasional use of inappropriate terms and/or rephrasing because of inadequate vocabulary.	Use of academic vocabulary and idioms approximates those of a native English speaker.	
	Pronunciation	Pronunciation and intonation make speech virtually unintelligible.	Pronunciation and intonation make speech difficult to understand; must frequently repeat in order to be understood.	Pronunciation and intonation necessitate concentration by the listener and occasionally lead to misunderstanding.	Usually intelligible, although pronunciation or intonation may slightly interfere with understanding.	Pronunciation and intonation approximate those of a native English speaker. Accent may be present but does not interfere with intelligibility.	
	Grammar	Errors in grammar and word order so severe that speech is virtually unintelligible.	Difficult to understand because of errors in grammar and word order; must either rephrase or restrict speech to basic patterns.	Frequent errors in grammar and word order; meaning occasionally obscured.	Occasional errors in grammar or word order; meaning not obscured.	Grammar and word order approximate that of a native English speaker.	

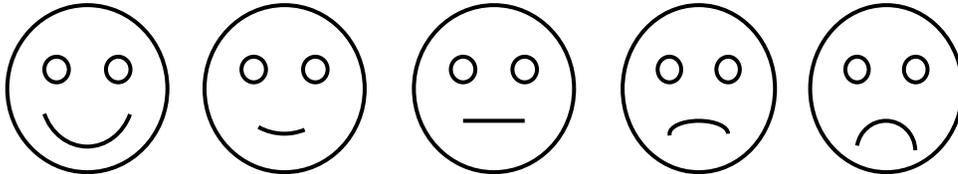
Note: The native English speaker in column 5 is the same age as the LEP student being rated.

APPENDIX B

Pre-study Survey Questions

Pre-study Survey Questions

1. Using the faces, point to the one that tells how you feel about Writer's Workshop.



Great

Good

Okay

Not Good

Terrible

2. Why do you feel that way?

3. Which entry in the writer's notebook (specifically *not* a finished

product) was the easiest for you to write or are you proudest of?

4. Why do you feel this way?

5. What in Writer's Workshop are you good at?

6. Is there anything the teachers do in the mini-lesson that makes your writing easier?

7. What could the teachers do differently to help you write more or better?

8. Do you have any advice can you give students coming to our school for the first time?

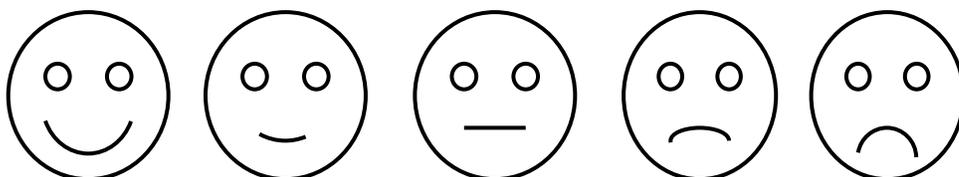
9. Is there anything you'd like to add?

APPENDIX C

Post-study Survey Questions

Post-study Survey Questions

1. Using the faces, point to the one that tells how you feel about Writer's Workshop.



Great

Good

Okay

Not Good

Terrible

2. Why do you feel that way?

3. Which entry in the writer's notebook (specifically *not* a finished

product) was the easiest for you to write or are you proudest of?

4. Why do you feel this way?

5. What in Writer's Workshop are you good at?

6. Is there anything the teachers do in the mini-lesson that makes your writing easier?

7. What could the teachers do differently to help you write more or better?

8. Do you have any advice can you give students coming to our school for the first time?

9. Did you get writing ideas from your classmates?

10. Did you get writing ideas from the teachers?

11. Is there anything you'd like to add?

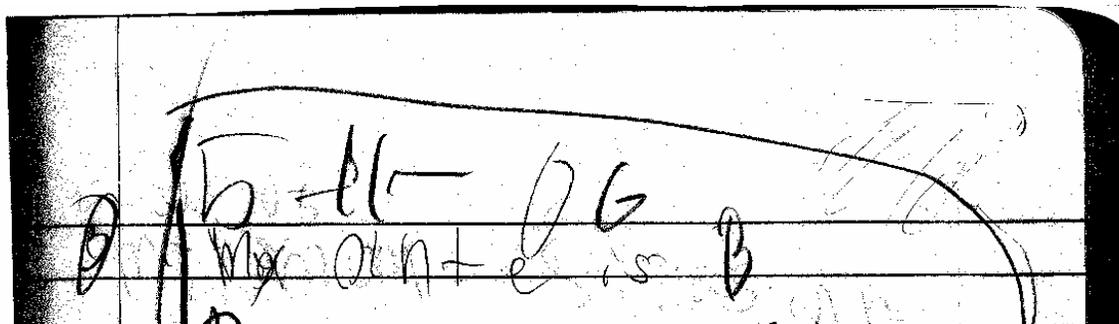
APPENDIX D

Adapted Checklist for Examination of Student Notebooks

Student Writer's Notebook Examination Checklist	
<i>Name:</i> _____	
BASELINE	STUDY
1.) Evidence of mini-lesson _____ <i>Yes</i> _____ <i>Somewhat</i> _____ <i>No</i>	1.) Evidence of mini-lesson _____ <i>Yes</i> _____ <i>Somewhat</i> _____ <i>No</i>
2.) Evidence of author's craft: _____ <i>Yes</i> _____ <i>Somewhat</i> _____ <i>No</i>	2.) Evidence of author's craft: _____ <i>Yes</i> _____ <i>Somewhat</i> _____ <i>No</i>
3.) Depth of focus _____ <i>Yes</i> _____ <i>Somewhat</i> _____ <i>No</i>	3.) Depth of focus _____ <i>Yes</i> _____ <i>Somewhat</i> _____ <i>No</i>
4.) No. of words: _____ no. of entries: _____ avg. no. words: _____	4.) No. of words: _____ no. of entries: _____ avg. no. words: _____

APPENDIX E

Samples of Student Work During the Study



Abdirahman's practice with a thank you note:

My ante [auntie] is B

Dear Aunt Muki Thank you for taking me to the Walmart and buying me a bike

Choua's practice with a memoir for Mother's Day:

I remember when you make me eggs and for now I no [know] how to make eggs now Mom. and I remember when you make me a Birthday cake. and I remember when my mom took me to the store and I remember when. I say to my mom can I go and sleep over and she say yes!

Thao's practice with a thank you note:

Dear Ms. B. Thank you for teaching us about lizards hermit crabs. Also nature Have a good summer have fun! To [too] Thao

Vang's practice with a memoir/letter:

Vang's practice with a memoir/letter:

Dear mom, I remember...

You took my birthday party at beaver lake park and we went fishing with my cousin who live at wisconsin and I caught a bass but my cousin almost caught a giant crappy but it got away then when I fish again [again] with a little fishing Pole then I throw my fish Pole in the water then I used a big fishing Pole then I throw my fish Pole then like 5 cecend [seconds] I already caught one sunfish.