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# Using a Scaffolded Multicomponent Intervention to Support the Reading and Writing Development of English Learners

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## Introduction and Purpose

*“Writing can contribute to the building of almost every kind of inner control of literacy learning that is needed by the successful reader.”*

Marie Clay

With the growing numbers of English learners (ELs) or emergent bilinguals in the United States, it is vital that these students learn to be successful readers and writers in their second language, and it is equally vital that teachers use effective, research-based strategies to teach them (Nakamoto, Lindsey, & Manis, 2007). Unfortunately, less than one third of teacher training programs require field experiences with ELs (Casteel & Ballantyne, 2011) and as a result, teachers have a limited understanding of bilingualism and supportive instructional contexts for bilingual learners (Palmer & Martínez, 2013). Without such training and experiences, it is unlikely that teachers of emergent bilingual students will readily be able to use learners’ cultural and linguistic knowledge as resources during instruction (DeNicolo, 2014; García, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008). Therefore, it is not surprising that professional development of teachers (Casteel and Ballantyne, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Meskill, 2005) and comprehensive interventions and investigations are viewed as critical in accommodating the language and literacy needs of ELs (August and Shanahan, 2006, 2010; García et al., 2008).

Interventions framed within a sociocultural environment with talk as the “glue” that holds these processes together are likely to capitalize upon learner knowledge and interests.

Designs of interventions that have been called for in the literature must take into account student language barriers, literacy development needs, and modes of instruction that are comprehensive and support both reading and writing. Instruction that capitalizes on the reciprocal nature of

reading and writing (Clay, 1998; Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Tierney & Pearson, 1983) and the transactions that occur within and across both processes (Dahl & Farnan, 1998; Squire, 1983) are likely to help children gain literacy footholds. Furthermore, interventions framed within a sociocultural environment with talk as the “glue” that holds these processes together are likely to capitalize upon learner knowledge and interests, thereby strengthening language and literacy processes through mediational tools and scaffolding. Such approaches have shown promise beyond traditional or “default” models of ESL/ESOL education (Kong & Pearson, 2003; Razfar, Khisty, & Chval, 2011).

With these aforementioned considerations in mind, we set out to design an intervention that incorporated orchestrated combinations of talk, reading, and writing. As teachers, the three of us began this collaboration at Robson’s request. At the time, she was enrolled in a graduate literacy course, and she regularly discussed her concerns and frustrations in her role as an itinerant ESOL teacher. (The designation of ESOL is used by the district.) Seeking a master’s degree in literacy and additional state certification as an ESOL teacher, she was learning about best practices in literacy instruction but found it challenging to adapt methods for the ELs she was teaching. In addition, Robson was concerned about the amount of time she was able to work with her students when she was so infrequently at each school. While we had no control over the sporadic nature of instruction that comes with itinerant teaching, we knew that it was critical to maximize the time that Robson had with her students. McCrea-Andrews was also interested in collaborating on this teacher-research project. We chose one second-grade group of Robson’s students she was most concerned about and set out to explore how a coordinated set of instructional practices might scaffold the language and literacy development of ELs in a small-group pullout setting.

### **Theoretical Framework and Related Literature**

The theoretical framework and related literature review that grounds this study are based on several assumptions of how students learn. The first assumption is that interactive read alouds (Barrentine, 1996), literate discussions (Au & Raphael, 2010; McIntyre, 2010), and various forms of writing instruction (Lenski & Verbruggen, 2010; Samway, 2006) work together in complementary fashion to support reading, language comprehension, and writing, as teacher and children work collaboratively (Rogoff, 1990; Wenger, 1998) in the EL classroom.

The second assumption is grounded in a sociocultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1986, 1978; Wertsch, 1985); that is, learning occurs as a function of interacting with more knowledgeable others who guide and move learning forward, always working within the learner’s zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Through such interactions, children are cognitively apprenticed (Rogoff, 1990) into using language, in both oral and written forms. Over time, as each learner develops competency, the scaffolding is adjusted or faded (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) based on the learner’s needs. Such scaffolding helps students feel comfortable in their learning environment (Tracey & Morrow, 2006) and nurtures a sense of agency.

The final assumption focuses on theories of reciprocity (Anderson & Briggs, 2011; Clay, 1998; DeFord, 1994; Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000; Harste & Short, 1988; Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Tierney & Pearson, 1983; Tierney & Shanahan, 1991), providing the foundation for our research

related to writing. As noted in the quote at the beginning of this article, Clay (1998) asserted that writing has the potential to contribute to every kind of inner control in literacy learning: “Writing reveals the taking-apart and building-up potential of the code to young children who are trying to write and read” (p. 131). Thus, the back and forth interactions of the child as she composes and constructs written messages develop an awareness of how language works and affords the learner with opportunities to slow down and notice the letter forms and words that are being constructed. “When we are specifically teaching to build reciprocity..., we want to demonstrate to the child that the item of knowledge she has learned from reading and from writing can be used in both contexts” (Fullerton & DeFord, 2000, p. 2). For example, as the child learns some information from reading, we want to demonstrate how that information can help in their writing and vice versa. Such activities are potent learning experiences for any child, but they are particularly powerful for ELs, especially when such processes are scaffolded. Within such reciprocal contexts and particularly during the composing and constructing of writing, teachers can put into place Vygotsky’s (1978) recommendation: “...Children should be taught written language, not just the writing of letters” (p. 119).

Because of its importance, writing instruction for ELs has received increasing research attention. We now understand that frequent writing experiences are an essential tool for literacy learning (DeNicolo, 2014; McCarthy & Garcia, 2005; McCarthy, López-Velásquez, Garcia, Lin, & Guo, 2004). Integrating and connecting these reciprocal processes for ELs across literacy experiences develops language, reading, writing, and comprehension skills, creating positive outcomes in literacy achievement (Cazden, 2009; Bicais & Correia, 2008; Rodriguez-Eagle & Torres-Elias, 2009). Likewise, content-based instruction, which integrates listening, speaking, reading, and writing, is important in the EL classroom (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). Classroom discourse and verbal interplay between teacher and students have the ability to enhance reading comprehension skills by not limiting knowledge, but by allowing student voices to extend knowledge (Nystrand, 2006). For ELs, such social collaboration is essential as students discuss and develop composing practices (Gort, 2008; Gutiérrez, Baquendano-López, Alvarez, & Chiu, 1999) and appropriate writing tools presented through instruction and discussion (Ranker, 2009). During this exploratory study, the intervention framework focused on reciprocity of reading and writing through scaffolded activities (Englert, Berry, & Dunsmore, 2001) such as interactive read-alouds and discussion (Barrentine, 1996), shared reading (Holdaway, 1979), shared writing (McKenzie, 1985; Ukrainetz, Cooney, Dyer, Kysar, & Harris, 2000), interactive writing (Hall, 2014; McCarrier, Pinnell, & Fountas, 1999), and guided writing (Gibson, 2008a, 2008b) to improve literacy.

### **Action Research Context**

Each year, Fullerton teaches a course on literacy research and reflection that requires graduate students (both doctoral and master’s program) to design a literacy teacher research project relevant to their own practice and interests. Reflective practitioners (Schön, 1987) engage in many aspects of teacher research. Systematically organizing instructional design, developing a plan of action, implementing the intervention, collecting and analyzing data sources, and reflecting upon the intervention’s impact provide relevant and intensive professional development for teachers who tailor the learning to their own and their students’ needs (Fullerton & Quinn, 2002).

When Robson, an early career teacher in her first year as an ESOL itinerant, came to Fullerton during the spring semester and asked for assistance as she worked with ELs, Fullerton knew that such collaboration would be beneficial to the authors and to Robson's students. Initially, Robson was not particularly interested in data collection or action research, but she was willing to try anything that might help in designing improved instruction. McCrea-Andrews, a doctoral student in the same course, agreed to collaborate on the project, primarily as an observer assisting with data collection.

In this investigation, we worked with three second-grade students, one boy and two girls, whose first language was Spanish. All children were seven years old at the time of the study. The intervention pullout group was small because these three students were the *only* qualifying ELs in their grade. In this rural district, there are small numbers of ELs in a given grade and school; therefore, itinerant teachers such as Robson travel to a school and work with the ELs one to two days per week. In line with school district policies, the three students were grouped together based on their grade level and scores on the English Language Development Assessment (ELDA), a required state and district assessment that evaluates ELs' reading, writing, speaking, and listening. (While we do not view the assessment as linguistically comprehensive, it was the required district assessment.) The language acquisition stages and characteristics of ELDA are represented in Table 1.

Table 1

*Overview of Language Acquisition Stages and Characteristics on the English Language Development Assessment (ELDA)*

ELDA Level	Stage of Language Acquisition	Characteristics
1	Pre-Functional	Has minimal comprehension Silent period Answers questions by nodding head "yes" and "no"
2	Beginner	Draws and points Has limited comprehension One- or two-word responses Participates by using key words and familiar phrases
3	Intermediate	Uses present-tense verbs Has good comprehension Produces simple sentences Makes grammar and pronunciation errors
4	Advanced	Has excellent comprehension Makes few grammatical errors

The students' five scores for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and comprehension on the ELDA, as well as the composite score, are represented in Table 2. Based on the composite scores, one student scored at the beginning level, and the others were at the intermediate level. However, the scores also indicate that these students are becoming bilingual and biliterate (Jiménez, 2000), and our goal in designing the intervention was to capitalize upon and further scaffold such development. Students met with their teacher, Robson, in a small-group pullout setting for 45 minutes two times per week; we conducted this exploratory intervention for six weeks (with two additional sessions for pre- and post-assessment) during the semester Robson and McCrea-Andrews were enrolled in the literacy course.

Table 2

*Student's Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, Comprehension, and Composite Scores on the English Language Development Assessment (ELDA) Prior to Intervention*

Student	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Listening	Comprehension	Composite
Eric	3	3	2	3	3	3
Melissa	3	3	4	3	3	3
Yasmine	2	2	2	2	2	2

### **The Reading-Writing Intervention: Instructional Procedures**

Mindful of the theoretical foundations that underpin our study, we designed components for the intervention that provided a strong sociocultural context. Literate discussions while hearing texts read aloud, then reading and writing about those texts worked collaboratively to support language, reading, and writing. Of particular importance, writing supported many other aspects of literacy learning, so the intervention included many opportunities for oral and written expression. The literacy components listed below represent the sequenced steps of the intervention, and each component is described within this section:

1. Vocabulary Language Prediction (VLP) adaptation for ELs (a small-group prereading activity to revisit and/or introduce vocabulary and concepts from the read-aloud text)
2. Interactive read-aloud of a fiction or non-fiction text (small group)
3. Shared or interactive writing (scaffolded small-group writing about the read-aloud text)
4. Shared reading of the day's shared or interactive writing text (small group)
5. Individual guided writing

6. Individual author's sharing of their writing from the session
7. Re-reading of the day's texts (read-aloud book, shared/interactive writing chart, and individual writing) on the same day and on subsequent days (individuals or partners)

An excerpt from Robson's field notes and reflections sums up one of the early lessons within the reading-writing intervention:

As Melissa and Yasmine entered their small classroom, broad smiles filled their faces. (Eric is absent.) Soon enough the lesson began. Bantered words, interesting pictures, and heightened discourse were focused on teaching these language learners to speak and comprehend English. They were interested in animals, so the topic is bears today: Bears sleep in caves, climb tall trees, and swipe at fish. Swipe, swipe! Melissa's painted pink nails swiped at fish. She seemed to like that word. Yasmine began to swipe too. It helped to see the word in motion. I thought the smiles were wide when they came in; they were even wider when the students left.

As Robson's notes indicated, on one of the first days of the intervention, Fullerton demonstrated several multicomponent approaches to support the ELs. During subsequent sessions, Robson implemented these approaches.

### **Vocabulary, Language, Prediction (VLP)**

The first approach supported background knowledge, vocabulary, and language. Using Fullerton's adaptation of the VLP approach (Wood & Robinson, 1983), she chose a few key vocabulary terms from the text while considering the learners' possible range of familiarity with the words, selecting one or two that she anticipated would be somewhat familiar and then only three more that were less likely to be familiar. To promote engagement, self-confidence, and participation, she wanted students to be able to share their background knowledge and spend time talking in the small-group setting. In addition, such conversations allow the teacher to gain better understandings of the children's background knowledge and to readily support or fill in any gaps when needed.

During the VLP prereading introduction, the students had the opportunity to hear these words and to hear Fullerton demonstrate the meanings through acting out or gesturing if such actions were feasible given the particular word, such as in the case of *swipe*. After seeing the cover of the book, the students were invited to predict how each word might be connected to the text. We then previewed the word in text, through print information, text language (phrase or sentence), and through illustrations (when available). As Fullerton demonstrated and the group discussed, the words were printed on a large chart, and they read the word together. After the five words were listed and read, each student was given an index card with one of the terms printed on it. On the back of the card, the children created a "quick draw" to help them recall the word's meaning. As represented on the day of the lesson detailed above, Melissa swiped the air just as Fullerton had demonstrated when she paused from drawing the bear's claw swiping at the fish. As the final step in the VLP adaptation, the children shared their drawing and read the word. (These words are then available during the writing portion of the intervention.)

### **Interactive Read-Aloud**

Following the VLP prereading component, the second component of the intervention was an interactive read-aloud (Barrentine, 1996). On this day, Fullerton read a simple non-fiction text about bears, pausing to allow for additional vocabulary and linguistic support. The learners participated, asked questions, and shared information at any point during the interactive read-aloud. The read-aloud concluded by the group jointly recapping a few key details or events to provide a summary.

### **Shared *or* Interactive Writing and Shared Reading of the Created Text**

The next component of the intervention was a form of scaffolded writing, either shared or interactive writing. During the first few days of the intervention and depending on the purpose and content of the writing further along in the intervention, Robson modeled the process of writing about the book through shared writing (McKenzie, 1985; Milian, 2005; Ukrainetz et al., 2000). In shared writing, the teacher serves as scribe and writes the message, but learners are fully engaged as they compose an idea and dictate the information to be written on a large chart. Using the gradual release of responsibility model (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Fisher, 2008; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983), the teacher's role gradually shifts, and greater control of the message transcription is relinquished to the students.

With these students, we transitioned into interactive writing of the message (Brotherton & Williams, 2002; Button, Johnson, & Furgerson, 1996; McCarrier, et al., 1999). During interactive writing, the teacher shares the pen with students invited to write words, portions of words, or even phrases or sentences depending on their level of knowledge and independence. Early in this approach, the teacher models saying words slowly, hearing beginnings and endings of words, using analogies or word parts to write other words, and to also use sound or letter boxes depending on the needs of the children. Additional chart paper is used as a “practice page” (Clay, 2005b; Williams, Sherry, Robinson, & Hungler, 2012) which serves as a mediational tool for working on analogies, word parts, or letter/sound boxes to support the children's developing knowledge of phonological and orthographic awareness. Other writing conventions such as capitalization and punctuation are also incorporated. Robson started working with her three students, all at early stages of literacy, by saying words slowly and writing the letter sounds they could hear, or using sound and eventually letter boxes to demonstrate how the letters in the word sound and look. These sound and letter boxes, also referred to as Elkonin boxes (Elkonin, 1973), have been adapted for use in classroom and intervention contexts to scaffold learners' development of phonemic and orthographic awareness (Clay, 2005b; Joseph, 1998, 2000).

In Robson's classroom, once the written text on the chart was completed, the teacher and students shared the reading of the text. Shared reading research suggests using the approach for a variety of age groups and purposes (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2008). On subsequent days, there were opportunities for the students to return to the text they created and reread it.

### **Individual Guided Writing and Sharing**

Within the same day's lesson, the final step provided more opportunities for independence and transfer. Individual guided writing encouraged the children to individually compose and write a text related in some way to the read-aloud and chart story they had shared, with scaffolding



provided by the teacher. In early lessons, the children typically wrote only one or two sentences with much encouragement and assistance. Over time, however, they improved in their ability to write longer and more complex ideas. As with the shared and interactive writing chart stories, the children's individual writing was used as familiar reading to support fluency and eventually was sent home with the child for continued practice. When students finished at different times, they could read and explore the texts for read-aloud or read previously created shared or interactive reading texts from the charts. The culminating activity was typically the author's sharing of their writing with each other, something they enjoyed and took pride in doing.

These group and individually created texts became a strong source of engagement. On subsequent days, the texts were re-read for further development of language, comprehension, and fluency.

### **Data Sources**

Immediately prior to and following the intervention, pre- and post-intervention assessments were administered, analyzed, and compared. The Developmental Reading Assessment K-3 (DRA-2) (Beaver, 2006), a required assessment in the district, was used to determine gains in reading. Two subtests of the *Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (OS) (Clay, 2002, 2005a), Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words (HRSIW) and Writing Vocabulary (WV) were used to determine each child's phonemic awareness (HRSIW) and word writing/spelling knowledge (WV). Denton, Ciancio, and Fletcher (2006) note the extensive use of the *Observation Survey* in the US and other countries, and their analysis indicated the validity and reliability of the assessment.

In addition, we collected pre- and post-independent writing samples for each student. We analyzed the writing samples to determine growth in relation to content, length, number of words attempted, and number of words spelled accurately.

### **Intervention Results**

The action research intervention was conducted twice weekly for six weeks; this brief time may not sufficiently represent the intervention's long-range potential. However, based on the pre- and post-intervention data, it is clear that all three students made progress within a short span of time. For example, in the area of reading, all three students' initial reading levels were at level 10 (as determined by the Developmental Reading Assessment). As indicated in Figure 1, after six weeks, each student had progressed to a level 12, a gain of two text reading levels, indicating that these second graders were reading at a mid- to late-first grade reading level. At the end of the year, average first graders are typically at level 16. This acceleration of progress is in marked contrast to what had occurred previously. In almost two and a half years of classroom and ESOL reading instruction, the three students had progressed only 10 reading levels.

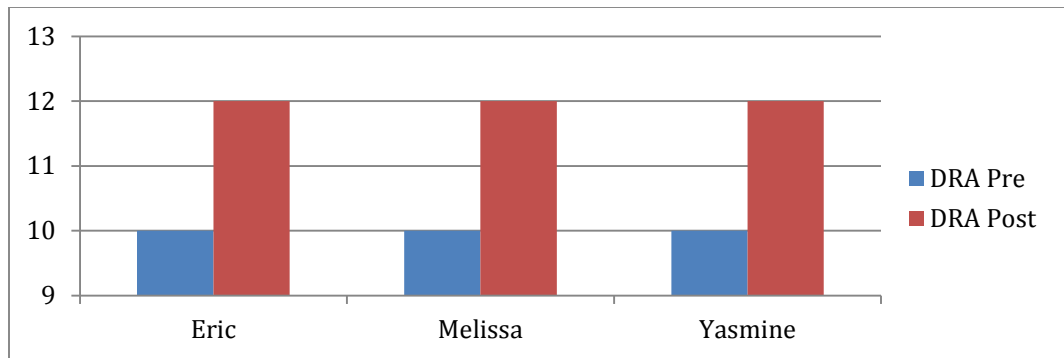


Figure 1. DRA text levels pre- and post-intervention.

All students demonstrated gains in phonemic awareness as indicated by *An Observation Survey, Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words* (Clay, 2002, 2005a); two of the students, Eric and Melissa, demonstrated substantial increases (see Figure 2). In six weeks, Eric showed a gain of four stanines while Melissa had gains of seven; Yasmine showed a growth of three stanines. Note that these stanines are for first grade. This assessment was used because the children were at a first-grade level in terms of their literacy development, and *An Observation Survey* assessment represents early literacy achievement in relation to phonemic awareness/hearing and recording sounds in words and writing vocabulary. Unfortunately, there are no US norms for second graders on these assessments (see National Data Evaluation Center, 2012, *US Norms and Correlations for An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement*). While these spring semester results indicate strong gains in a very short time, they also represent below grade level scores, with one student at an average first-grade level and two students performing at levels commensurate with end of the year first graders or beginning second graders.

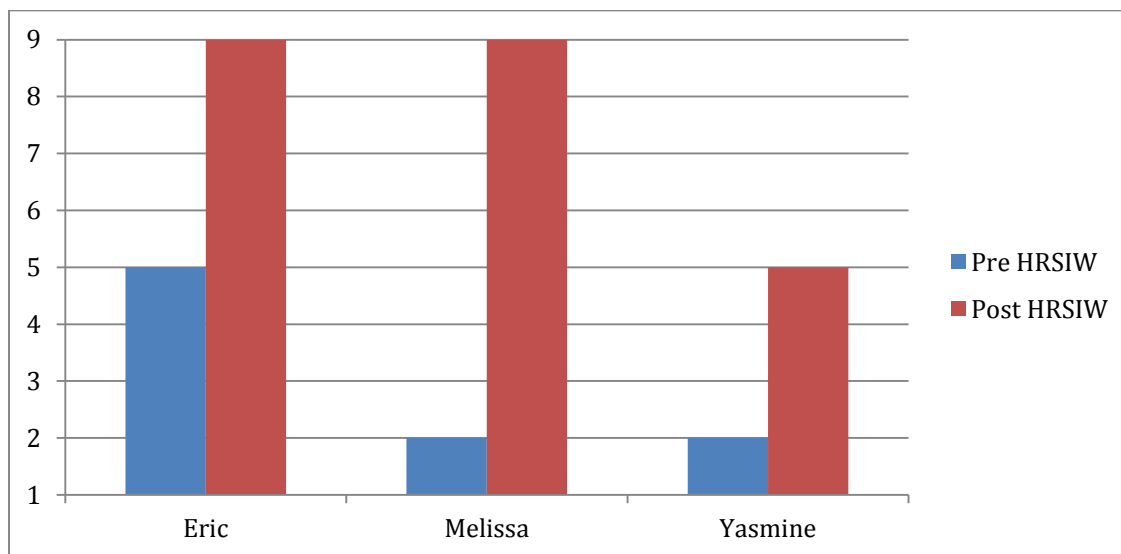


Figure 2. Pre- and post-stanines for *An Observation Survey, Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words* (HRSIW).

We also assessed students' ability to write/spell words correctly as indicated by *An Observation Survey Writing Vocabulary* (Clay, 2005a). On this subtest, there is no maximum score; instead, students write as many words as possible within a maximum of 10 minutes. While Melissa's raw

score results were higher at the end with 63 words written, Eric made the strongest gains. Initially, he wrote 34 words independently. After the intervention, he was able to write 58 words. Before the intervention, Yasmine wrote 41 words and after, 47 words. Melissa wrote 46 words before the intervention began and 63 words after. Figure 3 represents these scores as stanines. These stanines indicate that each of the three ELs was performing at an average first-grade level midyear, but after the six-week intervention, two of the students were performing beyond the first-grade average. Again, however, these findings indicate that all three are performing below their second-grade peers.

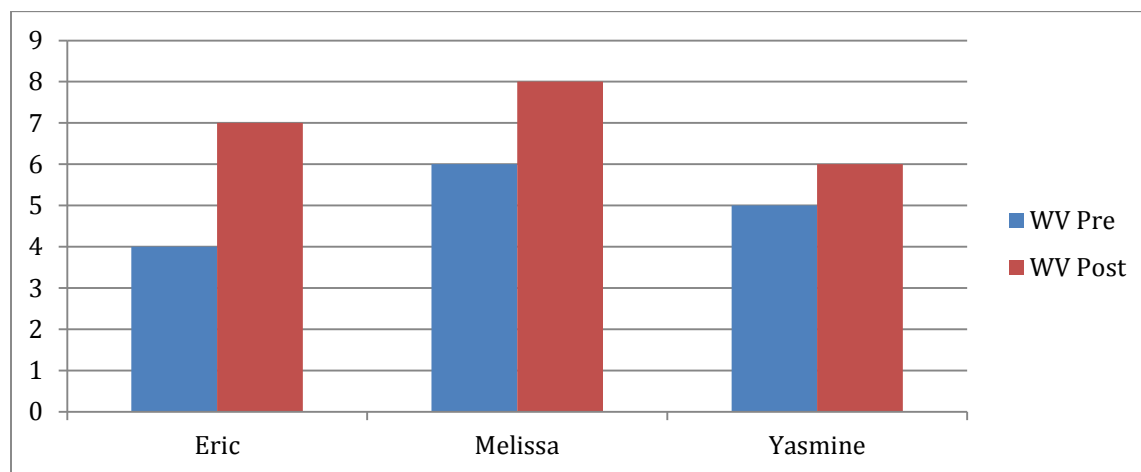


Figure 3. Pre- and post-stanines for *An Observation Survey*, Writing Vocabulary (WV).

Pre- and post-intervention writing samples provided another data source supporting evidence of growth in phonemic awareness and word learning. To ensure consistency, students were given the same writing prompt and were not timed or supported as they wrote their individual writings. As represented in Table 3, two of the learners increased the number of unique words written correctly; there was no change for Eric, as he wrote 14 unique words in the initial and final samples. In this area, Melissa's writing demonstrated the most change. The number of sentences in the post-assessment sample increased as did the number of words she attempted (31% increase). The number of unique words written correctly from pre- to post-intervention indicated an 82% increase, from 11 unique words spelled correctly to 20, a substantial change of 82%. Yasmine's writing followed a similar trajectory. Her writing increased in terms of the number of sentences, words attempted, and words written correctly; there was a 78% change in the number of unique words spelled correctly.

Table 3

*Number of Total Words, Total Sentences, Average Sentence Length, and Number of Unique Words Spelled Correctly and Percentage Change Pre- and Post-Intervention*

Student	Total Words			Total Unique Words			Total Unique Words Spelled Correctly		
	Pre	Post	Change	Pre	Post	Change	Pre	Post	Change
Eric	35	21	-40%	19	16	-4%	14	14	0%
Melissa	32	42	31%	23	22	-4%	11	20	82%
Yasmine	23	30	30%	13	19	46%	9	16	78%

Overall, the writing samples for two of the three students supported *Observation Survey* results—the girls’ writing demonstrated growth in phonemic awareness and spelling accuracy. However, the writing prompts for the writing samples seemed to constrain the students somewhat, and in Eric’s case particularly, he seemed to be more enthusiastic about writing about his pet during the pre-intervention data collection sample than someone he was thankful for in the second prompt/post-assessment. While he was able to represent more verb tenses correctly, Eric’s initial writing was actually lengthier than the final sample, and there was no change in total unique words spelled correctly, as indicated in Table 3.

In Figure 4, we provide an example of the pre- and post-writing sample data for Melissa that represents her attempted spelling and the conventional spelling of words in her sample. Analysis of the complexity of the writing samples seems to suggest that the students did not demonstrate substantively greater linguistic complexity and focused primarily on writing “safe” information, perhaps because they realized it was an assessment. However, given the span of the intervention, this finding is not surprising. Furthermore, the topic choices for the prompts were highly familiar and connected to background knowledge, but they did not promote greater complexity of ideas and syntax.

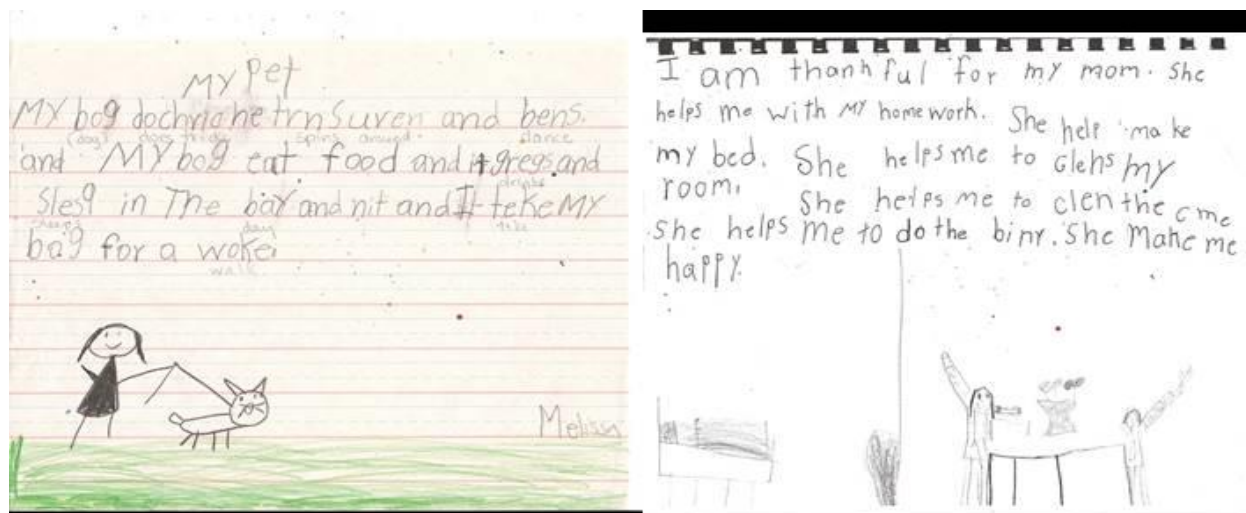


Figure 4. An example of pre- and post-intervention writing samples: Melissa.

### Melissa, Pre-Writing Sample

My bog do chric he trns uren and bens.  
dog does tricks turns around dances

and My bog eat food and it gregs and  
dog drinks

slesq in The bay and nit and I teke My  
sleeps day night take

bog for a woke.  
dog walk

### Melissa, Post-Writing Sample

I am thankful for my mom. She

helps me with My homework. She help make

my bed. She helps me to clens my  
clean

room. She helps me to clen the cme  
clean kitchen

She helps me to do the binr. She make me  
dinner

happy.

## Discussion and Implications

These findings indicate that in a short time, with sessions twice weekly for six weeks, students demonstrated growth in both reading and writing development. We are not suggesting or advocating, however, that two days per week for 45 minutes is an adequate intervention for ELs who are performing below grade level. Rather, these findings confirm that, because of the short span of time and Robson's presence at the school on only two days, the growth represented is not sufficient—it did not close the gap between these ELs and their second-grade peers. Given the trajectory of progress, however, the intervention seems to hold promise.

For the three ELs, growth occurred in their reading and on the two *Observation Survey* assessments used to measure phonemic awareness (Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words test) and word writing/spelling or orthographic awareness (Writing Vocabulary). We also assessed overall writing progress with pre- and post-writing samples. For two of the three children, the samples reflected similar patterns of growth as with the *Observation Survey* subtest results. As compared to the other two students, Eric's writing samples did not demonstrate growth in increased length of written text or in words written or spelled correctly. There are two

possible explanations for this finding; as indicated earlier. First, the prompt used for the post-test writing sample may not have been as engaging as the opportunity to write about a pet, the prompt in the pre-test. The second explanation is related to Eric's persistent attendance issues; it may be that his absences impacted perseverance and time spent writing—he had spent less time than the other two students in sustained individual writing time across the intervention.

The assessment results...suggest that the consistent framework, the careful scaffolding, the connectedness of the reading and writing components, and the teacher's decisions about when to relinquish control and when to guide, resulted in increased engagement

This issue related to the writing prompt represents a limitation of the study. The action research reported here took place during one semester of graduate work. The pre- and post-assessments, Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words (Dictation) and Writing Vocabulary, are a part of the highly regarded and well researched, *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (Clay, 2005) and are represented in such reports as the *What Works Clearinghouse Report* (US Department of Education, IES, 2013). Writing samples, on the other hand, have served as a naturalistic,

informal assessment for decades, but our findings may have been stronger if we had had the opportunity to pilot a variety of prompts to ensure that interest was not a factor in the data gathering for the samples. Again, the study's length of time was a limitation. An additional limitation of the study was the small number of participants; these second-grade students were grouped together for the same pullout intervention based on school and district policies. Perhaps a somewhat larger and multiage group may have supported increased discussion and language learning opportunities, further supporting our goals of scaffolding for bilingual, biliterate development (Jiménez, 2000). Finally, the scheduling of these sessions and her itinerant status did not allow enough time for Robson to observe the students' progress in their classroom and compare it to their peers.

On the other hand, the assessment results and the field notes collected by Robson and McCrea-Andrews suggest that the consistent framework, the careful scaffolding, the connectedness of the reading and writing components, and the teacher's decisions about when to relinquish control and when to guide, resulted in increased engagement and independence. Moreover, because of the children's engagement and increasing independence, Robson was able to function more frequently in the role of "guide," rather than demonstrator, as the intervention continued.

This exploratory investigation's results suggest scaffolded writing instruction, particularly when coupled with additional reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction in the form of read-alouds and prereading vocabulary support, may have potential for supporting the literacy growth of ELs. In this study, students demonstrated growth in reading and in phonemic and orthographic awareness in a relatively short time, less than one semester. For these students, it also seems that more of their attention went to the composing of sentences and the correct spelling of words. Perhaps such a focus is expected, given that developmentally, these second graders were performing at a first-grade level in their reading and writing. The students learned a great deal, and so did we. All of us, and especially Robson, came away with stronger understandings of the

needs of ELs and the necessity for instructional contexts that provide numerous opportunities for dialogic interactions along with a consistent framework for reading and writing development.

Our findings support previous research that suggests scaffolded writing, which encompasses both shared and interactive writing, has potential for supporting the language and literacy development of ELs (DeNicolo, 2014; McCarthy & Garcia, 2005; McCarthy et al., 2004; Lenski & Verbruggen, 2010; Samway, 2006). Our research also suggests ways that teachers and researchers might capitalize upon the reciprocity of reading and writing (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000) to support these gradually developing processes using language as the foundation. We need further research to explore how writing may serve as a tool to improve reading and language development for ELs. This study suggests that teacher-to-child and peer-to-peer interaction lies at the heart of language acquisition for ELs. "When we consider the outward journey, from thought through inner speech to writing, we have to start even further inside, with affective, volitional tendencies and desires that activate and motivate these inner processes" (Cazden, 2009, p. 174). The affective component of the model, as reflected in the earlier vignette of the students' enthusiasm, suggests this interactive model incorporating reading and scaffolded writing in a variety of forms holds promise in developing literacy acquisition. More long-term investigation of the intervention model used in this action research is warranted given these results.

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