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Strategies to Support the Writing of a First Grade English Language Learner with Identified Learning Disabilities

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Abstract

This classroom study is a qualitative integration of assessments and instruction as part of the regular classroom routine. Instructional scaffolds were specifically chosen to support the writing development of a second language learner with diagnosed learning disabilities. Instructional scaffolds selected to support the development of the subject's writing included: (1) Modeling writing through shared writing, personal journal instruction, and conferences; (2) Context embedded learning experiences that were cognitively demanding through direct teaching and instruction; (3) Activating background knowledge to provide the subject with a purpose of writing; (4) Metacognition – thinking about writing. The methodology used to observe and evaluate the subject’s written works included: (1) Anecdotal records taken before, during, and after the writing process; (2) One-on-one conferences that took place as part of the feedback process in writing; (3) Direct teaching of specific concepts: the alphabetic principle, story schema, writing process and independent writing; (4) Teacher-student conferences to determine the subject’s understanding of the writing process. The assessments used to support the promotion of learning and development through instructional scaffolds include anecdotal records, Marie’s Clay’s letter and sound identification, and student independent writing partnered with teacher reflection. The results revealed that the second language learner developed significantly in his writing through scaffolded instruction showing development that ranged from early to early fluent. This study validates that English language learners with diagnosed learning disabilities need individualized support that is specially
tailored with attention appropriate support mechanisms in order to achieve increased
development in writing.
Introduction and Rationale

The purpose of this classroom study was to investigate strategies that specifically address the needs of second language learners with diagnosed learning disabilities. This study came about because, as a classroom teacher who had an English language learner in my classroom with identified learning disabilities, I did not know what to do to help him. As I talked with other classroom teachers, I found that they also felt like I did, especially in the area of writing, a very complex process for all students but more specifically for second language learners. Thus, I felt there was a need for this classroom-based study.

California public schools are faced with students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Hearne, 2000). California public school teachers are met with challenges that are far more unique than those of many other classrooms across the nation. Hearne (1997,4) reported the following statistics from the Department of Education and the California Teaching Association:

- “More than 50% of all children who are second language learners in the United States of America reside in California
- Second language learners represent 24% of the total student enrollment in K-12
- Approximately 78% of all identified second language learner students speak Spanish as their primary language
- California’s ethnic composition of students from Hispanic backgrounds is considerably higher than the national average
- The United States average of Spanish speaking English learners is 12.3%
- California average Spanish speaking English learners total 36.1%”

Because of Proposition 227, California’s classroom teachers are met with increasingly new challenges. Proposition 227 provided for English only instruction for bilingual students. Thus, California’s teachers need to have an arsenal of
strategies to support the needs of their diverse classrooms. In this paper, the terms English learners, English Language Development (ELD), Second Language Learners, and bilingual learners all refer to students in the process of learning English as a new language. In districts and schools where ELD students are not grouped together in SEI (Structured English Immersion) classes, bilingual students are now placed into mainstream classrooms. Some of these students, like their monolingual counterparts, have special needs. Thus, teachers are faced with students who have diagnosed learning disabilities and are English learners.

Bilingual education and special education are complex. When bilingual education and special education have to be addressed in mainstream classrooms, teachers need to be knowledgeable about both issues. They must be trained in literacy strategies that support students who are culturally and linguistically diverse with identified learning difficulties. It is essential that teachers look at their students holistically and not separately, that is, as being identified ELD or having qualified for special education services. When teachers consider all of a student’s needs and strengths, more practical interventions are developed to address the language arts – reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Writing is a critical part of literacy and second language learners need to learn many things about writing. According to Pauline Gibbons (1993), ELD students need to learn the symbols of the writing system, the relationships between sound and symbols, and how writing differs from speech. In order for ELD students to become writers, they need to be taught systematic strategies that consistently develop and scaffold their understanding about writing as well as their ability to write. These
systematic strategies tend to be used effectively with monolingual learners; however, many times they are modified for or not available to English learners. Like English only learners, second language learners progress developmentally in order to gain a complete understanding of writing (Peregoy & Boyle, 1997). Teachers must use these developmental characteristics to guide their instruction. By analyzing students' work, teachers can focus on each child's current language needs. The goal of every teacher should be to help each of their students reach their individual potential.

Most strategies for second language learners focus on auditory processes, oral language development, and activation of prior knowledge. The variety of strategies, which support early reading and writing development for young English learners, are specifically tailored to support students. However, there is a need for quality strategies for those students who have been diagnosed with learning disabilities, in addition to being English learners.

As a result of observing students in my classroom, I became aware of the need to assist a second language learner who was struggling with literacy. Not only was he a second language learner, but also a student with identified auditory processing disabilities. In many classrooms children are learning English as a second language. Sometimes the needs of English language learners are perceived as exotic or mysterious. If we closely observe our second language learners in our classrooms, we would recognize that English language learners have needs that are similar to their English only counterparts (Peregoy & Boyle, 1997). As my student struggled with writing, I decided that I needed to begin exposing him to strategies that were developmentally consistent as well as systematic. The strategies I chose were based
on the following sequence (1) Learning the alphabetic principle; (2) Developing story schema; and (3) Writing in personal and independent journals. These strategies were not exclusive of each other. Rather, consistency and integration of these strategies were used to develop metalinguistic understanding or linguistic awareness, the understanding that language can be manipulated to convey messages and meaning. My classroom research convinced me that there is a need for consistent scaffolding of writing for second language learners, especially students with identified learning disabilities.

Therefore, the question of this classroom study was: How can the writing of a first grade second language learner with identified auditory processing learning disabilities be developed and supported?

Hypotheses

The hypotheses of this classroom study were:

1) If consistent, systematic strategies are used to scaffold the writing of ELL students with identified learning disabilities; there will be developmental improvement in independent writing.

2) If consistent feedback is given to ELL students before, during, and after the writing process, observable improvement in writing will be evident.
Definition of Terms

Alphabetic Principal – The understanding that there is a systematic relationship between letters and sounds (Boston, 2000).

Automaticity – The ability to engage in complex activity without having to concentrate on each part of it (Peregoy & Boyle, 1997).

Direct Instruction – A structured, systematic lesson focusing on a specific skill. (Boston, 2000).

Fluency – The ability to identify letters and words automatically (Boston, 2000).

Language – Experience Approach (LEA) – A technique which builds upon student interest and background knowledge.

Learning Strategies – Thoughts or activities that assist in enhancing learning outcomes (Chamot & O’Malley, 1994).

Metalinguistics – The process of thinking about language use, discourse, genre, and other forms of language (Perez, 1998).

Modeling – An instructional technique that allows teachers to demonstrate a literacy strategy within an authentic writing activity.

Phonemic Awareness – The knowledge that words are comprised of sounds (Cooper, 2000).

Prior Knowledge – A cognitive strategy which has applications to all types of content learning, and to listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Chamot & O’Malley, 1994).

Scaffolding – The provision of extensive instructional supports when concepts and skills are first being introduced and the gradual removal of supports when students begin to develop greater proficiency, skills, or knowledge (Chamot & O’Malley, 1994).

Schemata – Memory frameworks where interconnected ideas and concepts are stored (Chamot & O’Malley, 1994).

Story Grammar – Elements of a text. An example, narratives have a beginning, middle, and end.

Text Structure – The way in which a genre is structured.
Zone of proximal development – Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist’s concept of learning and development.
Literature Review

It is true that when either learning a first or second language, students go through similar stages of acquiring language. However, students who are learning a second language need a large amount of support to help them acquire strategies to improve their skills. Not only should teachers of second language learners be aware of their students' needs, they need to be keen observers of the writing behaviors their students display. This review of literature will address the following issues pertinent to supporting the writing of English language learners: 1) Importance of learning the Alphabetic Principle; 2) Developing story schema; 3) Scaffolding necessary to support English language learners; 4) Stages of developmental writing; 5) Independent writing.

Alphabetic Principle

Beginning second language learners, just like their first language counterparts encounter many challenges. When learning any language, students must learn how to understand the sound-symbol relationships of the written language. The English language has two sets of printed letters: capital and lower case. Meanwhile, students must be able to distinguish and identify these 52 geometric forms. This task takes time to learn and understand (Clay, 1998). All children go through a developmental process of learning and understanding the writing system. However, the progression of development is different for each child. In order to master a writing system, a child needs to deal with letters, words, and word groups. According to Clay, children learn all of these levels at once.
When learning a second language, “there is a transfer of knowledge and skills” (Perez, 1998, 59). However, according to Perez, it is less clear how this transfer of knowledge and skills is affected when learning the writing system of a second language. In the case of English and Spanish where both writing systems use the same symbols, problems consistently occur when “associating familiar symbols to a different sound system” (Perez, 1998, 60). For example, although the vowels in Spanish are represented by the same letters as the vowels in English, the sounds of the vowels in Spanish are very different from the vowels in English. Teachers of English Language Learners find that they will often substitute an “e’ for an “a” and an “i” for an “e”. English is difficult to predict, and there are numerous exceptions to most rules. This makes it even more difficult for second language learners. However, if a student has a strong prior knowledge base in his or her first language, he will already know that symbols in any language will represent phonemes. Students further understand that when clustered, phonemes produce words that carry meaning and thus must mean something in the written language.

The United States Department of Education (Boston, The ERIC Review, 2000, 4) defines the alphabetic principle as the “understanding that there is a systematic relationship between letters and sounds”. An example of the alphabetic principle using the word “cat”, is that it contains three letters and three corresponding sounds. The alphabetic principle is an abstract concept and it appeared that the English language learner in my classroom needs to made more connections with letters and words embedded in context. Meaningful experiences with text is how second language learners learn more about letters and how letters are used in spoken and
written words. Creating alphabet books, in addition to reading them, are a way for teachers to immerse students in the language, and provide them with meaningful experiences. It is important for teachers to create activities that are embedded in context (Cummins, 1994). To support English language learners through the complex process of learning how to make meaning from a symbol and sound, teachers need to provide authentic opportunities with written and oral language.

Phonemic awareness is a tool teachers use to assist students' development of sound-symbol awareness. Cooper (2000, 11), defines phonemic awareness as "the knowledge that words are comprised of sounds". Phonemic awareness aids in literacy development and teaches students how to listen for the sounds that make up words they speak. Teachers need to provide students with systematic and explicit instruction in phonemic awareness. Because the alphabetic principle is not learned naturally by most children, it needs to be explicitly taught (Cooper, 2000). Cooper, also states that phonemic awareness "is part of learning the alphabetic principle" (p.168). In order for students to effectively use and apply letter-sound relationships to daily decoding (reading) and encoding (writing) activities, they must have acquired phonemic awareness. Rhyming, segmenting and blending phonemes and syllables, counting syllables, phonemes and words, and substituting sounds are all elements of phonemic awareness (Eldredge, 1995 as cited in Cooper, 2000).

Development of Story Schema

Second language learners need numerous tools to foster literacy and to develop literacy awareness. Researchers have found that one of these necessary tools is schema development. Schemata allow ELD students to organize, understand, and
interpret written text. Therefore, using personal schemata as a tool, implies that a student is likely to have developed "connections through their previous personal and literacy experiences" (Perez, 1998, 37). Students use schemata in listening, writing, and reading comprehension to help make meaning while engaged in learning processes. Students with a greater prior knowledge base on topics will have an easier time comprehending information, than students with a lesser prior knowledge base on the same topic. In addition, an ELD learner must bring all of his or her experiences to bear on the process of constructing meaning. To aid their students in this enormous task, teachers must instruct their students using explicit learning strategies that activate schemata. According to Chamot & O’Malley (1994), schemata are a complex linking of old and new information, which assist English learners “to solve problems and/or understand similar information” in a new language (p.14). These literacy connection strategies will in turn help students to construct meaning. Thus, connecting meaning to language empowers a student to develop greater linguistic awareness. Chamot & O’Malley also note that young learners are focused on the process of developing an awareness of themselves as thinkers and learners. Therefore, it follows that teachers must find multiple ways to support thinking and linguistic awareness of young developing literates.

Not only is it important for teachers to assist students in developing schemata, but students also need to learn and understand how a story works. In order for students, especially those who are learning English, to progress developmentally in writing they must be able to understand text structure or story grammar, and how writing
differs from oral language. To support continued learning of concepts, the instruction of English language learners also requires multiple levels of scaffolding.

**Scaffolding**

Scaffolding is a temporary learning tool. It refers to any activities that support and assist students to reach the next level of development. When students’ no longer need a scaffold activity, it can be dispensed with and students move forward in their development on their own. Peregoy & Boyle (1997, 186) state that scaffolding “supports students in comprehending and producing written language at a level slightly beyond their competence in the absence of the scaffold”. Vygotsky (1962) called this phenomenon the “zone of proximal development” (Peregoy & Boyle, 1997, 80).

Scaffolding allows teachers to model predictable language patterns, focusing on whole texts. An example of a whole text is a story, recipe, or poem. When teachers scaffold student learning in the classroom, they try to build on students’ prior knowledge. By helping second language learners link new information to prior school and life experiences, teachers help them apply skills already learned in their own cultures to reading and writing in English. There are many skills that transfer from literacy in a first language to a second language. Some of these process skills include understanding that the “written language is a code, and there are particular rules for decoding (reading) and encoding (writing), and making meaning” (Perez, 1998, 68). Transferred skills from a students’ first language also can support them in deciding on strategies to support their reading, organizing, and classifying of important details needed for comprehension. This transfer of knowledge from one
language to another can assist students in learning literacy in a new language.

Chamot and O'Malley (1994, 22) authors of The CALLA Handbook refer to the role of students’ prior knowledge as a “critical influence on the acquisition of new information”. Teachers need to be conscious of their students and remember the role of children’s prior knowledge when planning instruction. By doing this, teachers are creating other ways to provide opportunities for new experiences.

Another important part of scaffolded instruction is modeling. Cooper (2000, 426) defined modeling as the “process of showing someone how to use or do something he or she does not know”. Modeling is an instructional technique that allows teachers to demonstrate a literacy strategy within an authentic writing activity. There are different types of modeling; implicit and explicit. Implicit modeling is when the “ideas being modeled occur as part of an experience and are not directly identified” (Cooper, 2000, 392). Allowing students to observe their teacher writing a letter with no student interaction is an example of implicit modeling. In turn explicit modeling is the opposite, it “involves directly showing and talking with students about what is being modeled” (Cooper, 2000, 392). Explicit modeling must always be used within the context of a specific text, and if used incorrectly will not effectively assist students in constructing meaning. Shared writing where students actively participate in the writing is an example of explicit modeling. Walter, (1996), Cooper, (2000), and Tompkins, (1997) all write about strategies such as talk-alouds and think-alouds as two examples of explicit modeling. A talk-aloud is when a teacher will share and articulate needed steps in order to complete a task the teacher has already completed (Tompkins, 1997). Whereas a think-aloud occurs when a teacher performs a task in
front of his or her students, hence “reflecting on their thoughts, explaining their reasoning, and showing their thinking as they perform a task” (Tompkins, 1997, 150). These types of modeling need to occur in the classroom on a daily basis. Walter, (1996) noted that one could use modeling in a variety of contexts, for example shared writing, daily news, and writing a note to the office.

The top-down approach is another aspect of scaffolded instruction. In literacy the top-down approach “moves from whole to part, and back to the whole again, recognizing that background knowledge, experience, and understanding play an important role in making meaning (Walter, 1996, 44). Background knowledge is the foundation in which students can construct meaning. In addition to background knowledge, students need to learn and understand how to use three major cueing systems to construct meaning from any text. When reading, writing, listening, and talking we use these cueing systems simultaneously (Tompkins, 1997). Walter (1996) lists and describes the three major cueing systems as, 1) semantic, 2) syntactic, and 3) visual/graphophonic (page, 44). The semantic system asks the question, “does it make sense?” and focuses on meaning. The syntactic system applies the ELD student’s knowledge of language patterns and sentence structure and asks the question, “does it sound right?” The third cueing system is visual/graphophonic and asks “does it look right?” This cueing system pertains to the sound/symbol relationship and visual parts of language (Walter, 1996, Tompkins, 1997). Using background knowledge and the three-cueing systems in daily authentic writing helps second language learners progress through the developmental writing stages.
In addition to helping promote and achieve using cognitive strategies within instruction Cummins (1981) created a framework or continuum. This framework was designed to “help identify the extent to which students are able to cope successfully with the cognitive and linguistic demands made on them” (Cummins, 1997, 10). The continuum placed academic tasks ranging from context embedded (lots of clues) to context reduced (no clues) intersecting them with tasks that range from cognitively undemanding to cognitively demanding. These forming Cummins’ quadrants. As second language learners develop they will begin to accomplish and master tasks from each quadrant. Cummins’ quadrants are also used by teachers to plan instruction. The quadrants help identify the level of proficiency required to achieve certain tasks. Moreover, the quadrants promote “the use of strategies that help support students in constructing meaning from more academically challenging tasks” (Walter, 1996, 22).

Furthermore, it is essential that in order for a second language student to be successful, teachers must use consistent scaffolding, and as a many as necessary, to help develop the writing of all ELD students. However, an ELD student with an identified learning disability, needs many more scaffolds there are an necessary for an English learner without identified learning disabilities.

How Writing differs from Oral Language

There are several irregularities between oral and written language. For instance oral language relies on visual contact to support meaning. A speaker may use reference words to refer to objects or people in view or they may use physical movements to convey meaning, such as pointing to something. On the other hand, in
written language, reference words serve a different purpose (Gibbons, 1993). Written language requires the author to be clear to the reader. Students need to have a clear understanding about both oral and written language. Both monolingual and bilingual learners need to have some understanding that a sentence is a cluster of words grouped together to convey a complete thought. Every sentence uses different forms of punctuation and is at times grouped with other sentences to form a paragraph. It is critical that a writer understands how we cluster words in the productive process of writing. Dividing meaning units into sentences or paragraphs is not relevant for a speaker. As a student becomes more secure in the understanding of speech and written language, teachers can provide multiple opportunities for students to interact with different types of genres of reading and writing. By using an assortment of texts, teachers can explicitly teach strategies to help students understand the different text structures. The written development of second language learners has a temporary disadvantage—they may not be fluent in the spoken language causing writing to develop at a slower rate. Thus, teachers will need to support students by providing systematic instruction in both oral language development and writing. Both oral language and writing can be strengthened by an understanding of the structure of stories.

Text Structure and Story Grammar

Text structure affects how a student comprehends text. All texts have some type of structure or structures. A typical narrative text has certain elements, such as a beginning, middle, and end, in addition to good/bad characters, setting, a problem or problems, and a solution. These essential elements are called story grammar. Story
grammars are organizational devices, which enhance comprehension (Peregoy & Boyle, 1997). Second language learners need to learn about text structure to help them understand these patterns in the different types of text. To improve understanding of this concept, teachers can model story grammar by using visual aides or story maps. English learners and students with mild learning disabilities will be able to apply their knowledge of stories and story structure to facilitate comprehension (Meese, 1994). ELD students can use their prior knowledge of stories to comprehend new text structures if they are aware that structures similar to the cultural stories they have heard exist. An understanding of text structure influences a student’s level of comprehension. In addition to teaching English language learners about text structures, teachers must provide their students with learning strategies to further assist comprehension, such as activating personal prior knowledge.

Role of Prior Knowledge

A student’s role in learning how to write involves implementing diverse and complex sets of understandings and behaviors. Students need to be active and responsible participants when learning how to write. As second language learners gain more knowledge they “continually integrate new findings into their framework of knowledge about language and texts, replacing what no longer works with revised theories and fresh information” (Taberski, 2000, 3). A powerful tool for second language learners is relating old and new information. A student can do this at any stage of development. English language learners must have knowledge of how language works to help them figure out words and understand text.
The Language-Experience Approach (LEA), is a technique which builds upon student interest and background knowledge, in addition to developing language. LEA is a common approach for beginning second language learners. According to Peregoy & Boyle (1997, 224), LEA “builds on linguistic, social, and cultural strengths and interests the student brings to school”. This technique allows for the student to dictate words and sentences about personal experiences, as the teacher writes the dictation for the student. The teacher provides a model for the student, and the developed text becomes the child’s reading. All content of these dictated stories stem from the student’s experiences. During LEA activities second language learners are given opportunities to not only generate words, but also to organize, and clarify their ideas to make their stories more interesting. Language-experience activities provide students with a “stimulus for writing” (Tompkins, 1997, 488).

Teachers need to remember that second language learners bring their own language and experiences into the classroom and should build and expand upon these experiences as well as enrich them with language. The knowledge a student brings to the classroom is essential. According to Cummins (1994, 38) teachers need to “build on students’ experience thereby validating students’ cultural identity”. To support their students, teachers need to provide direct and systematic instruction. This type of instruction needs to be supportive and interactive to actively engage students who are English language learners and have learning disabilities. Cooper (2000, 97) found that the more opportunities for writing and reading in the classroom allowed for “students’ prior knowledge to expand”. All teachers need to remember that prior knowledge is necessary for the construction of meaning, especially for English
identified learning disabilities. Many times ELD students with learning disabilities will have limited prior knowledge bases. If a student has limited prior knowledge teachers can help him or her construct meaning and develop prior knowledge through systematic instruction. An understanding of how stories work helps students as they embark on their own independent writing.

Writing Development

When learning how to write every child goes through various stages of development. Second language learners, just like their first language counterparts progress through various developmental phases in their writing. In order for students to become more effective writers they need to “coordinate a broad range of complex skills” (Peregoy & Boyle, 1997, 199). These complex skills include organizing one’s thoughts and expressions, as well as the ability to use conventional spelling, grammar, and punctuation (Peregoy & Boyle, 1997). As students grow as writers, teachers need to continue supporting them through scaffolding activities. Teachers need to introduce activities such as shared writing to “model, guide, and support each step until students take charge of their own writing” (Cooper, 2000, 344).

The writing development of young learners includes many levels. Researchers such as Cooper, Tompkins, and Peregoy & Boyle all list similar patterns describing these levels young learners follow. The earliest stage is when the child draws a picture as their story, or picture writing. The patterns which occur next in a child’s writing development are similar to those in reading development. According to Tompkins (1997), emergent writing, beginning writing, and fluent writing are all stages in writing development (p.385). Emergent writing begins with scribble
writing. This is when the child attempts to mimic adult writing. This stage progresses as students begin to copy and write letters or letter-like forms in strings or repetitive practice. Beginning writing “marks children’s growing awareness of the alphabetic principle (Tompkins, 1997, 385). This is when young learners begin to comprehend the letter-sound relationship and begin to experiment with invented spelling to create words. Fluent writing is when students “use conventional spelling and other conventions of written language, including capital letters and punctuation marks” (Tompkins, 1997, 385). As a child grows developmentally, their pictures, which support their writing, become more detailed and less important to convey the meaning of the written text.

To support and assist students as they develop into writers, teachers need to provide opportunities for authentic writing experiences, such as journal writing on a daily basis. It is equally important for teachers to briefly conference with students about their daily writing. This is especially true for second language learners with identified learning disabilities. Students who have learning disabilities benefit from daily moments of individualized attention. These conferences can be informal and short in length. The information provided to teachers through these informal conferences are valuable and “enable the teacher to provide on-the-spot support” (Cooper, 2000, 477). Teachers can also model a skill that is complicated or causing a problem for the student, by explicitly teaching a mini-lesson. A mini-lesson is a short and focused lesson on a specific strategy or skill (Cooper, 2000). These informal conferences are also important as an assessment tool. Cooper writes, “written responses in journals provide evidence about spelling, grammar and usage, and
comprehension" (p. 478). Students, who are provided support and guidance as they progress through the developmental stages of writing, are more able to write independently.

**Independent Writing**

Writing is the most complex area of literacy. In order for students to write, they must be able to combine a variety of areas of knowledge. These include oral language, spelling, reading, and handwriting. In addition, students must be able to understand the different purposes of writing along with comprehending various text structures to be able to communicate through writing (Meese, 1994). Also, in order for students to express themselves through writing they must be able to plan and organize their ideas. It follows then, that students must have numerous opportunities to practice these skills. Teachers need to provide their students with time for purposeful writing in a classroom environment that is conducive to writing and supported by conferences for feedback.

When second language learners are given opportunities for independent writing they are able to express their ideas and interests through original written and visual works. Teachers need to observe these original texts as benchmark samples and also as artifacts as a part of ongoing assessment. Thus, teachers can gain insights into their students’ writing progress. Furthermore, teachers can use what they have learned about their students in independent writing to tailor instructional experiences to the needs of the individual student (Franklin, 1989). The goal is to help students write fluently with initial attention to getting their ideas down on paper, that is, to become automatic while writing.
There are different types of activities that teachers can provide for second language learners to develop fluency and automaticity in writing. Peregoy & Boyle (1997, 206) define fluency as “the ability to get words down on a page easily”. Automaticity is defined as the ability to engage in a complex activity without having to concentrate on each part of it. Meaningful writing practice is the only way to develop fluency and automaticity in addition to continuing English development in meaningful ways. There are many ways to encourage meaningful writing practice. I chose one that seemed to appeal widely to my students – journal writing.

**Journal Writing**

Journal writing is another way for teachers to provide students with meaningful concepts to practice and develop fluency and automaticity. In journal writing, students are able to generate ideas when they write in journals on a daily basis. In turn, teachers can assess their students’ authentic work to provide individualized instruction. It is important for teachers to model appropriate responses for their students in addition to allowing time in the classroom for them to write in their journals. Hurley and Tinajero (2001) state that teachers need to demonstrate strategies such as brainstorming to support students when writing about personal experiences and literature responses. When writing in journals, brainstorming serves as an “organizing framework or outline for things to write about while also developing oral language” (Hurley & Tinajero, 2001, 77). If teachers do not appropriately model strategies, the task of journal writing can become overwhelming and tedious for some students. Thus, students with mild learning disabilities need
direct instruction to plan, organize, and draft written works to improve fluency (Meese, 1994).

Tierney (1995), an advocate of journal writing suggests that this type of one-on-one interaction is an advantage for teachers and students. Journals are a powerful tool for second language learners because they engage students in "real and purposeful dialogue" (Peregoy & Boyle, 1997, 208). Researchers on children's writing found that children who write on a daily basis learned how to read through writing. For example, Edelsky 1989, 102) notes that "journal writing is a supportive context for written language development". Furthermore, when given opportunities to write freely, second language learners learned how to write for a variety of purposes (Urzua, 1989). The support provided to English language learners should not only be meaningful and purposeful, it should be systematic.

Systematic Instruction

The teacher's role in teaching second language learners with identified learning disabilities is a crucial one. Once a teacher has assessed students' writing, he or she must provide and demonstrate effective writing strategies. These strategies need to be systematic in that they are developmental, based on the need of the writer and scaffold an understanding about writing. These effective strategies must also be consistent. Systematic instruction builds a foundation for students with mild learning disabilities and are learning a second language. Students who are English learners with learning disabilities, like their counterparts, have developmental difficulty in organizing information. Thus, the purpose of systematic instruction is to provide ELD students with learning disabilities with scaffolding strategies that "activate the
individual in the learning process through simple learning strategies that will make organizing, learning, and reviewing information easier” (Rooney’s (1985) Meese, 1994,189). Teachers must reinforce meaningful strategies such as how to organize, how to learn about what writers do, and how to review what one has written and learn to self edit. The goal of systematic instruction is independence. Students will learn how to use these strategies to gain control over their own learning.

Systematic instruction is supported by the use of scaffolded strategies. When scaffolding learning in systematic ways, teachers are enabling their students to develop an understanding at the students’ instructional level. Many second language learners with identified learning disabilities have difficulties constructing meaning partly because of a limited prior knowledge base. These students are especially in need of systematic strategies that were specifically designed for writing.

Through conferences teachers can reinforce systematic strategies. Conferences provide opportunities for teachers to observe and gain insights about their students. It is especially important for students who are at the pre-emergent and emergent writing stages to have one-on-one time to conference on how print works. As students develop into beginning and fluent writers, teachers should plan conferences to teach students how to organize and guide their thinking. This regular and direct intervention provides priceless guidance for students who are learning English.

Conferences can be formal, informal, one-on-one, or small group. During conferences the teacher’s role is to talk with students and more importantly listen to students. Teachers should record valuable information taken from these conferences. Cooper (2000) writes and lists four purposes of writing conferences. The first
purpose is for sharing where the teacher and the student discuss the student's completed writing. The second purpose is for the teacher to further discuss with the student some part of the students' writing; "modeling and coaching to help students develop their writing" should occur during this time (Cooper, 2000, 477). The third purpose is for the teacher to "provide a mini-lesson on a particular strategy or skill" that is needed to support the student (p. 477). The fourth purpose is assessment. Student progress can be assessed through conferences and thus guide instruction. Taberski (2000, 38) describes the advantages of conferences. Conferences give teachers a unique opportunity to "get to know them (students) better and to plan instruction to meet their (students) needs".

Reading Recovery, an early intervention plan for struggling students in the first grade, also supports systematic instruction. The program involves teachers and students in one-on-one reading activities and writing experiences. Teachers who use Reading Recovery procedures in their classrooms provide their students with "individually designed and individually delivered instruction" (Clay, 2001, 220). According to Clay, Reading Recovery was designed to do the following within the classroom: provide one-on-one instruction with teacher selected activities created to meet individual needs of students, and lessons that are paced and sequenced. Teachers need to create lessons that use a "set of texts designed to deliver a sequence of items to be learned" (Clay, 2001, 220). The activities used in these lessons should be designed to "elicit, demand and support a broad-range of strategic behaviors which comes from knowing how to problem-solve in a variety of ways in both reading and writing" (Clay, 2001, 221). When working with struggling English language learners,
the strategies used in Reading Recovery and the one-on-one instruction, support their literacy development. Developing a variety of interventions to use in the classroom is invaluable to working with ELD students with learning disabilities. However, whenever possible, literacy experiences must be supported in the home.

**Literacy in the Home**

A child's literacy development begins before they reach the preschool or kindergarten classroom. Children are exposed to many types of environmental print such as magazines, store signs, and billboards, in addition to print found inside their homes. Newspapers, books, comic books, magazines, grocery lists, recipes, and written notes can be found in most homes. It is through these forms of written language that families are modeling the "forms and functions of print for children" (Peregoy & Boyle, 1997, 158).

It is important for the classroom teacher to involve parents in their child's learning. Many of the literacy activities parents can do to encourage their child's development as a reader and writer are part of the family's daily life. Writing grocery lists, signing cards, and writing messages for family members are all examples of how parents can support literacy development in the home. Teachers need to provide parents with instruction of how to create a positive literacy environment. By doing this, teachers can build on the literacy activities which already occur in the household. This is a positive way of validating parents and making them active participants in their child's literacy development. Teachers can model activities and strategies for parents, such as demonstrating how to read stories aloud and ask questions of their child to develop cognition, in addition to showing them activities that develop
literacy. Some of these activities include engaging in conversation with your child about daily occurrences, following a recipe together, looking in the TV Guide to check show times, and making a list of household chores. For those parents who are also learning English, working with their child can improve their own literacy skills. If parents are developing in English themselves, they can have their child read stories, recipes, grocery lists or notes to them. Engaging families is crucial to a child’s success; thus, promoting parent involvement only helps students.

Conclusion

This classroom study was designed to explore strategies used to assist English language learners with diagnosed learning disabilities in the area of writing. Second language learners with diagnosed learning disabilities face many academic challenges and require special attention in classrooms because learning disabilities will affect the student’s development. Therefore, all teachers and especially those who teach in California’s public schools, need to recognize their students’ needs and understand the issues important to supporting the writing of second language learners. In addition, teachers need to think about the diverse aspects of the child as well as the disability and language development. In order to meet the needs of English learners with identified learning disabilities, teachers must guide their instruction in a holistic matter, yet develop systematic teaching strategies that will address the specific needs of students. The consistent use and integration of scaffolding strategies that support the learning of the alphabetic principle, story schema development, stages of developmental writing and independent writing need to occur in our classrooms to help students gain a clearer understanding about writing. Through these strategies
teachers will enable English learners with diagnosed learning disabilities to be more successful as developing writers.
Methodology

The methodology used in this classroom case study is a qualitative integration of assessments and instruction as part of the regular classroom routine. Esteban, the subject, was told that his part in this study was strictly voluntary. The methodology used to observe and evaluate the Esteban’s written works included the following:

1) Anecdotal notes taken before, during, and after the writing process.
2) One-on-one conferences that took place as part of the feedback process in writing.
3) Direct teaching of specific concepts: the alphabetic principle, story schema, writing process and independent writing.
4) Teacher – student interviews or conferences with the subject to determine his understanding of the writing process.

Instructional scaffolds were specifically selected to support the development of the subject’s writing. Instructional scaffolds used the most in this classroom research study to support the writing process were:

1) Modeling writing through shared writing, personal journal instruction, and conferences.
2) Context embedded learning experiences that were cognitively demanding through direct teaching and instruction.
3) Activating background knowledge to provide the subject with a purpose for writing.
4) Metacognition – thinking about writing while writing, for example., How did you ...? Tell me how you ...? What were you thinking about when you ...?

Participant and Setting

The participant selected for this classroom study was a male, seven-year-old, first grade student, a second language learner with diagnosed auditory processing disabilities. For the purpose of this study and to ensure confidentiality he will be known as Esteban. Esteban has struggled academically throughout his entire school career, and was retained in the first grade (see Formal Assessment for assessment results). He participates in the English Language Development (ELD) program. In comparison to other children his age who are in the ELD program, he is learning English at a slower rate. Esteban’s academic challenges appear to stem from learning disabilities and not solely from second language learning factors.

The elementary school that Esteban attends is located in a lower to middle class neighborhood in southern California. The population of the school is 602 students, consisting of an ethnic breakdown of 70% Caucasian, 14% Hispanic, 7% African-American, 2% Native American, 3% Asian, 1% Pacific Islander, 3% Filipino. The school operates on a traditional school year calendar.

Health and Developmental Background

Esteban’s parents reported that he reached most developmental milestones within expected limits, except for learning how to speak. He did not learn how to speak until the age of four years. There were also complications with his premature birth. However, Esteban has had excellent health throughout his childhood.
Environmental, Cultural, and Economic Factors

Esteban lives at home with his parents. He has two younger sisters age five and four years. Spanish is the language spoken in the home. Esteban’s family is of Mexican decent, and both parents are learning English as a second language. Their cultural and linguistic backgrounds provide a contextual setting for Esteban that is significantly different from most of the children who attend his elementary school. His father works three jobs to provide for the family, and his mother does not work outside the home. Furthermore, one of his sisters has a medical condition that has placed both emotional and financial stress on the family. Esteban and his sisters participate in the free lunch program, along with Project Smile and Operation School Bell. Project Smile provides free dental services for families in need. Operation School Bell is an organization which provides school age children with the appropriate supplies (backpacks, folders, books) and clothing (shoes, jackets, seasonal clothing) for school.

Formal Assessment

Esteban was given the Peabody Individual Achievement Test – Revised (PIAT-R) and the Test of Kindergarten/First Grade Readiness Skills to assess his levels of academic functioning. The school site’s bilingual psychologist and the Resource Specialist administrated the assessments in June of 2000, at the end of his initial year in the first grade. The school psychologist and the Resource Specialist felt that Esteban’s performance on the tests was a good indication of his skill level. Almost every response on the PIAT-R was measured by a pointing response while the Readiness Test was evaluated with a variety of types of responses, matching, oral,
and written. It was felt that he attempted the items to his best ability. His scores in all areas measured were at Kindergarten level or below. When compared to his bilingual and age peers his performance was in the lower quartile for all the tests.

Esteban's performance score on the PIAT-R assessment was at the 8th percentile. The results of the Kindergarten/First Grade Readiness Skills assessment were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Areas</th>
<th>Age Equivalent</th>
<th>Scaled Scores</th>
<th>Percentile Ranks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>5-1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>5-11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>4-4</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>&lt; 0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scores clearly indicate that Esteban's readiness skills were in the lowest percentile compared to expectancies for children his age. It was recommended that Esteban repeat the first grade to give him another year to acquire the foundation skills that are necessary to be successful in academic areas in school. It was also recommended that Esteban receive support through the Resource Specialist Program at school in a small group setting.

Materials

The materials selected for this classroom study were meant to support the targeted concepts: 1) the alphabetic principle; 2) the understanding of story schema; 3) the development of independent writing.
Materials to Develop the Alphabetic Principle

The materials selected to support learning of the alphabetic principle were as follows. Alphabet books were used as a learning tool to support Esteban’s development. Alphabet books assist students in focusing on letters and use their knowledge of sound-symbol correspondences. Comprehension of the alphabetic principle is enhanced through the use of alphabet books as well as teaching, students to learn the names of the letters in the English alphabet, especially when English is learned as a second language. Another important aspect of using alphabet books is that they are predictable. They most always follow the sequence of the English alphabet and are usually presented in a format that exposes students to one letter per page. When reading alphabet books, second language learners can view upper and lower case letters in print. Many alphabet books incorporate delightful illustrations. Detailed and interesting illustrations assist English language learners understanding of the alphabet by building on their prior knowledge to make connections between letters and sounds. Many alphabet books are created around a concept such as dinosaurs. These are excellent for beginner readers and writers because second language learners can build vocabulary and actively participate in activities based on letters and concepts in the book. Some of the alphabet books used to support Esteban were:

Base, G. Animalia.

Ehlert, L. Eating the Alphabet.

Kitchen, B. Animal Alphabet
Alphabet books published by Rigby were also used within the classroom study to help facilitate learning. The series used was called the Rigby Alphabet Starters. These books focus on individual letters by displaying words beginning with the letter using real pictures to support each page. Once the subject mastered each letter, he placed the book into his “Esteban Box” for independent reading.

In addition to alphabet trade books published for children, student-made alphabet books are also essential in developing an understanding of the alphabetic principle. Esteban was exposed to alphabet books in the following ways:

1) The books were shared by showing Esteban a page with a letter on it. We said the letter together and named all the things we could think of that started with that letter. All words were recorded on chart paper.

2) Esteban then built words we had talked about using magnetic letters.

3) Esteban subjectly created his own alphabet books about subjects that interested him, such as baseball, soccer or his favorite pet.

Within this study the student created alphabet books around objects and animals in which he was interested.

Magnetic letters and other tactile letters were used as manipulatives to support the student-made alphabet books within the classroom. As Esteban progressed through his student-made alphabet book, magnetic letters were used to teach and reinforce learning of the alphabet. Magnetic letters provide second language learners with the opportunity to work kinesthetically or hands-on. For example, students can make and break words beginning with isolated letters. Second language learners can learn how to spell new words through the sounds being taught. Through explicit modeling
teachers can teach letters by isolating them for English learners. These letters–sound activities help students become more fluent.

Materials to Develop Story Schema

The materials chosen to promote understanding of story schema included wordless books, story map, and predictable texts. Wordless books are useful in assisting second language development. Wordless books “tell stories through the pictures only” (Peregoy & Boyle, 1997, 203). When English learners interact with wordless books they are not only able to enjoy the detailed illustrations, but also they are able to offer their own interpretations of the story by using picture clues to create the story. In addition to published trade books, one can create wordless books using familiar books. By using only story’s pictures and not the words, the student can write a new version of the story. Esteban was given wordless picture books. He was able to look at the pictures and try to tell a story. The story incidents were recorded by the teacher and then written under each picture. This created story became Esteban’s reading. The same procedure was followed when using the pictures only of published trade books.

Story maps were used as graphic organizers to support English learners. Story organizers assist ELD students to visualize and organize thoughts and ideas and learn the text structure of stories. Story maps were used in the following ways:

1) A partially filled in story map was used to help build story schema while Esteban was reading a story with the teacher.

2) As Esteban became more familiar with story schema, a story map was built or created by the student as he read a story with the teacher.
Pictureless books were also used to support the understanding of story schema. A pictureless book is a text generated from the student. Usually the text is either dictated to the teacher and then the student will illustrate their story. Pictureless books can also be written by the teacher based on a classroom experience or discussion. In both scenarios, the student will always illustrate the story to match the text.

Narrative and expository texts were also used in this classroom study to develop story schema. Both follow specific organizational patterns, which allow second language learners to develop a basic understanding of text. Predictable books were used to help develop story schema because they not only follow a narrative or expository structure; they also use repeated phrases that reinforce principal concepts of the story. Predictable patterns allow second language learners to model their own writing. I chose stories from the Rigby PM storybook. The stories from this series meet many important criteria. Predictable texts need to have meaningful content, which encourage second language learners to develop critical thinking. The titles within the Rigby series also included many titles from different genres. Predictable texts also provide second language learners many opportunities to learn about directionality, punctuation, and letter-sound relationships. Predictable texts also support language development of second language learners because students can learn skills in context at their current reading level.

Predictable texts were used in a shared reading context as follows:

1) Esteban and I previewed the text. Esteban was encouraged to make predictions about the story.
2) I had Esteban point to the name of the story, the author, and the illustrations.

3) The story was read by myself and Esteban was encouraged to read along.

4) I pointed out where sentences began and where they ended by pointing to the words read. Attention was called to punctuation, specific capital letters, high frequency words, and letter learned through use of the alphabet books.

The process described above was engaged in daily, after the shared reading experience, Esteban was encouraged to read the book on his own while the teacher worked with other students.

The following predictable books were used in this study. They were all part of the Rigby PM Red level book collection:

- The Photo Book
- Hedgehog is hungry
- Wake Up, Dad
- Tiger, Tiger
- Baby Lamb’s first drink
- The big kick
- Kitty and the birds
- The flower girl
- Ben’s Teddy Bear
- Lizard loses his tail
- Tom the brave
- A home for Little Teddy

- The Lazy Pig
- The Merry-go-round
- The Little Snowman
- A birthday cake for Ben
- Sally and the daisy
- Hot Dogs
- The baby owls
- The bumper cars
- Ben’s treasure hunt
- Father Bear goes fishing
- Hide and seek
- Where is Hannah?
A home for Little Teddy  Where is Hannah?

Materials to Develop Independent Writing

The materials selected to promote the writing process and the development of independent writing included activities, were based on Esteban's authentic experiences. Within the study the subject reconstructed words, sentences, and stories that were dictated and then I recorded them on sentence strips. Strips were cut into pieces and Esteban was asked to arrange them in sentences that were subsequently read. Specific words were isolated for Esteban to decode. Then used in his own writing.

Esteban's language development was also supported through cloze strategies. A cloze strategy is when a written version of text contains deletions that the child fills within the appropriate word or phrase that makes sense. Cloze strategy activities are useful because they are to meet students' needs and can help determine if a second language tailored learner comprehends the overall text. Furthermore, cloze activities can be helpful in determining text for use at appropriate levels for students. Cloze activities can also be used as an assessment tool for specific phoneme, alphabetic, onset, rime, and sentence structure. Students can become independent writers by using cloze strategies to become confident and comfortable with different wiring genres. In addition, second language learners can become accustomed to writing in length when being supported by scaffolded cloze activities.

The development of independent writing was also supported through modeled writing and writing conferences. Second language learners need quality models of the written language. ELD students need to develop an awareness of different writing
morning message, shared writing, and whole group journal writing. Conferences are also essential to the development of independent writing. Students, especially English learners with diagnosed learning disabilities need opportunities to discuss their written works. These need to occur daily.

Writing conferences were structured in the following format:

1) I sat with Esteban and asked him to share his writing.

2) Esteban read his writing and I asked him metacognitive questions in English, such as: How else might you do that? What did you see in your head when you were describing your pet? What might you say to help me “see” your pet? This exercise helped him expand his writing.

Conferences occurred whenever I determined that Esteban was ready. That meant that I saw that he had started a story and seemed to have enough text on his paper to discuss. Conferences occurred on an average of every other day for about 10 minutes during the classroom’s independent writing block.

Once a month during these conferences, I would assess Esteban using my school districts’ Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). DRA is a reading assessment tool in which I administer a running record and document Esteban’s literacy behaviors, such as comprehension of the story, sentence structure, and the use of visual cues. The DRA assessment kit included leveled assessment books. According to my district’s first grade expectations, at the end of the school year students need to be able to read at a DRA level 16. Esteban’s IEP goals stated that at the end of the school year he should be able to read and comprehend a story at a DRA level 4. Celebration Press publishes the Developmental Reading Assessment
Daily journal writing was also used within the study to support the development of independent writing. Daily writing encourages second language learners to use invented spelling. Reading-writing connections are also made as students model their own writing on stories they have read. Modeling their writing after a predictable text pattern is an example of this connection. Also, though journal writing activities, students are provided opportunities to write in an environment that is positive, non-threatening and supportive. At first, I structured the daily journal to incorporate scaffolding activities around a topic or interest that Esteban enjoyed. Within the daily journal we would draw and label the illustration, and build vocabulary, which supported the topic. Through out the week, Esteban and I would build upon his chosen topic. Quickly, this daily journal routine transformed to the following way: Esteban chose a topic to write about in his journal. Initially I chose a topic for him. I usually chose a topic that was based upon an interest, classroom theme, or from a story. In time, Esteban was able to choose his own topic to write on.

1) At first, Esteban had difficulty writing when he was asked to write then draw his picture. He needed to draw his picture and then write.

2) Esteban and I discussed what his sentence and or sentences would look and sound like. I did this by using a “thinking aloud” strategy to assist him in organizing his thoughts. I would ask him questions such as: Tell me about your topic. What do you want to say about the subject? Does that sound right? Can you say that another way? By using this strategy his thoughts and ideas became clear and organized.
3) After mentally creating his sentence, he would then write it on paper. Then, he would draw a picture to support his writing.

4) Eventually, Esteban would add to his writing after drawing his picture.

5) After writing and drawing, Esteban and I would conference on his daily entry.

He would read his writing to me and then read it to several classmates.

**Assessments**

The assessments used to support the materials for the promotion of learning and development of the alphabetic principle, story schema, and independent writing were: anecdotal records, Marie Clay’s letter identification, and student independent writing partnered with teacher reflection. Anecdotal records were used in this classroom study on a daily basis. Anecdotal records are written observations on a student made by the teacher. They are spontaneous, continuous and involve not only observation, but also on the spot interpretation. Esteban was observed during reading and writing, as well as on the playground. This type of assessment is an important and effective sequential document.

Marie Clay’s letter identification assessment tests the lower and upper case letters of the English alphabet. Having the student read across the lines of large print alphabet allows the teacher to document his or her responses to stimuli. The letters are printed in a random and not alphabetical order. When scoring the identification assessment, the teacher records the correct answers as the student responds to the following: letter name, letter sound, or a response that indicates the correct letter of the initial letter of word.
Esteban’s independent writing was examined by using a side-by-side analysis. I created this assessment to document my analysis on Esteban’s independent writing and then connect each analysis with a personal reflection. I selected pieces from Esteban’s daily journal, which is separated monthly. This side-by-side analysis assessment tool allowed me to critically look at journal entries from the beginning, middle and end of the months, September through May. I looked carefully and analyzed each entry documenting developmental stages, patterns displayed, and skills that were gained and/or lost.

When documenting Esteban’s progression through the developmental stages I observed the patterns within his writing samples and then placed them within a developmental writing continuum using Tompkins (1997) and Dorn, French, & Jones (1998). This continuum included the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Student will Produce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early</td>
<td>picture as their story, or picture writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergent</td>
<td>scribble writing, strings of letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>invented spelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluent</td>
<td>conventional spelling, uses most conventions of written language, capitals and punctuation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a result of careful analysis I observed several patterns within patterns, which occurred later in the school year. I felt that this demonstrated that he was going through a dry period as a writer. Also, as Esteban became more confident he was
able to verbalize to me when he wanted to try something new, for instance, the way we structured journals. He wanted to write freely in journals, but to do the scaffolding activities in addition to the journal and not within the journal. This was an important stage of his growth because he was able to take ownership of the daily journal activity. Another pattern I observed was when Esteban generated his own writing topics. At times Esteban could only draw a picture to support his journal topic. This is an example of the early stage of his writing development. Topics which Esteban enjoyed writing about were skateboards, dogs, and dinosaurs. I also observed that as Esteban grew as a writer, skills such as proper use of punctuation and correct capitalization decreased.
Results

This qualitative classroom study revealed that Esteban, a second language learner with diagnosed learning disabilities, developed significantly in his writing through scaffolded instruction. Esteban showed development that ranged from early to early fluent. The results of this classroom study are reported using the following: 1) Anecdotal records; 2) Marie Clay’s letter Identification test; and, 3) Student independent writing partnered with teacher reflection.

Results Based on Anecdotal Records

An analysis of my anecdotal records on Esteban revealed the following themes: 1) a desire to write on daily basis; 2) turning self interest into writing topics; 3) a desire to free write without “interference” from an adult; and, 4) self motivation to engage in other learning activities.

Theme 1: A Desire to Write on a Daily Basis

Because Esteban is a learner who showed growth over a long period of time, I was able to document his growth through the use of personal anecdotal records. A review of my anecdotal notes showed that I documented many reoccurring patterns in Esteban’s development as a writer. My notes showed that Esteban had a consistent desire to learn. For example, Esteban consistently wanted to write in his daily journal. The journal writing block of Esteban’s day was an essential part of his routine. He looked forward to writing in his journal. In my notes, I described how Esteban eagerly waited for journal writing because he felt successful. My anecdotal records were an essential document because I was able to observe patterns of Esteban’s development and they assisted me in creating the appropriate activities to
meet his ever-changing needs. As a result of my anecdotal records, I was able to create a side-by-side analysis intervention type of assessment cycle. That is, I read my anecdotal notes for reoccurring themes and patterns. I then developed interventions that were developmentally appropriate as well as having sufficiently scaffolds to meet the needs of Estaban, an English language learner.

Theme 2: Turning Self Interest into Writing Topics

The ability to self-generate topics was a second theme that emerged from my anecdotal records and a vital part of Esteban’s growth. Initially, I planned specific topics for Esteban to write about in his journal. In my notes I wrote that his quality of work was reaching my expectation; however, he demonstrated a lack of interest. “Esteban asked me if he could write about something new. He wanted to write about his scooter” (September 19, 2000). I tried different methods to structure his journal, such as labeling his pictures, building his sentences each day to create a story, making and breaking words and then gluing them into the journal. All these attempts to create the ideal journal activity to meet Esteban’s needs seemed to distance him and not engage him. At last, Esteban was comfortable enough to verbalize to me that he wanted to try something new in his journal. He wanted to write freely in his journal. Although, he still enjoyed doing the scaffolding activities (labeling, creating large-scale pictures, or developing a word ring) he wanted to do these activities outside of the actual journal writing time. After Esteban and I adjusted the structure of the daily journal, I began to observe more improvement in his quality of work. I also noted that Esteban wanted to take the activity “products”, such as his posters and word ring, home to share with his family. Esteban told me that he enjoyed hanging his work
from school in his bedroom. Esteban's parents confided that it was very important for him to share his work and then display them in his room.

**Theme 3: Desire to Free Write without Adult Interference**

Esteban had a strong desire to be an independent learner. A word I used in my anecdotal notes to describe him was “proud” (August 25, 2000). Especially when writing in his journal, he did not like to ask for assistance. Esteban always attempted to write independently. At times Esteban did need my help. When this occurred, he would almost never come to me for help. I would be the one to initiate the offer. Whenever I observed Esteban hesitating to create a picture he could write about, I took that as a clue to move toward him and offer help. For example, on February 28, 2001 I documented that Esteban had a difficult time focusing and staying on task. I noted that he appeared to be avoiding the task of writing, and probably would have not written at all that day without my encouragement. Some typical questions I would ask Esteban were “Who’s in your picture?”, “Tell me what you are doing in your picture”. In August and September, Esteban needed my help in creating a sentence to match his illustration. For instance, on the first day of the school year Esteban was extremely hesitant to write. I used the following questions to guide his thinking from thought to written word: How do you think you spell that word?”, “What does that letter word look like?”

Gradually, Esteban took more ownership and control over his writing and was able to clearly structure his thoughts and write them on paper. As Esteban gained more confidence and skills he would write with little assistance. Over the course of the school year, Esteban became more aware of his writing and specific needs for
help. He knew when he wanted help. He would solicit help on his own. He also
gained an awareness of how his sentences and words should appear on paper. An
example of this scenario is illustrated in the December 12, 2000 of my anecdotal
notes. When Esteban was attempting to write a sentence, which included the word
“eating”, Esteban was writing, “eating” with the initial letter as an “iting”. I noted
that Esteban came to me concerned that he was not writing, “eating” properly. I
asked a few probing questions such as, “If you were to pick another letter to begin
your word with what do you think that would be?” He became clearly frustrated and
finally, asked me to write the word for him. I was pleased that Esteban was aware of
his writing needs and verbalized those concerns.

Towards the end of the school year Esteban eagerly created his picture and wrote
his message with very little teacher help or interference as his body language
indicated. I wrote in my anecdotal notes: “I sense that Esteban has gained a new
found confidence in writing he seems to outwardly display his joy of writing. He
eagerly shared his independent writing journals with his peers. If I happen to be
monitoring his work he quickly replies “I can do it myself or I don’t need help” (May
23, 2001).

Theme 4: Self-Motivation to Engage in other Learning Activities

Throughout this study I found that Esteban responded well to consistent
kinesthetic activities. This was especially evident when Esteban was asked to
participate in activities to develop his awareness of the alphabetic principle. I created
tailored kinesthetic activities, such as building words with magnetic letters to help
Esteban develop an understanding blending of letters into words.
I used informal assessments such as segmenting and blending words with magnetic letters, then asked Esteban to locate the words in the classroom. I also provided Esteban with many different kinds of magnetic letters – plastic, sponge, and a variety of colors. Then I asked him to sort the letters according to an isolated letter or sound. Esteban’s development was enhanced and supported because the classroom became a learning toolbox for him. At any time he could select the learning tools he needed, and he was motivated to do so.

Conclusions

Anecdotal records kept from August 2000 to May 2001 reveal that Esteban emerged from dependence on teacher input to the understanding that he was his own best resource. In turn, I became a facilitator that he used when and only when he needed me. Esteban took the first big step to becoming a writer. He valued his own ideas and would write about them, not mine. All other available activities moved from the center of his writing time, to “extra stuff” he did when he felt like it.

Results of Marie Clay’s Letter Identification

Marie Clay’s letter identification score sheet was used to assess Esteban’s knowledge of letters and sounds. The table below displays pre and post letter identification scores:
Letter Identification Score Sheet

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<thead>
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<th></th>
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<td>Letter sound response</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Word response</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect response</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Test score is based on a score of a 54 (alphabet response and letter sound response).
- Test score is out of a possible 26 (word response).

These results indicate that when assessed Esteban was able to recognize 15 more letters in the post assessment compared to the pre assessment. In addition, when comparing the pre and post assessments, Esteban increased his knowledge of letter sounds by 18. When asked to produce words with specific initial letters he improved by 20 in the post assessment. These results indicate that Esteban grew in all areas.
assessed using this instrument. I feel that an important reason for Esteban’s success in the area of letter and sound recognition was that he was able to participate in kinesthetic activities throughout his school day.

Results of Esteban’s Student Independent Writing Analysis

I used a specific framework to help me analyze and interpret Esteban’s independent writing journals. This framework allowed me to place Esteban’s work along a continuum of development. The continuum described behaviors Esteban displayed as he gained more control of written language. These descriptors revealed how Esteban progressed through the developmental stages of writing. The continuum is based upon the research by Tompkins (1997) and Dorn, French, & Jones (1998). In this study, the following stages were used as a framework to analyze Esteban’s independent writing journals:

Early stage on the continuum of developmental stage of writing:

- Student will produce a picture as their story or picture writing.
- Scribble writing: “The child uses lines or scribbles to convey meaning” (Dorn, French, & Jones, 74, 1998).
- Student will write using random letters, which have no letter-sound correspondence.
- No spacing between words.
- Most letters are uppercase.
- Limited knowledge of left-to-right directionality.
- Student needs picture to read their writing.
Emergent stage on the continuum of developmental stage of writing:

- Student writes using some correctly spelled words.
- Student proceeds to write using “isolated letters, symbols, and numerals to represent meaning” (Dorn French, & Jones, 74, 1998).
- Letter-sound correspondence.
- Spells consonant-vowel-consonant words correctly (c-a-t).
- Uses a combination of upper and lower-case letters.
- Consistent control of using spacing between words.
- Letter names are used to represent sounds or syllables (r for are).

Beginning stage on the continuum of developmental stage of writing:

- Student uses repetitive patterns stylized and organized around known words.
- Student uses spaces between words.
- Student can read their writing without their picture as support.
- Student depends more on how the words visually appear.
- Alternate spellings for same sound.
- Reversed order of visual patterns.
- Experimentation of inflectional endings (ed, ing).
- Student writes using vowels in each word.

Fluent stage in the continuum of developmental writing stage:

- Student has control over the conventions of writing.
- Student consistently uses punctuation correctly.
- Student has a solid knowledge of the letter-sound relationship.
• Student uses an assortment of word structures (compound words, suffixes, etc.).
• Student writes using a variety of vocabulary.
• Student’s ideas are organized in logical and chronological sentences.

The following examples of growth in independent writing are based on samples of Esteban’s work.

Sample 1 (August 21, 2000)

(First day of school benchmark writing sample)
This journal entry was completed on the first day of school. Esteban was asked to write about his drawing. He had difficulty completing this task. I feel that because it was our first day of the school year Esteban was unsure and uncomfortable with writing. I feel this journal entry reveals that Esteban is at a pre-writing stage of development, or picture writing (Tompkins, 1997). Esteban's picture shows a smiling self-portrait holding onto a partial alphabet. Esteban did use the room as a tool to write the alphabet. I could hear him say the alphabet aloud and then write letters on his paper. His writing shows that he had some working knowledge of what the written alphabet looked like. After he was finished drawing, I sat with him in an informal conference. Esteban's explanation of what his picture was about was clear. I wrote his words in yellow highlighter below the picture and then he traced the words. I asked him to read and track his sentence. Esteban was able to read his sentence and read it with ease.
As the month progressed Esteban expressed an interest in rockets. I wanted to use his journal more as an activity to develop and build upon his prior knowledge. I was delighted that Esteban drew a precise picture of a rocket. I noted that he took great care and time to create his picture. After he drew the picture, Esteban and I conferred about his work. We then labeled the rocket and developed a sentence to match his picture. Esteban continued to write in the pre-writing stage using picture writing (Tompkins, 1997).
As Esteban became more aware of written language he progressed to the beginning writing developmental stage of writing (Tompkins, 1997). This journal entry reveals that Esteban used isolated letters to represent words (the semi-phonetic stage). He recognized that letters have sounds. His writing shows a combination of upper and lower-case letters. He has begun using spacing between words, thus displaying an understanding of word boundaries.
This journal entry reveals that Esteban is writing using a combination of semi-phonetic and phonetically spelled words, but writing within the beginning writing stage (Tompkins, 1997). He is moving along the developmental writing continuum. Esteban wanted to write, “I want to fight the spider.” He became frustrated with his initial attempt to write this sentence. He erased his original work more than one time. I went to help him and we discussed and sequenced his sentence. The frustration he displayed (frowning and erasing his word) dissipated after receiving help. It is important to note that Esteban was attentive and observant during this assistance stage, as if he were storing the information away for future reference.
Esteban copied a portion of a story for the journal entry exhibited above. He then attempted to build a sentence by using sight words displayed around the classroom. Esteban's placement of periods reveals that he has begun experimenting with punctuation. He felt that when he wrote to the end of a line, this signified that he had written a sentence. This is a common stage of developing a sense of how the conventions of the English language work. Even though it appears as if Esteban has regressed in this sample, I feel that this journal entry shows progress because he is experimenting with his punctuation. As writers develop, they experiment with the conventions of the language in search of patterns that work.
In this sample, Esteban used correctly spelled words. However, he appears to be regressing because he is not spacing between words. Our conference revealed that he still depended on his picture to assist him in reading his message. Esteban did use words that he knew how to spell or could use from the word wall. He specifically used the word wall to write the word “saw”. Esteban used me as a resource and asked me how to write, “fox”; I stretched out the word for him, that is slowly enunciating the word “/s/ /o/ /x/”, accentuating each sound in the word. He successfully wrote the word. For additional words, he scanned the room and on the classroom word wall
before and during writing. Esteban consistently continued to use the word “fox”
correctly with lower and upper case letters.

Sample 7 (November 2, 2000)

In class we read different versions of The Gingerbread Man. Since one of the
characters is a fox, Esteban enjoyed this story and read it often. He liked the comical
characters and already made spelling and background knowledge connections with
the term “fox” as discussed in sample 6. Esteban liked to re-tell this story on the felt
board where he could engage in a concrete kinesthetic activity. He wrote this
sentence independently but used a copy of the story to assist him with his writing.
Thus, he knew where to find resources to get him started and use during the writing
process. His sentence incorporates correctly spelled words and punctuation lacks spacing between words as in sample 6. He was able to further develop ideas that reflected his self-interests and desires. Other examples of pursuit of self-interest are demonstrated in the journal entries #3 and #8 where reoccurring "stories" of dinosaurs and scooters were present.

Sample 8 (December 12, 2001)

(Experimenting with patterns)

Pursuit of self-interest in writing continues as Esteban experiments with writing about his favorite subject, a fox; a word he could access with ease. Esteban had learned to spell fox, sample #7. This journal entry reveals that he is writing in a stylized manner. He has a sense of basic sentence patterns organized around known
with this sample, Esteban does not include punctuation, nor does he differentiate between the two sentences. Esteban does not use either a capital letter or a period. Again a demonstration of how developing writers continue to experiment and search for patterns. Esteban does continue to write within the beginning developmental stage of writing (Tompkins, 1997).

My anecdotal notes supported the pursuit of self-interest in this particular entry: "He wanted to write more than I like the fox. He attempted to write his second thought, "the fox iz eating". Esteban came to me for help with writing the word "eating". He was writing "i" as his initial sound "iting", but knew that it wasn't correct. When I asked how he knew that eating did not begin with "i", he replied "It needs an "e" He erased his work and asked me to write, "eating" for him.

This writing sample reveals that Esteban is beginning to develop a sense of language conventions. He is at the very beginning stages of becoming a self editor – understanding that some words just don’t look right and he can problem solve or “fix up” what doesn’t look right.
After a two-week winter vacation, Esteban had difficulty writing. When asked to write, he seemed to regress and immediately began drawing a picture. He spent a lot of time drawing. We conferred about his picture. Initially, Esteban had difficulty explaining his drawing. He knew that the picture included himself, but he had trouble recalling the name of the friend he had placed in his picture. I coached him by asking him questions such as, “In your picture are you at home or at school”, “Is your friend in our class”? (Anecdotal notes January 4, 2001).

Through this coaching and questioning, Esteban was able to recall what his picture was about. Once he recalled, we orally organized his thoughts to help him create a meaningful sentence. I assisted him by saying each word aloud as he wrote. He asked his friend to spell his name, and used the classroom word wall to write the
word “PLAY”. Once again, although Esteban needed initial help with his writing, he still exhibited independence by asking his friend to spell his name and using the word wall. I did not correct Esteban when he excluded punctuation from his sentence. He seemed more concerned with how words looked (see sample # 8) so I decided to address punctuation at a later date since Esteban had exhibited concerns and behaviors of development as a self-editor had.

Sample 10 (January 16, 2001)

Esteban continued to write in the beginning developmental stage of writing (Tompkins, 1997) as demonstrated in this sample. This journal revealed that he was starting to write more than one thought. Esteban loved the story Tacky the Penguin,
by Helen Lester. When writing this journal entry, he used the book as a reference to spell Tacky and penguin. He wrote a stylized sentence, which included known sight words "I like penguins". Esteban had difficulty with his final thoughts. I first thought it was because he had run out of lines on his paper. When I asked him about what his sentences said, he skipped over the third sentence "no penguins is". I believe that he couldn't find the words to complete this sentence because he had probably forgot the terms used in the penguin story. Since he was beginning to ask for what he needed as a writer, I let it go.

He then combined his last two sentences where he proceeded to write "i", instead of "e" as the initial letter in the word "eating". He still was not sure (see sample #8). He asked me to write the word "eating" for him. He used me as a resource because he was not sure of the correct spelling. Esteban was able to read his sentence back to me. When Esteban wrote the word "play", he reversed the order of the letters, spelling it "paly". He forgot to use the resource he had used before – the word wall.
Sample 11 (January 31, 2001)

"I saw a gobl egl bird". This journal entry indicates that Esteban’s writing was within several stages of developmental writing (Tompkins, 1997). His sentence was organized and followed a particular pattern, using sight words as a beginning base. This is evident because the sight word is spelled correctly and begins the sentence. Esteban then used phonetic spelling for the words "golden" and "eagle". He continued to use spacing between words and left-to-right directionality. This journal entry also revealed that Esteban started to take risks and had begun to use capitals and punctuation independently and correctly. He seems to have emerged from looking for
patterns that work in use of language conventions to knowing how to use them accurately.

Sample 12 (February 1, 2001)

In this entry, Esteban attempted to write his thoughts two times. This journal entry displays a desire to write correctly: “I went to see the X-Men movie”. Esteban had developed a pattern of known sight words and tried to use them when writing this sentence. I know Esteban tried to use his pattern of sight words because he knew how to correctly spell the following sight words; “with”, “see”, “I”, “to” and “the”. But he had difficulty organizing these words to make a coherent sentence. He erased his writing several times and he refused my initial attempts to assist him. After his
second attempt, he reached out for assistance. We orally organized his sentence and then he wrote it down. This journal sample also shows that he continued to write in several writing stages. His wrote using both phonetic and conventional spelling (Dorn, French & Jones 1998). He used a capital and punctuation. These are elements of the beginning developmental writing stage.

Sample 13 (February 14, 2001)

In this sample we see that sharks became Esteban’s new topic of interest. Anecdotal notes show that he put all of the classroom library books on sharks in his Esteban box. He also freely organized his thoughts and wrote about his picture. His writing is in between several writing stages (Tompkins, 1997). Esteban wrote shark without using a vowel in the first sentence, then in the third sentence he wrote “sak”,
then wrote over the "a" with a "r". He knows that the word "shark" must have a "r" in it to make sense, so he replaced the "a" with an "r"-an understanding of matching sound to print. The writing sample does not include punctuation. This is an inconsistency since the previous sample show that Esteban is developing a sense of conventions. I showed him where the periods went to complete his sentences.

Sample 14 (February 21, 2001)

Esteban independently used a picture card to spark inspiration for this journal entry. We talked about what the fox was doing in the picture. Then Esteban and I talked about what he wanted to write. Esteban independently wrote his story about the fox. He was gaining a better sense of sentence structure and syntax. This writing
sample displays that Esteban continued to write within the beginning writing stage (Tompkins, 1997). His sentence includes known sight words and phonetically spelled words. This entry also showed that he used his working knowledge of capitals and punctuation. Esteban was writing within the beginning writing stage (Tompkins, 1997) and was slowly moving toward the fluent writing stage, using one of the criteria.

Sample 15 (February 27, 2001)

Esteban had difficulty staying on task when writing on this day. He quickly drew his picture. The sentence he wrote displays Esteban's use of a friend's name within a simple pattern. I noted that he had trouble tracking his written words and did not want to elaborate
on his sentence. The words were spelled correctly and his used spaces between each of them. He did not use punctuation. Samples 10, 12, 13 and 14 demonstrate what young writers do. At times they may focus on several criteria during writing and at other times they may concentrate on one criterion. Esteban needs to experiment with word patterns that work or ones that he can predict.

Sample 16 (March 3, 2001)

Esteban’s journal entry displays that he confused the /i/ with /e/ when trying to spell the “eating” (see sample 8). Dinosaurs were his topic of writing. I noted that he had a clear vision. He organized his sentences independently. He wrote, “I take a picture of a dinosaur. I will give the picture to me”. Esteban used sight words and phonetically spelled words. These sentences were not within his normal writing
pattern but were a mixture of correctly spelled and phonetically spelled words. He also inappropriately capitalized many of the words within his sentences. Esteban proceeded to write within the beginning developmental writing stage (Tompkins, 1997), a stage in which he and many beginning writers stay for some time.

Sample 17 (March 6, 2001)

Esteban’s writing sample here indicates that several writing stages are occurring at once. He continues to write about dinosaurs. We were studying weather and tornadoes in class, but he stayed focused on his interest of that time – dinosaurs. Esteban was experimenting with punctuation and wanted no assistance from me. This journal entry also shows that vowels in a word were a continuing problem for
Esteban. For example, he writes "live" as "lev". Once again, he has confused "i" and "e". His sentences displayed words with lower case and upper case letters, following an organized pattern. Esteban wrote "The DiNosr nd a Tornado. The DiNoSr. LeV in the wTr". He continues to write here within and between the beginning and emergent writing stages (Tompkins, 1997) illustrating that writing development is a dynamic process that utilizes several stages at once.

Sample 18 (March 27, 2001)

(Seems to have regressed)

We just came back to school after a two-week spring vacation when Esteban wrote this journal entry. He had difficulty focusing his thoughts. His initial attempt was unorganized and jumbled. We conferred about what he wanted to write. He
asked me to stretch each word for him as he wrote. Common blends were extremely
difficult for him. Esteban used correct spacing and was then able to read back his
writing. This journal entry revealed that he continued to write at several different
writing stages (Tompkins, 1997) but seemed to regress in terms of clear focus and
organization after time off (see sample #9). After some assistance, however, he
seems to jump-start and recall as well as use the skills he learned before vacation.
Sample 19 (April 3, 2001)

In this entry, Esteban’s writing is a normal stylized writing pattern - a
combination of sight words and upper and lower case letters. He continued to write
in the beginning developmental stage of writing (Tompkins, 1997). During our
conference, we talked about his second sentence. I asked him if this sentence sounded better if we changed “at” with “on”. He disagreed. He felt that his sentence sounded correct. Esteban appeared to move in and out of writing stages as he developed an “ear” for the English language and a sense of writing as a process. Since writing was a challenge for Esteban, each journal entry required him to focus his thinking on one task at a time, a process that worked to support his learning. Esteban was attempting to make sense of all of his newly acquired skills, looking for patterns, and beginning to take risks.

Sample 20 (April 4, 2001)

(Going to the store)
Esteban writes about going to the store. He started right away on his own and needed no assistance. He came to me after he completed his writing. Blends and vowels were still causing him problems ("st", "sk"). He was able to read his work and punctuation and capitals accurately. His picture supported his message in a clear manner. He was making progress. As Esteban grew and acquired more skills and he became more independent, his pictures evolved from simple basic to more detailed depictions of his stories. Esteban’s writing was a mixture of accurately and phonetically spelled words. Directionality was under control. He was writing within the emergent and beginning stages of writing (Tompkins, 1997) because he was using criteria from both of these developmental stages.

Sample 21 (April 24, 2001)

(Rodeo)
Our class went on a field trip to the rodeo. Before writing, Esteban and I conferred about what we saw while attending the rodeo. He told me about his favorite part of the field trip, which was petting one of the rodeo horses. He then easily began his journal with a picture of him on a horse. His sentences were once again organized in stylized patterns. Sentences incorporated sight words and phonetically spelled words. I noted that the morphemes “s”, “ing”, “ed” and caused him difficulty. I also noted that he used an alternate spelling for play. Whereas previously, journal sample # 10 he wrote “play” as “paly”, this time he wrote “plas”. He was still unsure of the spelling of this word and once again, because he was so focused on what had happened at the rodeo, he forgot to refer to the word wall as a resource. Esteban continued to write within and between different developmental writing stages, emergent and beginning (Tompkins, 1997) as demonstrated by using criteria from both developmental stages.
Even though his thoughts are clearly written I noted that Esteban was having difficulty with the letters “b” and “d”. At times, Esteban would transpose these letters. At times he did transpose “b” and “d” in other writing contexts and when asked orally he would also confuse the two letters (Marie Clay letter and sound assessment August 22, 2000). Esteban continues to write using a sight word pattern with correct spacing and directionality. However, punctuation was not concrete. I had to put the first period in writing and then ask him where he thought the second period should be placed. He continued to confuse the vowel “e” and “i”. In the Spanish language the vowel “i” makes the sound of long “e” in English, which is a probable explanation as to why these two vowels were so difficult for Esteban (see samples #9, 11, 17). He
This journal, entry in my opinion, was Esteban's best piece of work. He wrote in a clear stylized pattern and compared the dark to a dinosaur. In addition, Esteban described the dark as being big, black, and scary. His sentences included a mixture of sight words and phonetically spelled words. He also used capitalization and punctuation correctly. This journal entry revealed that he used skills he had learned in the writing process, conferencing, and word work to assist him in writing within the beginning writing stage (Tompkins, 1997).

(Dinosaur and the dark)
This journal entry indicates that Esteban continued to experiment in his writing. His writing included correctly spelled sight words (I, with, like, to), phonetically spelled words (basketball-bascit), left-to-right directionality, and spacing between words. He used the classroom word wall to assist him with writing his friend’s name. The vowels “i” and “e” continue to be confused, in addition to a mixture of upper and lower case letters (With, cameron). Esteban asked for no help and was able to easily read his written work. For me, Esteban was supported by the knowledge he had gained through the daily writing process. He continues to write within and between the emergent and beginning writing stages (Tompkins, 1997).
Reflection

Even though Esteban’s journal entries revealed that he was writing within several developmental writing stages, I did not see this as any kind of permanent regression. On the contrary, I felt that Esteban progressed throughout each month. Each new challenge, such as using punctuation and capitalization correctly, spacing between words, writing sight words correctly, and deciding upon his writing topic required him to focus his thinking on a singular skill (Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998). Each time he had to divert his thinking to a new challenge, even though it looked as though he lost his previous learning (Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998), he really had not. He was simply trying to understand what worked where and when it worked. These are not gaps, but progression through the developmental stages (Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998).

I decided to use the term “jump wise learner” to describe Esteban’s progress. A jump wise learner is someone who shows a large amount of growth over a long period of time. A jump wise learner has developed a sense of self efficiency. He has figured out what must be done to improve and be engaged in learning activities because of personal motivation as well as familiarity with a given process, in this case, the writing process. This is the opposite of most students who are step learners. Step learners show measurable growth over small increments of time. If one were looking at Esteban’s progress using only formal assessments, one would not be able to recognize the tremendous growth he made. District assessments used also showed less than Esteban’s true capabilities. Informal assessments rather than formal assessments gave me accurate authentic results of Esteban’s academic capabilities.
Esteban seemed to have moved from the early stage of writing to the emergent stage fairly quickly. However, once he reached the beginning stage, he fluctuated between the emergent stage and the beginning stage while touching upon as well as using characteristics of the fluent stage such as punctuation and some language conventions.

Esteban was learning to write in a second language. He required numerous exposure to literacy experiences, including ample time to write and conference to figure out how writing in English works. These samples of Esteban’s writing show that he is on his way to learning how to manipulate English as a written language. His fluctuation between writing stages show that writing is not only a dynamic process, but learning to write is dynamic as well.
Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this study was to investigate strategies that specifically addressed the needs of a second language learner with diagnosed learning disabilities, especially in the area of writing. Evidence from this study suggests that the consistent systematic strategies used to scaffold the writing of a second language learner with learning disabilities did assist in the improvement of the student’s writing.

Through this study I have learned that second language learners with learning disabilities have specific needs to be met in order help them become successful within the classroom. Therefore, they need focused as well as individualized support. Teachers need to be aware of their students’ needs and create activities to specifically assist their struggling learners. Dorn, French, & Jones (1998) state that “literacy is complex” (160). This applies to all students. A student who is learning how to read and write in a new language along with diagnosed learning disabilities is faced with numerous obstacles not unique to mainstreamed students. Teachers must be able to provide students with an opportunity to be successful no matter what it takes. Educators can do this through training and understanding of systematic instructional strategies to guide their students through developmental stages of reading and writing in order to gain a stronger understanding of their current language needs. This was a learning point for me because I had to remember to look at the patterns that Esteban was displaying in order to make the appropriate decisions on how to structure instructional support for him.

Observing Esteban holistically helped me to better understand his needs as a learner. Observation and analysis were important tools that allowed me to look more
closely at the significant concepts associated with assisting second language learners. As the study progressed I became more aware of my student and his unique needs. Anecdotal notes and reflective analysis allowed me to fully view Esteban’s independent writing. In turn, I was able to meet his current needs and I felt as if we took each step together.

Instructional scaffolds must be part of all ELD classrooms. Teachers need to build upon the prior knowledge of their second language learners and be able to develop schema when necessary. Once English language learners are able to use scaffolds to learn strategies that teach them to be independent learners, they will be ready to gain a full understanding of writing. The role of the teacher is to help their students make connections.

Teachers need to consider the following components as critical to the academic achievements of English language learners:

1) Systematic scaffolded instruction.

2) Teacher modeling of multiple and various ways to achieve a goal.

3) Individual conferencing to validate students’ strengths and feedback on ways to accomplish new writing tasks.

4) Consistent collaboration with a trained bilingual and a special education resource teacher to develop the best promising practices.

Additional studies are needed to further examine other scaffold combinations to support strategies needed to improve the writing of second language learners with diagnosed learning abilities. Further studies would be beneficial for teachers of struggling second language learners with diagnosed learning abilities. Finally, I feel
that educators must always be open to learning and discovery in order to gain a better understanding of how to help all students become literate.
References


Lane, B. *After the end: Teaching and learning creative revision.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.


Appendix
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**Percent Error Rate**

- Easy: 95-100%
- Instructional: 90-94%
- Hard: 50-89%

**Page 1**

**Title**

*Can You Sing? - Level A*

**Information Used**

- E: Easy
- SC: Instructional

---

Bird wants a friend who can sing.

"Frog, can you sing?"

"No."

"Snail, can you sing?"

"No."

"Ladybug, can you sing?"

"No."

"Rabbit, can you sing?"

"No, no."

"Butterflies, can you sing?"
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**Error Rate**

- Easy
- Hard
- Instructional

**Percent Error Rate**

- 95-100%
- 90-94%
- 50-89%

**Page**

- DRA - Celebration Press
- Things That Go - Level 1

**Title**

- The train can go.
- The car can go.
- The bus can go.
- The boat can go.
- The plane can go.

**20 words**
I can see a blue pond.

I can see a green frog.

I can see a red flower.

I can see a brown tree.

I can see a black bird.

I can see a yellow sun... and I can see a rainbow.

41 words
### Scores: Running Words Errors

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Percent Accuracy</th>
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**Text Level**

**Easy**

95-100%

**Instructional**

90-94%

**Hard**

50-89%

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**Page** | **Title** | **DRA - Celebration Press**
---|---|---
| | The "I like" Game - Level 3 |

"I like oranges," said the boy.

"Do you?"

"No." said the girl.

"I like apples.

Do you?"

"No," said the boy.

"I like bananas. Do you?"

"No," said the girl.

"I like grapes."
Do you?

"No," said the boy.

"I like ice cream. Do you?"

"Yes, said the girl.

"I like ice cream too!"

54 Words
"Where is my hat?" said Ben.

Ben looked under his bed.

"It is not here," he said.

Mom looked in the closet.

"It is not here," she said.

Ben looked in his toybox.

"It is not here," he said.

He looked and looked.

Mom looked behind the chair.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>E</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Here it is! she said.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53 words</td>
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Temecula Valley Unified School District
800
INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXT: PREVIEWING AND PREDICTING

Teacher: Read the title and then say: This story is about a little boy named Ben. He doesn’t know where his hat is. Look at all of the pictures and tell me what is happening in this story.

As the student previewed the pictures he or she gathered: ____ little ____ some ____ pertinent information ___ commented on each picture as a separate event ____ began to construct a story

Please record student responses. Before reading and after the picture walk ask Question #1.

Prediction 1. What do you think will happen in this story? (any logical response)

Teacher: Read the title again and then say: Now read to find out where Ben and his mom looked for his hat. Please point to the words as you read.

Student reads the story aloud. After the reading: Teacher asks and records answers

Retell 2. What is this story about? Tell me in your own words. (a little boy, Ben who lost his hat)

Teacher: As the student completes his/her oral retelling, highlight the questions covered. Then ask the student any questions below that he/she did not cover in his/her oral retelling.

Fact 3. Who are the main characters? (Ben, Mom)

Fact 4. Where did the story take place? (in the house)

Fact 5. Where are some places Ben looks for his hat? (should name at least two - under his bed, in the closet, in his toy box, behind the chair)
WHERE IS MY HAT?

Name _________________________ Grade ____________ Teacher __________________ Date ________________

Fact 6. Who helped Ben look for his hat? (Mom)

Evaluation 7. Where would you have looked if you lost your hat? (any logical response; in my closet)

Inference 8. What does the word under mean in this sentence? Ben looked under his bed.

Story Element 9. What was the problem in the story? (Ben couldn’t find his hat)

Story Element 10. How was the problem in the story solved? (Ben and his Mom looked everywhere until they found his hat)

Analyzing Comprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prediction (P-1)</th>
<th>Topic (T-1)</th>
<th>Fact (F-1)</th>
<th>Inference (I-1)</th>
<th>Evaluation (E-1)</th>
<th>Vocabulary (V-1)</th>
<th>Story Element (SE-1)</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

Score 1/1 1/4 1/1 1/0 1/2

* Indicates the type of question and the number of questions in each graded paragraph. For example, F indicates a fact question and 4 signifies that this graded passage contains four F questions.

Comprehension Scoring Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Correct Responses</th>
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<tr>
<td>9 – 10</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
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<td>7 – 8</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Need Improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 or less</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
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Student’s Total # Correct Responses

Temecula Valley Unified School District
8/00
ORAL READING AND STRATEGIES USED

Take a running record as student reads.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Phrasing and fluency:
- Read: ___ word by word ___ in short phrases ___ in longer phrases ___ punctuation
- Reread for: ___ phrasing ___ punctuation
- Intonation: ___ emerging ___ developing ___ generally effective
- Reading rate: ___ slow ___ inconsistent ___ adequate ___ too fast ___ adjusted appropriately

At difficulty student:
- Problem-solved using: ___ picture ___ rereading ___ letter/sound ___ letter/sound clusters ___ syllables ___ multiple attempts ___ pausing ___ no observable behaviors
- Appealed for help: ___ often ___ sometimes ___ rarely ___ not at all
- Number of words told/given by teacher: ___

Analysis of errors:
- Miscues interfered with meaning: ___ yes ___ sometimes ___ no
- Self-corrected miscues that: ___ didn't make sense ___ didn't sound right ___ didn't look right

Comments: