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AN ANALYSIS OF INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE JOURNALS OF
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN FIRST GRADE

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education:
Bilingual/Cross-Cultural

by
Norma Castro Zavala
September 2001

AN ANALYSIS OF INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE JOURNALS OF
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN FIRST GRADE

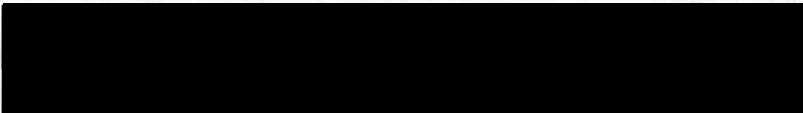
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Approved by:


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8/28/01
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ABSTRACT

This project will analyze interactive dialogue journals of first grade students who have been identified at different levels of English language proficiency. Interactive dialogue journals are used to develop the literacy skills and abilities. Interactive dialogue journals for four students representing a range of levels (LEP1-LEP5) will be collected and analyzed to determine student level of development in English reading and writing. The results of this analysis will inform educators about the relationship between tested levels of English proficiency and the development of reading and writing.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The United States has undergone a series of social changes during its period as a nation. Already, one in four Americans is Asian, Hispanic, or African American, and students of color make about one third of the nation's public school students. In order to increase educational equality for diverse groups it has required major school restructuring. Some of the common assumptions, structures and beliefs have to be changed. For example, these assumptions are the ways which educators interpret and utilize mental tests, and the use of tracking. Also, it means developing new patterns about the way students learn, about the nature of knowledge, and about human ability. In addition, it means educators need to believe that all children can learn, regardless of their ethnic group or their socioeconomic status. These educators need to believe that knowledge is a social construction that has normative, social, and political assumptions. This type of education to be implemented within schools is a long process that requires a long-term commitment.

The American school system has failed millions of its children, especially minority children. It is my belief the main reason American public schools do not educate all children is because they were never designed to do so. This school system is a reflection of the values system of European immigrants. This system is characterized by a strong belief in rugged individualism and competition. Most students of color and students of low socioeconomic status are affected by this system because they are more dependent on the school for academic achievement than are white-middle class students. In addition, schools that only worked for some students and not all students have been accepted as normal in our society. We need to educate all our children not just some of our children.

We need to create schools that work for all children and to develop the potential in each of our students. Our schools were designed for and by white people. We as teachers, have the duty to be a cultural mediator (Diaz & Flores, 2001). Self-examination can be an effective tool in helping students to understand themselves. Students can acquire knowledge about their own background, cultural aspects of their families and about the values

they believe. Students have to be able to understand and to approach social issues, including stereotyping, discrimination, and racism.

Reading and writing are processes central to all areas of the curriculum. It is essential, therefore, that, teachers develop a curriculum that supports the natural literacy evolution of young children. It is necessary to understand how children develop as readers, writers, and also to be aware that children construct their knowledge about written language in the way they form knowledge about the world. Teachers with an understanding of how children develop literacy will expect them to read exactly what is on a page in a book. They know that reading is a process in which children create meaning from print and in doing so they do not always read with one hundred percent accuracy. I believe that a teacher who realizes that children construct their own knowledge will not follow commercial materials or use learning activities that may be meaningless to them. Teachers also know that young children invent their spelling at an early stage of spelling development and that to insist on correct spelling when they compose stories may undermine their efforts to figure out the

spelling system. In addition, they know that children create their own hypotheses about reading and writing work and they observe carefully as new hypotheses are developed.

Reading and writing are both acts of composing. Readers compose meaning from the text, using their background of knowledge and experience. Writers compose meaning into text by using their background of knowledge and experience. Daily interactive dialogue journals (Flores, 1990) can be an authentic use of written language. Writing is a social activity (Vygotsky, 1978) and is supported by the relationship of student-teacher interaction. Heath (1986) states that academic success for all children depends, less on the specific language they know, but is essential on the ways of using language. According to Heath, all language learning is cultural learning.

The purpose of this project is to examine the writing development of English Language Learners in first grade, using interactive dialogue journals in a whole language classroom over a nine-month period. This study will use authentic writing samples in the form of interactive journal entries of three English Language

Learners students to determine the writing strategies used by these students. Peregoy and Boyle (1990) suggest that in order to document ELLs development strategies and progressions daily interactive dialogue journals should be utilized. "Dialogue journals allow both the reader and the writer to take risks as they discuss issues relevant to both of them" (Danielson, 1988, p. 7).

Problem

Children need to communicate by learning to read and write. Edelsky (1986) in a study found that in order to increase the development of writing in the student's second language, first language must be used. Children want to write. Before they went to school they marked up pavements, walls, newspapers, papers with chalk, crayons, pencils or pens, anything that makes a mark. Children acquire perceptions by writing. Hands, eyes, ears, and mouth work together, to help a child to understand the process of putting words on paper. Children's perceptions expand, because they write. Children learn to read the writing of others and their own writing. Vision comes with experience and through working with someone who will expand it through responses and questions to work in

progress. Interactive dialogue journal writing can be a powerful tool to enhance the communication between student and teacher (Goodman & Goodman, 1981). Children have problems learning written language in English when they come to school with a strong primary Spanish home language. It is very difficult for them to express themselves or their ideas when the writing language is in English. For instance, this project examines the writing development of English Language Learners in first grade, and this writing is done primarily in English. According to Goodman (1986) learning writing language at school is not much difficult than learning oral language, or it is not learned any different, but it can be extremely difficult by teachers who teach print and isolate it from its functional use. Writing language is very difficult for Spanish-speaking children, when teachers focus on written language and instruction of skills out of context. According to researchers Goodman and Goodman (1979), Bissex (1980), Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) and Dyson (1985), various aspects of the written language are learned by children as they learned oral language.

Statement of the Problem

1. Students seem to progress in different writing levels.
2. Students have difficulty writing in English.

Research Questions

1. Which reading and writing strategies do first graders use?
2. Which levels of writing does each student progress along the Developmental Continuum?
3. What are the problems that students encountered when going to different conceptual interpretations of writing levels?

Definition of Terms

This study requires the use of specific terms common to bilingual education. The definition of these terms was taken from Schooling and Language Minority Students: A Theoretical Framework (Krashen, 1990).

- Affective Filter - A construct developed to refer to the effects of personality, motivation, and other affective variables on second language acquisition. These variables interact with each other and with other factors

to raise or lower the affective filter. It is hypothesized that when the filter is "high" the second language acquirer is not able to adequately process "comprehensible input."

- Authentic - According to Edelsky and Smith (1984) the difference between authentic and inauthentic writing is that a person needs to use the four interacting systems of written language. The four systems are graphophonic, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic. The pragmatic system is not separated in authentic writing. In interactive journal writing what is required is that meaningful communication be shared between student and teacher. If the communication is not shared between student and teacher, then the communication is meaningless.
- Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS)
 - Communicative fluency in a language achieved by all normal native speakers. In other words, language that is proficient in everyday communication contexts.

- Bilingual Education Program - An organized curriculum that includes: (1) L1 development, (2) L2 acquisition, and (3) subject matter development through L1 and L2. Bilingual programs are organized for participating students in order for them to attain a level of proficient bilingualism.
- Bilingualism - The acquisition and the ability to use two languages; varying in degrees of fluency.
- Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)
- A construct originally proposed by Cummins (1981) to refer to aspects of language proficiency strongly related to literacy and academic achievement. Cummins had further refined this notion in terms of "cognitively demanding de-contextualized language."
- Comprehensible Second-Language Input - A construct developed to describe understandable and meaningful language directed at L2 acquirers under optimal conditions.
Comprehensible L2 input is characterized as

language which L2 acquirer already knows, (I) plus a range of new language, (I + 1), which is made comprehensible in formal schooling context by the use of certain planned strategies. These strategies include content but are not limited to: (a) focus on communicative content rather than language forms; (b) frequent use of concrete contextual referents; (c) lack of restrictions on L1 use by L2 acquirers, especially in the initial stages; (d) careful grouping practices; (e) minimal overt language form correction by teaching staff; and (f) provision of motivational acquisition situations.

- Communicative-based ESL - A second language instructional approach in which the goals, teaching methods, techniques, and assessments of student progress are all based on behavioral objectives defined in terms of abilities to communicate messages in the target language. In communicative-based ESL, the focus is on language function and use, and not on language

form and usage. Examples of communicative-based ESL instructional approaches include Suggestopedia, Natural Language, and Community Language Learning.

- Limited Bilingualism - A level of bilingualism at which individuals attain less than native-like proficiency in both L1 and L2. Such individuals invariably acquire Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills in L1, and demonstrate Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills in L2 as well.
- Partial Bilingualism - A level of bilingualism at which individuals attain native-like proficiency in the full range of understanding, speaking, reading, and writing skills in one language but achieve less than native-like skills or all of these skills areas in the other language.
- Proficient Bilingualism - A level of bilingualism at which individuals attain native-like proficiency in the full range of

understanding, speaking, reading, and writing skills in both L1 and L2.

- Language Minority Students - Students with non-English background.
- Limited English Proficient (LEP) Student - A student who is unable to fluently communicate in English, and is usually unlikely to read and write competently in English.
- Primary Language (L1) - One's native or first language also referred to one's home language.
- Transitional Bilingual Education Program - An organized curriculum that includes (1) L1 development, (2) L2 acquisition, and (3) subject matter development through L1 and L2.
- Whole Language - It is students becoming literate in a whole real context- learning to read by reading and learning to write by writing. According to Goodman (1986) Whole Language is more a philosophy than a methodology. The focus is on meaning and not on language itself in literacy events and in authentic speech. Whole language assumes

respect for the teacher, language, and for the learner. Students are encouraged to take risks and are also invited to use all aspects of language: speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

- Zone of Proximal Development - According to Vygotsky (1978) the Zone of Proximal Development is the way children approach problem solving that is socially mediated through formal and informal interactions with members of the culture group. Vygotsky defined it as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (1978, p. 86).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Some classrooms are heavy with boredom and apathy and others lively, exciting, and vibrant. Teachers are the ones that can make the difference. They know that there are concepts and ideas on the constructive nature of children's thinking, reading, and writing. The social knowledge is constructive by each individual and teachers focus on this nature. Learning takes place best when it is viewed as holistic and when instructional materials for children are authentic and purposeful. "Writing at any level is a direct and forceful means of communication to others, but also can be a means for personal inquiry and for clarifying one's thoughts" (Danielson, 1988, p. **XX**).

Teachers can create environments where children use reading and writing in ways that are authentic and meaningful. Effective classroom management has little to do with the activity of noise level in the classroom. A well-managed classroom is one which students are engaged in the learning tasks and classroom activities their teacher has set for them. When the classroom is well

managed very few students interfere with those activities or tasks set by the teacher. We, as teachers, must tend to the unique needs of many different children. We also must make quick decisions about how to respond to unplanned events. For example, an unplanned earthquake drill that was not in the schedule but occurred because "Mother Nature" decided to shake the earth just a little bit.

The social context for teaching and learning is the most significant for promoting how children come to know the written process of language in English (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky also discussed the relation to both the student and the context within which writing occurs to the development of writing. Cultural tools (drawing, writing, speech, etc.) are used in social and cultural processes where interpersonal interactions are embedded. "The cognitive and communicative function of language then becomes the basis of a new and superior form of activity in children" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 28). In addition, Vygotsky states that "...children should be taught written language, not just the writing of letters" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 119). Most children begin school with well-developed oral language. They know a lot about

language and how it works. Language learning is social and natural for children. Graves (1983) states that writing is a social tool. Language is learned in social contexts and is mediated by others (Edelsky, Altwerger, & Flores, 1991). According to Goodman (1986), language learning is a process of personal and social invention. Teachers ought to regard reading and writing as natural extensions of early learning and focus on the language strengths children bring to school. Writing according to Emig (1983) is viewed in traditional practice as a process that is linear, where children are taught to write atomistically, from parts to wholes (e.g., letters, sounds, words, etc.) in a solitary and silent activity. However, new knowledge has evolved in contrast to the traditional practice that has changed the thinking and reasoning of how children develop the written language:

- A) Sociocultural traditional (Vygotsky, 1978; Diaz, Moll & Mehan, 1986; Flores, 1990);
- B) Psychogenesis (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Flores, 1990);
- C) Sociopolitical (Freire, 1970; Shor & Freire, 1987);
- D) Sociopsycholinguistic (Goodman, 1986)

According to Freire (1970) there has been a shift from a "transfer of knowledge" pedagogy, "banking education," because of this new knowledge. In "banking education" the teachers are the holders of all knowledge and deposit it into empty vessels, the children. Freire believes that the teachers are the bankers and the students are the depositories. In addition, Cummins (1989) also believes that teachers are the ones that have all the knowledge about writing and they will pass all this knowledge to their students.

Journal Writing

Journal writing is a means that presents both student and teacher in interconnecting in authentic written communication instead of having written exercises that are meaningless. "Dialogue journals are a functional form of writing much like having a conversation with another person: the student writes an entry and then the teacher writes a response to the content of the student's entry" (Danielson, 1988, p. 7). Students can develop an authentic relationship with the teacher that is mediated through the continuous writing of interactive dialogue journals. According to Flores (1990) an authentic use of

written language is entered in daily interactive dialogue journals.

Ulanoff (1993) states that the students view writing as an authentic means of communication and what is very important also is that the students have control of their own writing. According to Atwell (1987) immersion in journal writing with a specific focus on process rather than product, is very beneficial to show improvement in spelling, grammar, vocabulary development, sentence structure, and writing fluency. Dialogue journal writing is an essential tool for "promoting reading and writing in classrooms organized around a process approach to literacy" (Reyes, 1991, p. 292). In addition, Reyes believes the following regarding dialectical journal writing:

Dialectical journals are a form of written communication between the student and the teacher about topics that either party wishes to discuss. Dialectical journals are said to be successful because students are free to select their own topics, determining the amount of writing, ask questions, and seek academic or personal help in a nonthreatening, nongraded context. Success with this medium also attributed to the fact that teachers are able to concentrate on individual needs, validate students' interests, praise their efforts, get to know them better, and focus on meaning. (p. 292)

Interactive journal writing according to Fulwiler (1987) provides children with an arena of communicating, in order to facilitate the development of written discourse. "It is necessary to bring the child to an inner understanding of writing, and to arrange that writing will be organized development rather than learning" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 118). In addition, the use of dialogue journals provides authentic use of written communication:

...dialogue journal writing is one powerful means of bridging the gap between the oral language competence necessary for writing extended prose unassisted, and thus an effective way to prepare children or adults literacy. (Peyton, 1988, p. 91)

By using this method of communication teachers can develop students' oral and written language proficiency by creating context for learning. Comprehensible input can be evaluated using journal writing. This term is used by Krashen (1981) in order to explain how the learner acquires an understanding of the message but does not focus on or analyze the form of the input. Johns (1988) states: "For speech to be 'comprehensible input' it must contain a real message to be communicated" (p. 18). According to Emig (1983) "...we must put aside a belief

that the cognitive psychologist Howard Gruber calls 'magical thinking'... to believe that children learn because teachers teach and only what teachers explicitly teach is to engage in magical thinking from a developmental point of view" (p. 135). Instead of 'magical thinking' directing children to copy exercises from language textbooks, to fill in blanks on worksheets or workbook pages, teachers can plan so that children learn to use the language for real purposes that touch their lives directly. For example, children might be encouraged to fill out applications to join clubs, to write business letters asking for free materials about something they are studying at school, or write friendly letters to real people. For reading, children can read self-selected literature and then have conferences with their teacher or interact with a small group of peers about a book they all read. Reading and writing must be a part of all content areas and not limited to a specific time slot of the day. "It important that children grow in their understanding for the process and conventions of print. This growth, however, should be natural, occurring as a result of using literacy to support the development of personal meaning" (Franklin, 1988, p. 189).

In Whole Language and development of writing meaning has always been an important issue. "Whole language programs accept the reality of learning through risk taking and error" (Goodman, 1986, p. 19). Eldesky, Altwerger and Flores (1991) define whole language according to the following characteristics:

- A) The cuing systems of language (phonology in oral, orthography in written language, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics) are always simultaneously present and interacting in any language use;
- B) Language use always occurs in a situation;
- C) Language is for making meaning;
- D) Situations are critical to meaning making;
- E) Written language is language.

In addition, Language Arts are social activities and are best learned through interaction with others.

Children construct their own knowledge from within rather than having it imposed on them from some outside source.

Also, learning to read and write will emerge naturally as children engage in these procedures in authentic ways using whole language and real-life materials. Whole language, is defined by Goodman (1986): "curricula that

keeps language whole and in the context of its thoughtful use in real situations" (p. 18)

Ferreiro (1982), states that it is very important to analyze the way children acquire knowledge of the written language: "In the learning process the child's linguistic competence and cognitive capacities play a part...written language is as much part of the environment as is other cultural object..." (Ferreiro, 1982, p. 8). Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) state that writing is "not a copying model." They mention that instead the models are an active interpretation of the adult world.

Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) analyzed and documented four conceptual levels of how children learn the alphabetic writing system: presyllabic, syllabic, syllabic-alphabetic, and alphabetic. Ferreiro (1986) has now changed the writing progression into three developing levels. Children develop from presyllabic to syllabic, then from syllabic level to a syllabic-alphabetic. Consequently, the children would progress to the final stage of alphabetic level, which approximates the adult conventional writing. According to Flores (1990) these levels are not psychogenetically ordered. Children do not progress in a linear way from one level to the next

level. This information is essential for teachers in order to understand the writing process and how to teach it to the children. According to Smith (1983) literacy is not a linear process but an internalization of rules through experience:

The learning process is identical with that by which infants develop a set of internal rules for producing and comprehending spoken language without the benefit of any formal instruction. And just as no linguistic is able to formulate a complete and adequate set of grammatical rules that could be used to program a computer (or a child) to use spoken language, so no theorist has yet achieved anything like an adequate insight into the knowledge the people acquire and use when they become fluent readers. (p. 12)

Ferreiro (1990) states that there are three developmental levels in the writing process. The first level is the difference between drawing and writing. Lines are used in both procedures. In drawing the lines follow the object's outline, while in writing the lines are unreliable because they do not follow the object's outline, and they are linear. The second level is when children express new lines to say different things or add more letters to add more meaning. Ferreiro (1990) states at this level: "a progressive control over the qualitative and quantitative variations leads to

construction of modes of differentiation between places of writing" (p. 12). The last level or third level is where the relation is made between sound patterns and the alphabetical writing system.

Children need the opportunity to pursue the interest and questions they have about life. According to Smith (1983): "children naturally try to learn-by testing hypotheses-provided, of course, that they have not been taught that society places a high premium on being right and that it is better to stay quiet than to be wrong" (p. 17). Children need choice in the curriculum. The reading and writing of stories allows such a choice. When planning classroom literacy activities, teachers need to consider whether their activities are tied actually to the questions, and interests express by the children in the classroom. Through reflecting on the ideas children express when reading and writing stories, teachers have a better understanding about the special meanings that children are creating. Consequently, literacy activities can then provide continued support for the children's development and thought.

Teberosky (1984) utilizes the following criteria in analyzing student's writings:

1. The drawing should have a justification and not merely a decorative function.
 2. For the children, writing should have a specific mode of representation differing from that of the drawing.
 3. The drawing should be utilized to anticipate the text content, anticipating with certain characteristics, especially nouns.
 4. The written text is used to confirm the anticipation made about the drawing.
- (p. 9)

There is value in having children write every day, children's writing as well as reading improves. Additionally, journal writing serves as a documentation of a child's progress in writing. Most teachers keep the journals for the entire year and, except for occasional overnight sharing with parents, the journals are not taken home until the end of the school year. Parents often point with pride to their child's writing growth evidenced in the journal and many children readily share what they have written with any adult who will read it or listen to them read it.

Leading Principle and the Role of Literacy

Knowledge to be acquired by the learner (a less mature member of the society) is possessed by the teacher

(a more mature member). Usually in the form of a set of skills or strategies for solving the target problems, the teacher is assigned by society the job of organizing the teaching/learning of that knowledge. "Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First, it appears on the SOCIAL, and then on the PSYCHOLOGICAL plane. First, it appears, BETWEEN people and the INTERPSYCHOLOGICAL category and WITHIN the child as an INTRAPSYCHOLOGICAL category" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 87).

The theoretical framework utilized in this project is based on an article entitled Looking forward: Using a sociocultural perspective to reframe the study of learning disabilities (Teft-Cousin, Diaz, Flores, & Hernandez, 1995). By using a sociocultural perspective on teaching and learning the authors on this article emphasized that an individual's learning can only be understood by addressing the social, historical, and cultural contexts surrounding such an individual. The model is characterized as five interconnected circles, stressing the fact that student learning is affected by variables from a multitude of contexts. Students develop within these contexts and are affected by these contexts.

One can construct a clear picture of variables affecting teaching and learning only by analyzing these other contexts.

The first context is the socio-cultural community contexts. It is here that fundamental learning occurs because what is learned on the individual plane (intrapsychological) is first learned on the social plane (interpsychological). This viewpoint comes from a Vygotskian perspective, stressing that what a learner internalized is first understood socially. For example, over the years many ELLs have learned who can and can not be successful in life. In addition, the socio-cultural perspective also understands that historical events play a central role in developing what a person learns. A clear example of a historical event that changed what people learn can be visualized as the changes in bilingual education after Proposition 227.

The second context is the district-school context, including those elements, which comprise a school culture. These elements can include the attitudes and training of staff members, and the socio-economics status of the school district. The third context, is the classroom-teacher context, the manner in which the

teacher organizes instruction in the classroom. The teacher is the mediator of knowledge in a classroom whose responsibility is to organize 'zones of proximal development' that foster student learning. This context is analyzed in the project, including the lessons, techniques, and scaffolds, used by the teacher in teaching a unit on literacy.

The fourth context is the group context. Classrooms for many years were viewed as a teacher-dominated attempt with sole authority and knowledge resting only with the teacher. The socio-cultural perspective emphasizes that student-teacher or student-student interaction is essential in moving children to new levels of development. As Vygotsky (1978) stated "in collaboration with more capable peers" is an important classroom element for children learning development.

The final context, the mind, is literally a product of the previous four, an "internalization of all social interactions" (Teft-Cousin et al., 1995, p. 659). The internalization of what a student's socio-cultural community context teaches, added together with the students' district-school, classroom-teacher, and group is appropriated in the mind.

The historic underachievement of Hispanic students entails many variables that occur in different contexts. The focus of the project is to analyze only one of these contexts, the classroom-teacher context. The key to extending into consideration the socio-cultural situatedness of agency is to be found in the account of mediational means one provides. By "appropriating" (Newman, Griffin, & Cole, 1989) them in the process of carrying out the intremental (social) and the intramental (individual) functioning, human mental functioning is shaped in socio-cultural specific ways. According to Hatano and Newman (1985) in educational research and cognitive science: "humans are generally active and component in their life and can benefit from a variety of interactions with other people and natural and artificial environment" (p. 95). In addition, knowledge, is constructed by learners themselves under a variety of sociocultural constraints, which encourages educators to look for alternatives to didactic teaching (Hatano & Newman, 1995).

Journal writing provides an area of freedom for the ELLs to explore and create. They can write in their primary language or they can take the risk to write in

the second language without having the feeling of failure.

Flores (1990) defined daily interactive journals as an authentic practice of the written language within the social contexts. They are used as a powerful tool for personal communication. The students can interact with the teacher and the teacher can interact with the student. Each student must choose a topic and write an entry in the dialogue journals. The student can share dreams, feelings, likes, dislikes, goals, worries, or anything on their mind.

Comprehensible input can be evaluated through the use of journal writing. Krashen (1981) states that in order to explain how the learner acquires an understanding of the message but does not focus on or analyze the form of the input. According to Johns (1988): "For speech to be 'comprehensible input' it must contain a real message, and there must be a need for the message to be communicated" (p. 18). The affective filter is a psychological explanation of how language input, no matter how theoretically effective, can be inhibited to various degrees by affective variables: personality, social status, culture, or motivation. The term affect is

a class name for feelings, emotions, or moods. Vygotsky (1986) considers affect to be a major importance in second language acquisition:

When we approach the problem of the interrelation between thought and language and other aspects of mind, the first question that arises is that of intellect and affect. Their separation as subjects of study is a major weakness of traditional psychology since it makes the thought process appear as an autonomous flow of 'thoughts thinking themselves,' segregated from the fullness of life, from the personal needs and interests, the inclination and impulses, or the thinker (p. 10).

Problem solving is approached by children, through formal and informal interactions that are socially mediated with members of the culture group within the "zone of proximal development." Vygotsky (1986) defines this zone as:

...the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (p. 86)

This kind of help is internalized by children when they receive help from others and use what they have learned to regulate their own problem solving behavior.

Psychogenesis of Literacy Development

Psychogenesis (origin and development of the mind) in literacy development includes the interpretation systems students use to figure out the elements of language. Ferreiro (1990) studies in psychogenesis of literacy describe many basic features. According to Ferreiro the 'production activities' (i.e., writing) and 'interpretation activities' (i.e., reading) unite to illustrate the "... evolution of the system of ideas children build up about the nature of the social object that is the writing system" (p. 13). Children know a lot about language and how it works. Journal writing gives children the opportunity to take chances, experiment with language and to build information about the writing system (Flores, 1990). Ferreiro (1990) believes that "knowledge of the psychological evolution of the writing system by teachers, psychologists, and diagnosticians is invaluable in order to evaluate children's progress and, even more important, to 'see' otherwise unnoticed signs of literacy development" (p. 23). Ferreiro, also states that the main pedagogical implication is simply "accepting that everyone in the classroom is able to read

and write - each one at his or her own level, including the teacher" (p. 24). According to Emig (1983) it is essential to differentiate between developmental errors and mistakes:

Developmental errors contrast readily with mistakes in that developmental errors forward learning while mistakes impede it...While the making of mistakes marks a retreat into the familiar, the result of fear and anxiety, developmental errors represent a student's venturing out and taking chances. (p. 143)

Communication is the primary goal of interactive journal writing. They insure that teachers and students will communicate on a daily basis with self-selected topics. Flores and Garcia (1984) state that interactive journal writing provide teachers with a developmental record of each child's writing.

CHAPTER THREE

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A descriptive methodology was used with this project. A descriptive method is a type of qualitative research based on careful description of educational phenomena. Description is viewed as understanding what people think related to their meaning. According to Jackson (1968) descriptive studies are concerned mainly with determining "what is." Data collected was recorded, by documentary analysis and observation in order to examine three students in this study.

The purpose of this project is to examine the writing development of English Language Learners in first grade, using interactive dialogue journals over a nine-month period. This study will use authentic writing samples in the form of interactive dialogue journal entries of three English Language Learners students to determine the writing strategies used by these students, and to document their levels of writing during first grade.

Peregoy and Boyle (1990) suggest that in order to document ELLs developmental strategies and progressions

daily interactive dialogue journals should be used.

"Dialogue journals allow both reader and the writer to take risks as they discuss the issues relevant to both of them" (Danielson, 1988, p. 7).

Subjects

This project will analyze interactive dialogue journal entries of first grade students who have been identified at different levels of English language proficiency. Interactive dialogue journal entries across a nine-month period for three students in first grade representing a range of levels (LEP1-LEP5) will be collected and analyzed.

The three students included in the study attend an elementary school in the High Desert area. The school is a K-6 grade level with an approximately of 770 students. The ethnic breakdown in percentages is Anglo 75%, Hispanic 18%, African-American 5% and American Indian 2%. Students participate in government subsidized breakfast and lunch programs at a percentage of 90%.

The three students participating in this project were in all English, first grade classroom. The class was self-contained and the teacher has a Whole Language

philosophy of education. These students had bilingual instruction given by bilingual aides. The students attended three times a week a bilingual classroom. They were there for a period of thirty minutes.

Data Needed

Authentic writing samples in the form of dialogue journal entries from the three students were collected during a period of nine months. This collection was used to determine student level of development in English reading and writing.

Data

A collection of dialogue journal writing was used for the written sample. The students had the opportunity to write on a daily basis. They wrote during the first hour of school, right after silent reading. One sample of their writing was taken weekly, and then one specific sample was chosen monthly. The students wrote on a topic of their choice. The writing samples were gathered for four quarters in order to measure the progress in writing. The samples were collected from July 1999 to April 2000.

The data from the writing samples was analyzed in order to address these research questions:

1. Which reading and writing strategies do first grade students use?
2. How many levels of writing does each student progress along the Continuum of Development?
3. What are the problems that students encountered when going to different writing levels?

Children enter school at varying levels of development in writing activity. If teachers ask kindergarten or first graders to write the first day of school, they will observe the children who draw pictures, scribble, or make only strings of letters. A few children may be able to invent their spelling, reflecting their knowledge of letter-sound correspondence. Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) have given us insights about children's early notions about writing. For example, they discuss the following writing levels:

Level 0: Children at this level draw pictures or scribbles rather than make letter or symbol-forms.

Level 1: Children write with a string of letters for a word that has no set number of letters from one

word to another. The string might run across an entire page as a child spells a word.

Level 2: Children write a string of letters that usually consists of three to six letters for each word. The letters may be different for each word or the same letters might be rearranged from one word to the next.

Level 3: Children at this level (consonant level) make letter-sound correspondence, mostly in consonants. For example, they usually write "smt" for cement.

Level 4: Children at this level (alphabetic level) make their letter-sound correspondence by consonant and vowels. For instance, they might write "vacashun" for vacation, or "moshum" for motion. These consistencies suggest the construction of a system approaching conventional spelling.

Level 5: Children spell most words in the conventional way.

The development of spelling from letter to strings to conventional spelling occurs at different times for children. Some make letter strings throughout

kindergarten and into first grade, and then begin to write at the consonant level (invented spelling) while others develop to the consonant level at a very early age. Within each kindergarten class there are likely to be children at each level; however, they maybe only a few or none that are conventional spellers.

CHAPTER FOUR
DATA ANALYSIS AND
INTERPRETATION

Interactive journal writing in a Whole Language class was used in a first grade classroom, as a case study approach to determine how the writing provided an effective teaching tool. Journal writing presents both teacher and student a means of interconnecting in genuine written communication. The data gathered from journal entries was recorded by documentary analysis in order to address the research questions:

1. Which reading and writing strategies do first grade students use?
2. How many levels of writing does each student progress along the Continuum of Development?
3. What are the problems that students encountered when going to different writing levels?

In order to analyze the data that was collected, it was necessary to organize the information of the three students in the following way:

1. Francisco - Student A
2. Jessie - Student B

3. Marina - Student C

Case Studies

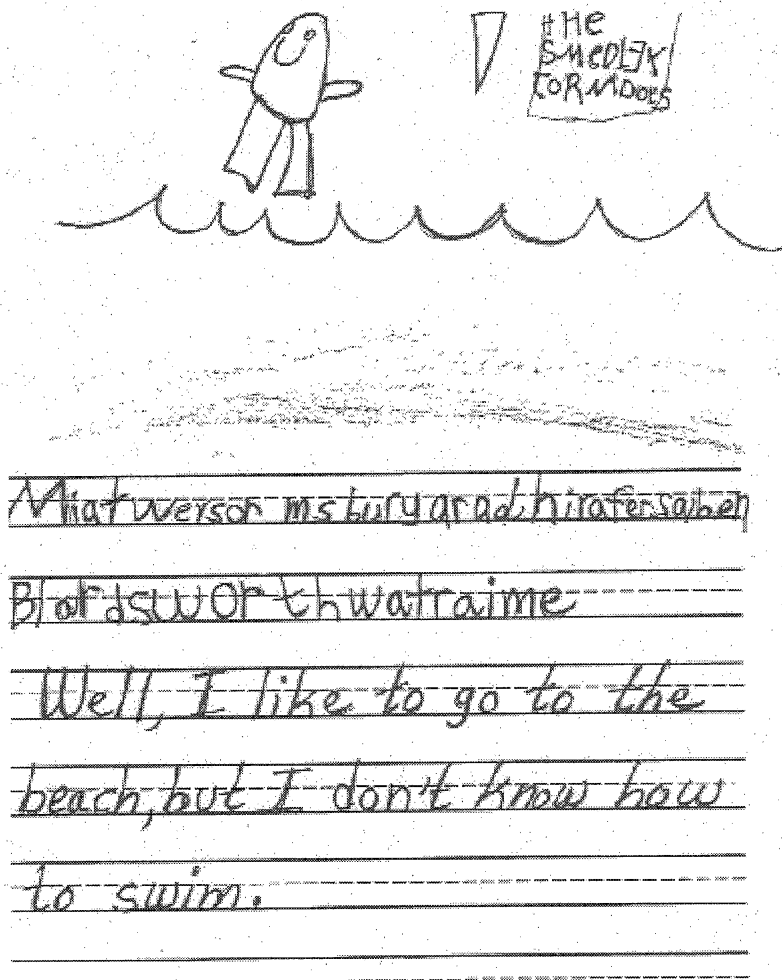
Student A

Francisco had a chronological age of 6.7 at the onset of the data collection and 7.8 at the end of the data collection. Francisco was in an All- English kindergarten class. The languages spoken at home were English and Spanish. His parents felt that English was more beneficial for him. Francisco's first grade class was All-English in instruction. Francisco was very quiet at the beginning of the school year. It seemed to me that he was paying attention to everything that was going on around him. However, he was not sharing at sharing time, or asking questions when I asked if there were any questions on their minds. He was always eager to do his work, and he was a happy child. One of the things he really enjoyed was listening to read aloud stories. Most of the times, I noticed that he always went back and revisited the stories read to the class. One of his favorite authors was Dr. Seuss. He really enjoyed how Dr. Seuss plays with words. His favorite story is The Cat In The Hat. Francisco loved to read this story over and over

again. One of his journal entries on this study was about this story.

Figure 1.

Student A - July Journal Entry



Francisco did not use pseudo-letters or scribble writing instead he wrote random letters. He organized his

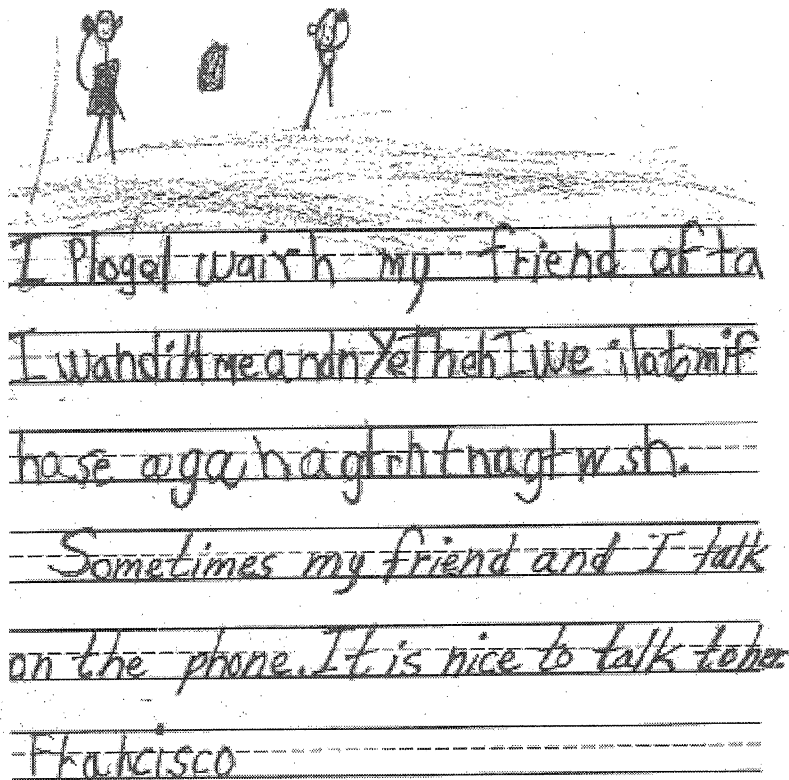
writing left to right and to represent meaning, he used recognizable letters.

In Francisco's first entry, he did not use pseudo-letters or scribble writing instead he wrote random letters. He organized his writing left to right and to represent meaning, he used recognizable letters.

According to Ferreiro (1986) he was engaged in the presyllabic writing system. It also shows that he is a risk taker.

Figure 2.

Student A - August Journal Entry

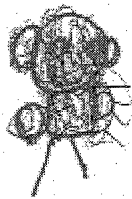


In Francisco's second entry, he is making the distinction between drawing and writing. He is still using a string of letters and copying words to represent meaning, but he was also experimenting with uppercase and lowercase letters. He is still using the presyllabic interpretation.

Figure 3.

Student A - September Journal Entry

FRANCISCO



Look!

The - door's - open.

That's - good.

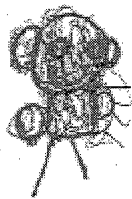
If the door is open is not a good
idea to go out. Please tell your mom.

In this third journal entry, Francisco shows that he has developed print awareness and was developing uppercase, lowercase letter formation. He, also, used spaces between his words. He appears to be copying words from the room environment that he can read.

Figure 4.

Student A - October Journal Entry

FRANCISCO



Look!

The door's open.

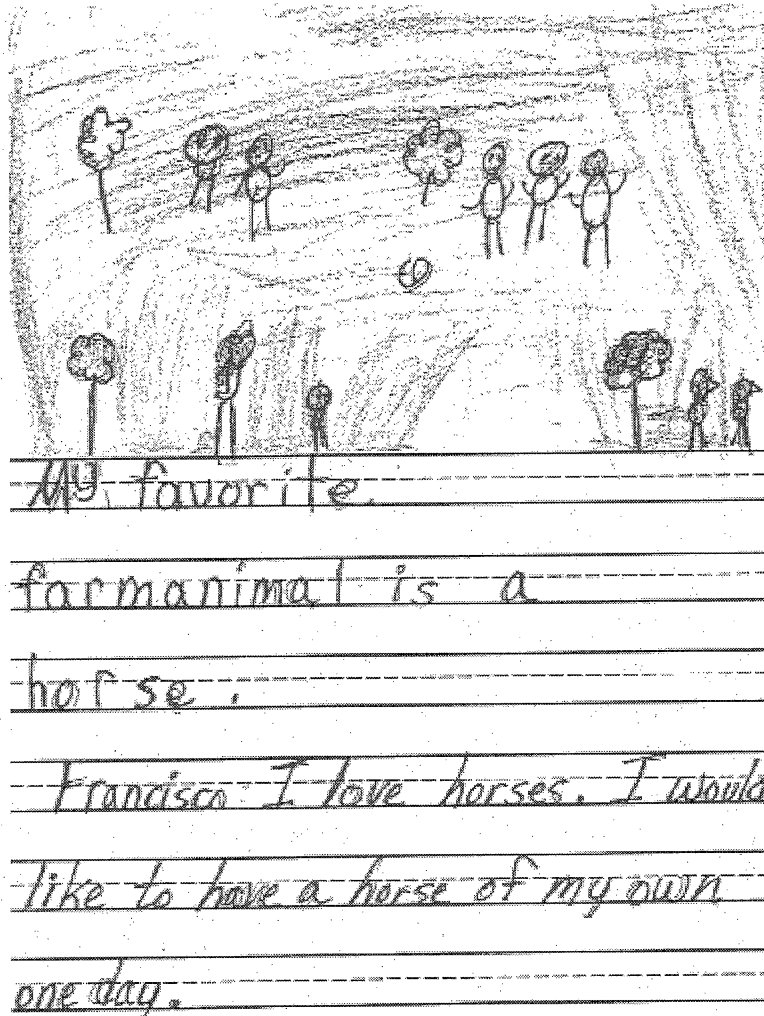
That's good.

If the door is open is not a good
idea to go out. Please tell your mom.

By the fourth month, Francisco repertoire of words, increase significantly as evidenced in this journal entry. He is using more words from the environment in the room, or from stories that were read in class. He is still using word spacing conventionally. He is at the alphabetic level of interpretation.

Figure 5.

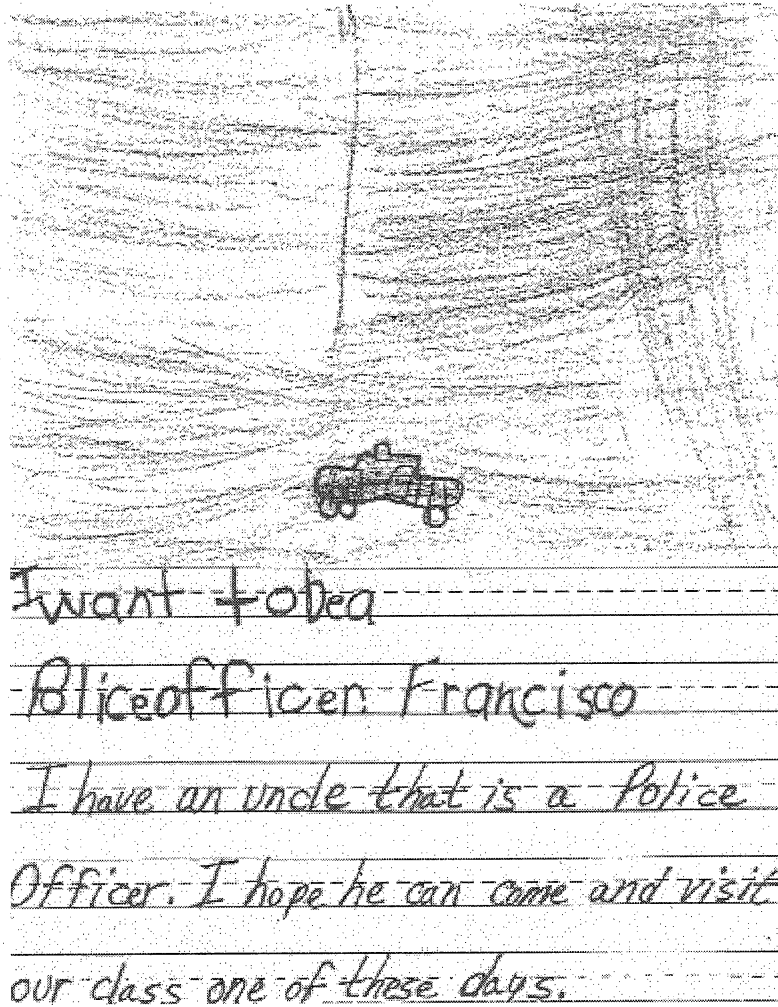
Student A - November Journal Entry



Francisco is copying from displays in the classroom. He is using lowercase letters, and space between his words. His sentence is making sense, and it has meaning. Also, he is using punctuation at the end of his sentence. He now controls the alphabetic writing system.

Figure 6.

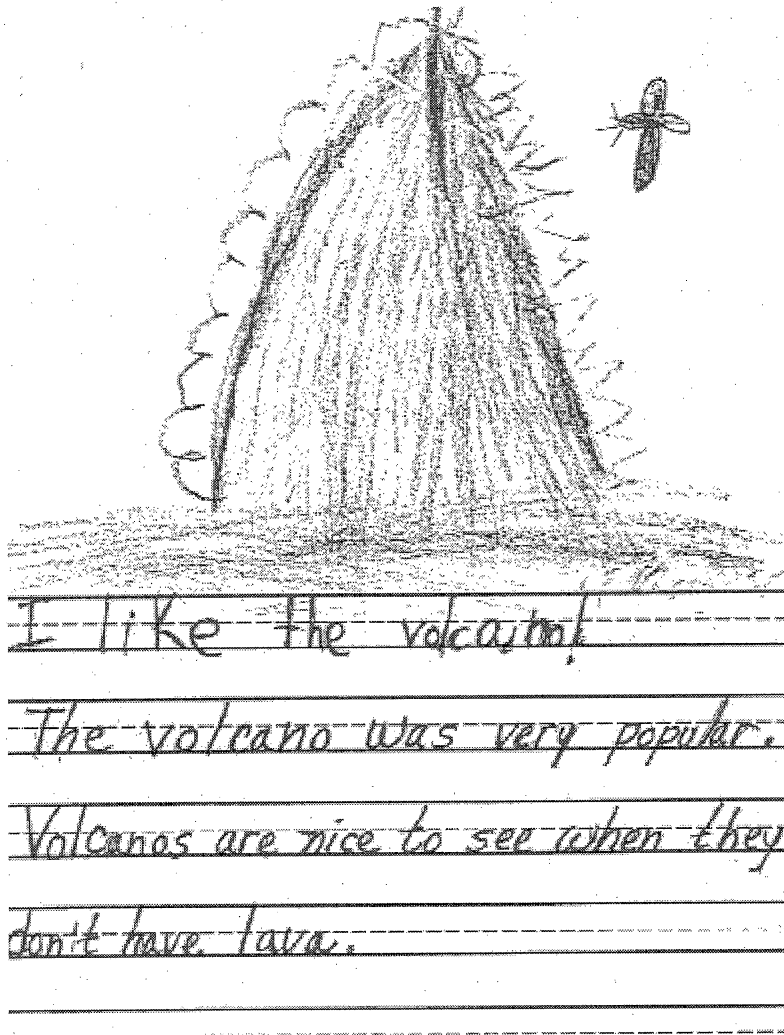
Student A - January Journal Entry



By January, Francisco is using self-generated words. He used uppercase letters properly. His sentence makes sense. This journal entry is definitely alphabetic. He is creating sentences that are spelled conventionally, enough to be read.

Figure 7.

Student A - February Journal Entry

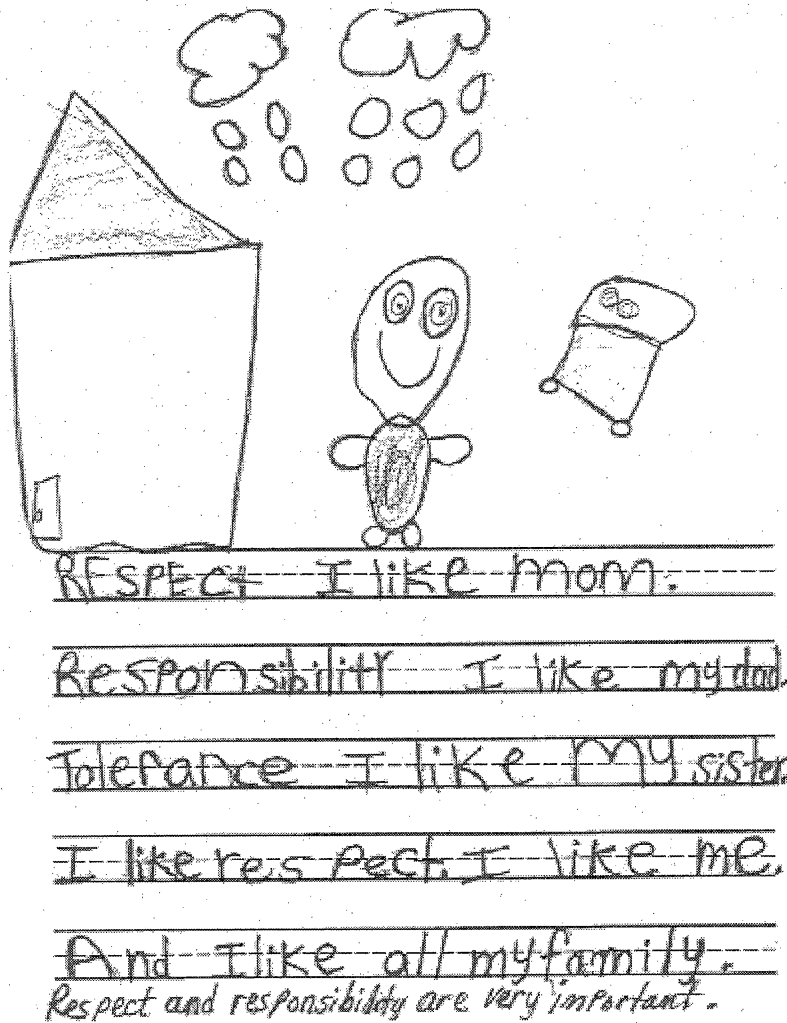


By February, Francisco is creating sentences that are easy to read and easy to understand. This time he is making the sentence fun. He used an exclamation mark, which shows that he is acquiring orthographic conventions

in punctuation. He was really proud of his writing. He feels very secure on his writing.

Figure 8.

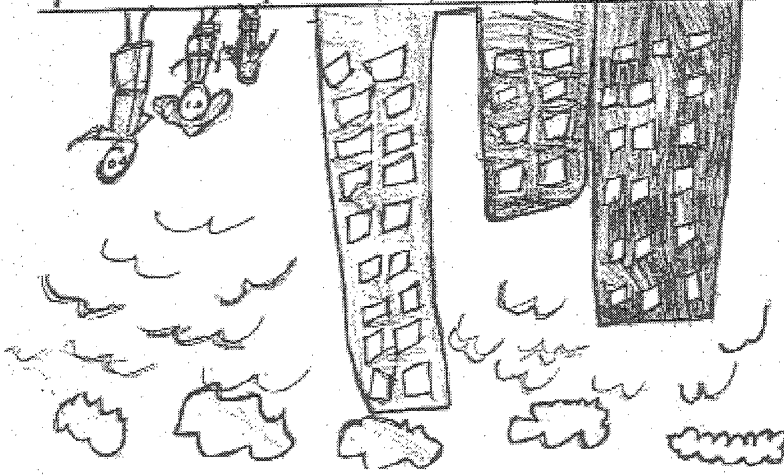
Student A - March Journal Entry



In March, Francisco went back, to write words copied from displays in the classroom. Now, he associated the words with a special person in his life. He is using

By April, Francisco really bloomed at this time of the year. He used self-generated sentences that

I would like to visit
 Los Angeles with my
 dad and my mom. In
 Los Angeles- it's fun
 there cause I like
 The day today I had fun.
 I like visiting my family in Los Angeles.



Student A - April Journal Entry

Figure 9.

and writing a lot more for meaning. He is completely alphabetic at this point. uppercase/lowercase letters, spaces between his words,

communicated integrated ideas. His standard spacing between words is conventional. Likewise, Francisco is using sentences that are both conventional and communicate meaning. He controls the alphabetic principle.

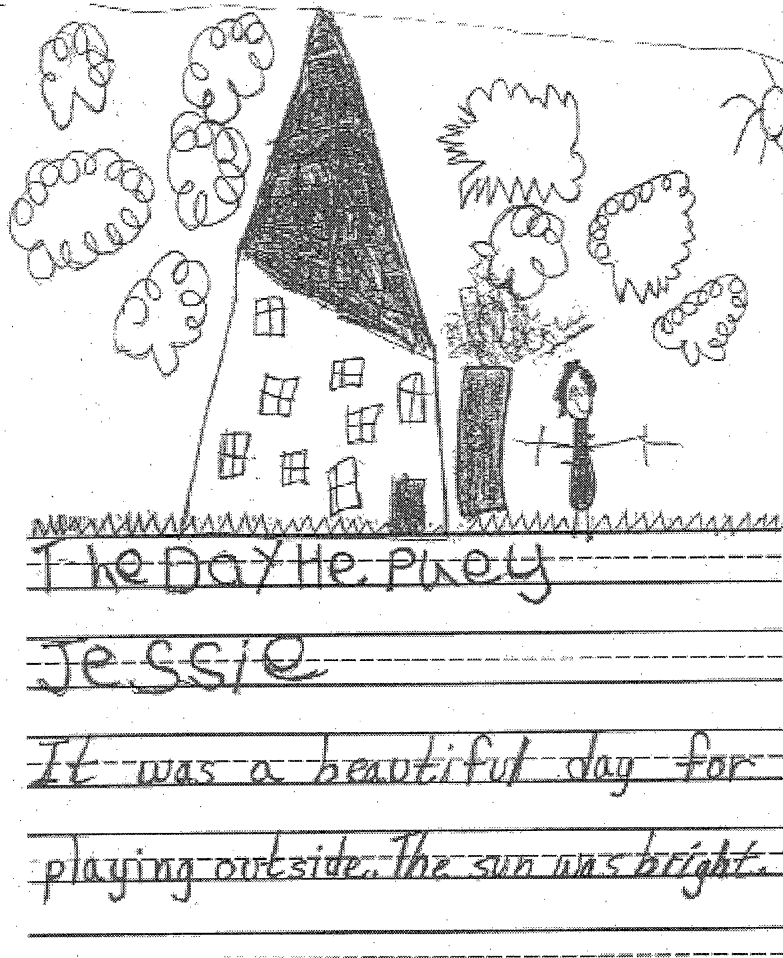
Summary of progression. At the beginning of the school year Francisco was using pseudo-words or strings of letters. This level was the presyllabic stage. He was at this level for the first two months at school (Jul. & Aug.). Then he moved to copying words from displays in the classroom or from stories that we read (Sept. & Oct.). For the next three following months, Francisco wrote self-generated sentences that communicated meaning in was moving toward the alphabetic writing level (Nov., Jan., & Feb.). In the last two entries: March and April, Francisco was alphabetic. He was using self-generated sentences that were nearly conventional and communicated an idea. He remained at this level until the end of the school year. He felt very proud because now he was able to write and people was able to read his stories.

Student B

Jessie entered first grade and had a chronological age of 6.9 at the beginning of the data collection and was 7.5 at the end of the data collection. Jessie's score on the BSM in English was a 3 and she scored a 5 on the BSM in Spanish. Jessie spoke Spanish at home, but she had older siblings that spoke English. At the beginning of the school year Jessie was able to name all the alphabet letters. She felt her English language was not very good. She did not know the name of many things. Her oral vocabulary in English was very limited. She was very quiet, but by the end of the year, she was highly verbal in English.

Figure 10.

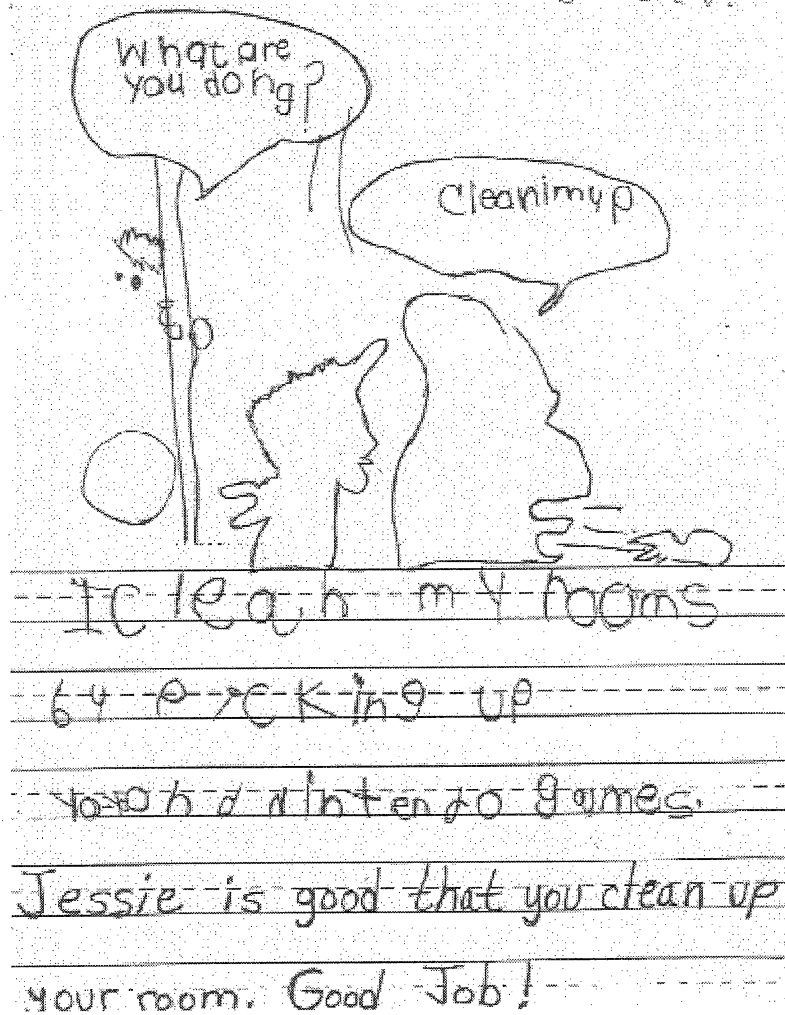
Student B - July Journal Entry



In July, Jessie is using a string of letters on her first journal entry. This entry, shows that she has developed print awareness, and she also developed uppercase and lowercase formation. She is using the syllabic/alphabetic writing system according to Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982).

Figure 11.

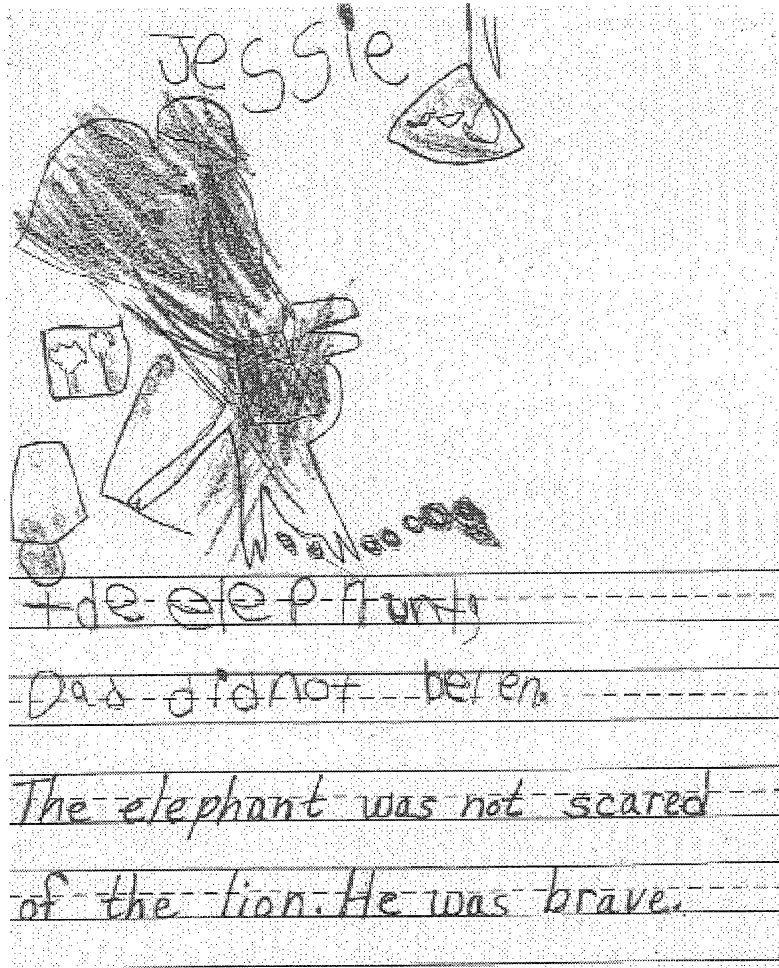
Student B - August Journal Entry



In this journal entry, Jessie is using proper usage of uppercase/lowercase letters "I clean my rooms by picking up yo-yo and Nintendo games." She also is using proper space between her words. Her sentence makes sense. She also used a question mark in the bubble indicating someone else is asking a question.

Figure 12.

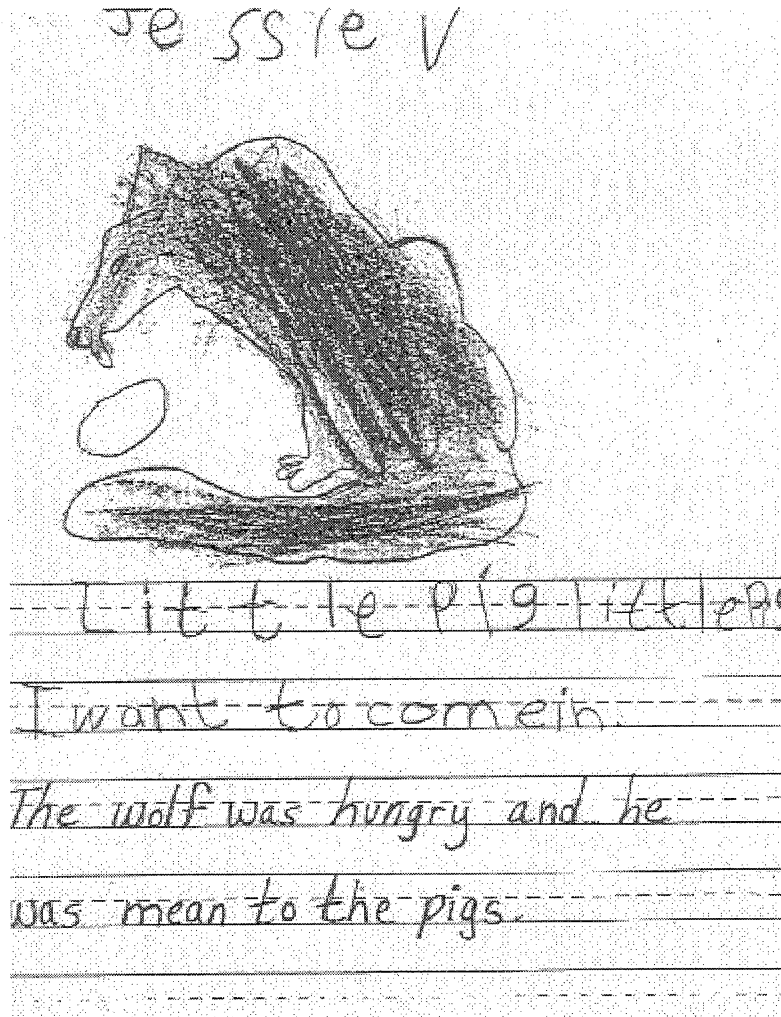
Student B - September Journal Entry



In September, Jessie continues to be in her writing at the presyllabic/alphabetic level. She writes: "tde elephunt Dad did not belen." Notice, she is using punctuation at the end of her writing. Her story matched her illustration. Her English is telegraphic but still coherent.

Figure 13.

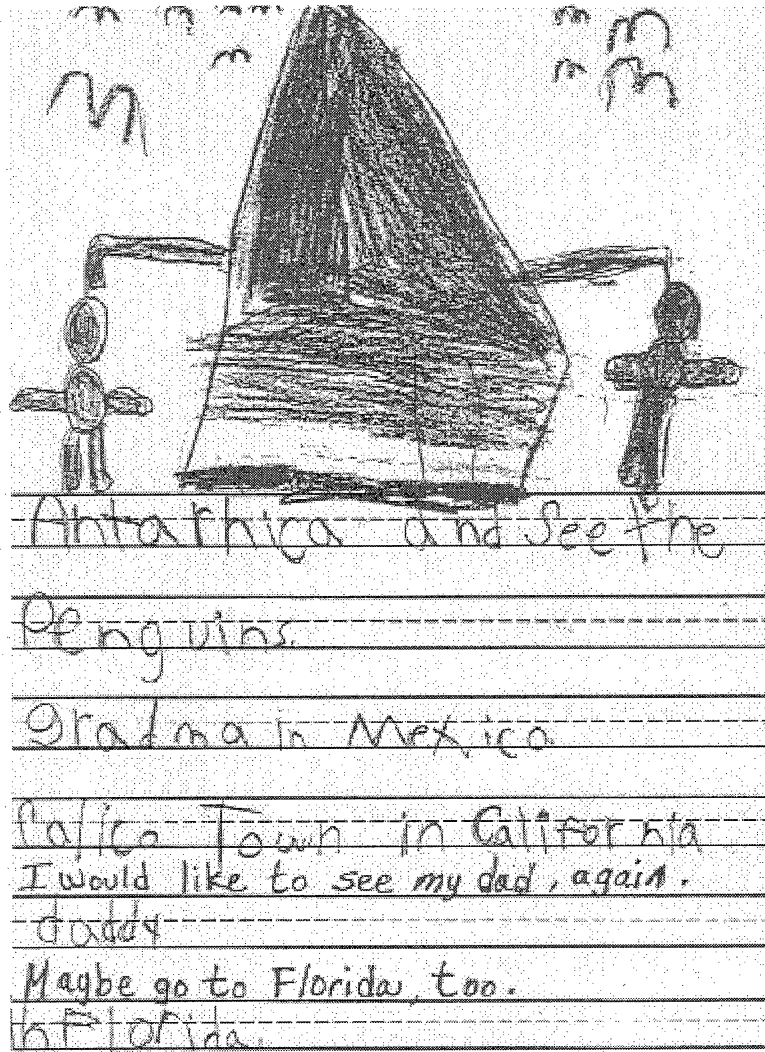
Student B - October Journal Entry



In October, Jessie is using proper punctuation in her writing. She wrote from a story read to the class. She is using spacing between her words. She is communicating an idea, and this idea matches her picture. She is moving toward controlling the alphabetic system.

Figure 14.

Student B - November Journal Entry

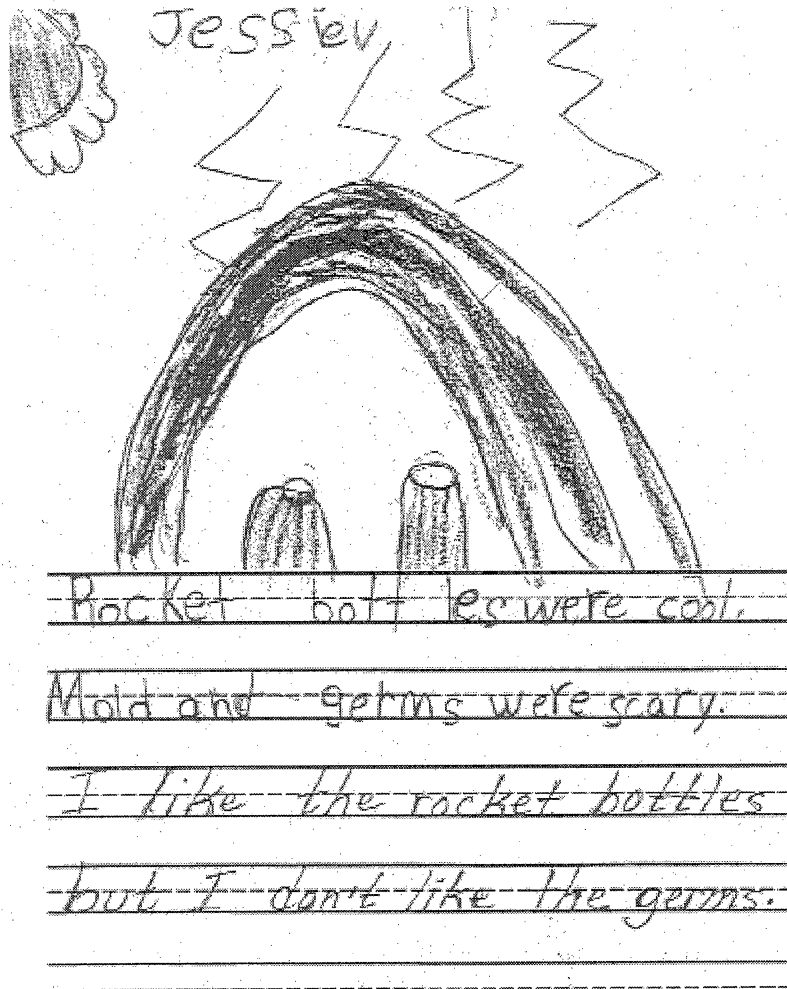


In November, Jessie continues to make sense in her writing. She is trying to communicate an idea with her writing and her illustration. She is using conventional spacing between her words. She writes: "Antartica and see

the Penguins. grandma in Mexico. Calico Town in California. daddy in Florida."

Figure 15.

Student B - January Journal Entry

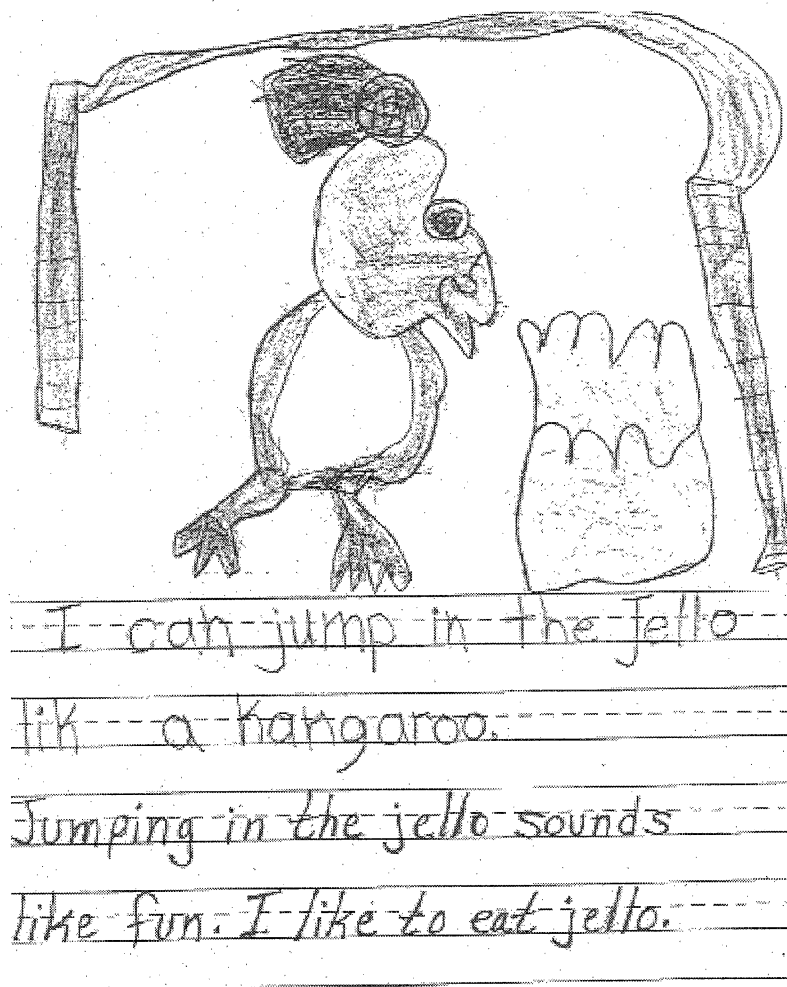


By January, Jessie's love of science is illustrated in this journal entry. She was very positive about her writing at this point. Jessie was able to write about

interesting subjects. She is fully alphabetic as evidence by this entry.

Figure 16.

Student B - February Journal Entry

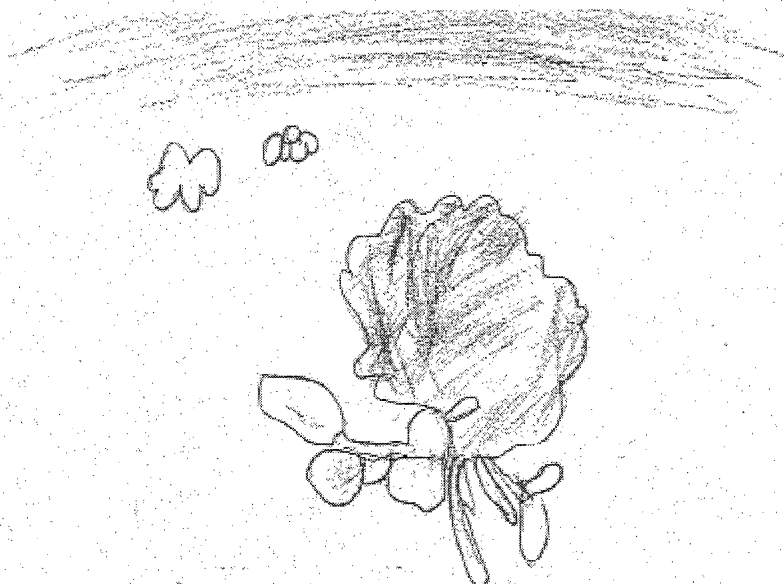


By February, Jessie was writing self-generated sentences. She was able to take risk in her writing. She also felt very comfortable when she was writing and

communicating an idea. Jessie is now writing conventional English.

Figure 17.

Student B - March Journal Entry



I like this book
about the red
rose growing in
the garden.
The red rose was beautiful. I love roses.
I have a rose garden at home.

In March, Jessie wrote sentences that are fully formed. They are self-generated, conventional which communicate an idea. She is at her prime time. She is at

the alphabetic level. Jessie wrote: "I like this Book about the red rose growing in the garden."

Figure 18.

Student B - April Journal Entry



I like The part when
The cat in the Hat holds
all of the things.
This story was very funny. I also
like this part. The cat was strong.

By April, it is evident that Jessie feels very comfortable about her writing at this point. She is able to put in writing her likes/dislikes about a story read.

She is mixing uppercase and lowercase letters. Jessie is using conventional spacing and punctuation at the end of her sentence.

Summary of Progression. Jessie has progress from using letters at the presyllabic level in July, 1999, to self-generated sentences at the alphabetic level in January - April, 2000. Jessie was also using interactive journal writing in order to increase her vocabulary. At the beginning of this project she used to write a string of letters to communicate an idea. Then she started to copy from the environment in the classroom, or whatever print was available to her. She copied signs from stores, streets, and from stories that she loved to read.

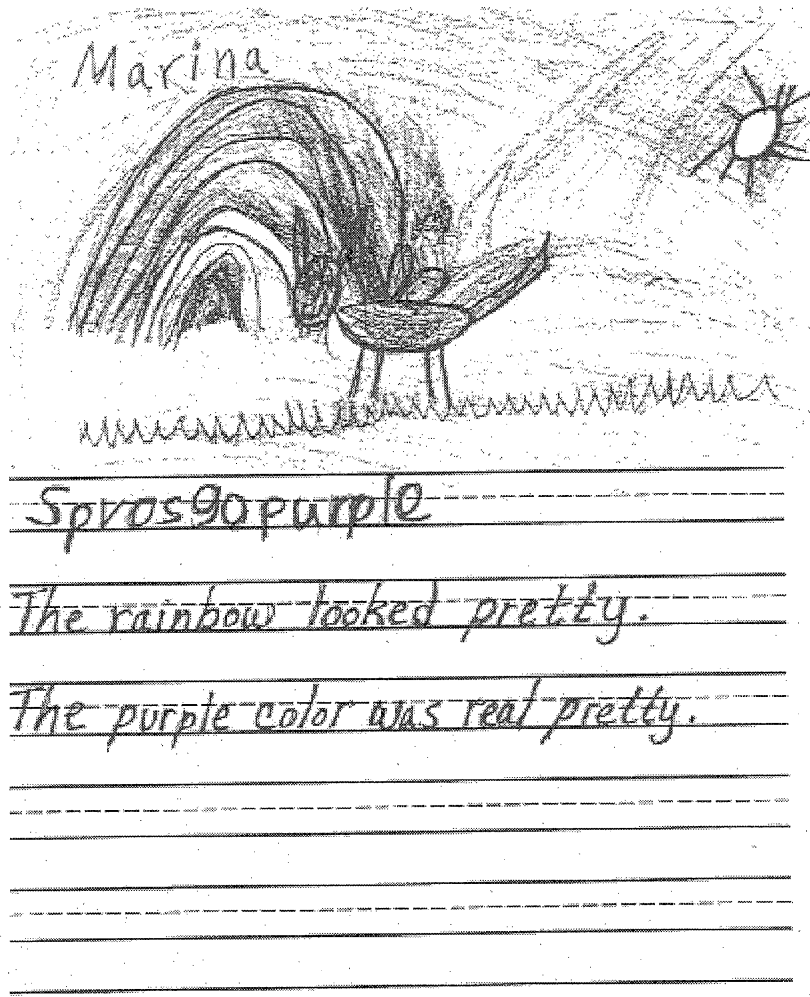
Student C

Marina had a chronological age of 6.4 at the beginning of the data collection and 7.1 at the conclusion of the study. Marina was at an All-English class in kindergarten and also at an All-English class in first grade. The language spoken at home was Spanish and English. Dad spoke English and mom spoke Spanish to her. Marina was the only child at home, but all of her relatives were bilingual. She was a child that interacted

with everybody and always was eager to help. She was a great classroom helper. The teacher knew that Marina was capable of explaining to the students when they ran into a problem. For example, she would tell them: "stretch the word, write the sounds you hear." At the beginning of the project, Marina felt that she was not good at writing. She wanted to spell all the words correctly, and she did not feel very happy when the words were not spelled correctly. At the beginning, the teacher told Marina that it was fine to write her way. Later during the year writing would be easier for her. Marina wrote everyday every moment that was available to her. She told the teacher that she wanted to be a writer when she grew up. She was going to write for children. Marina said that she knew exactly what children liked to read. One of her favorite authors is Eric Carle. She loved how Eric Carle illustrated the stories. Marina said that it was great to be able to read his books. His stories were fun. Marina wrote self-generated sentences that communicated an idea. Marina wrote everyday in order to increase her vocabulary. Her vocabulary increased as a result of her daily interactive journal writing.

Figure 19.

Student C - July Journal Entry

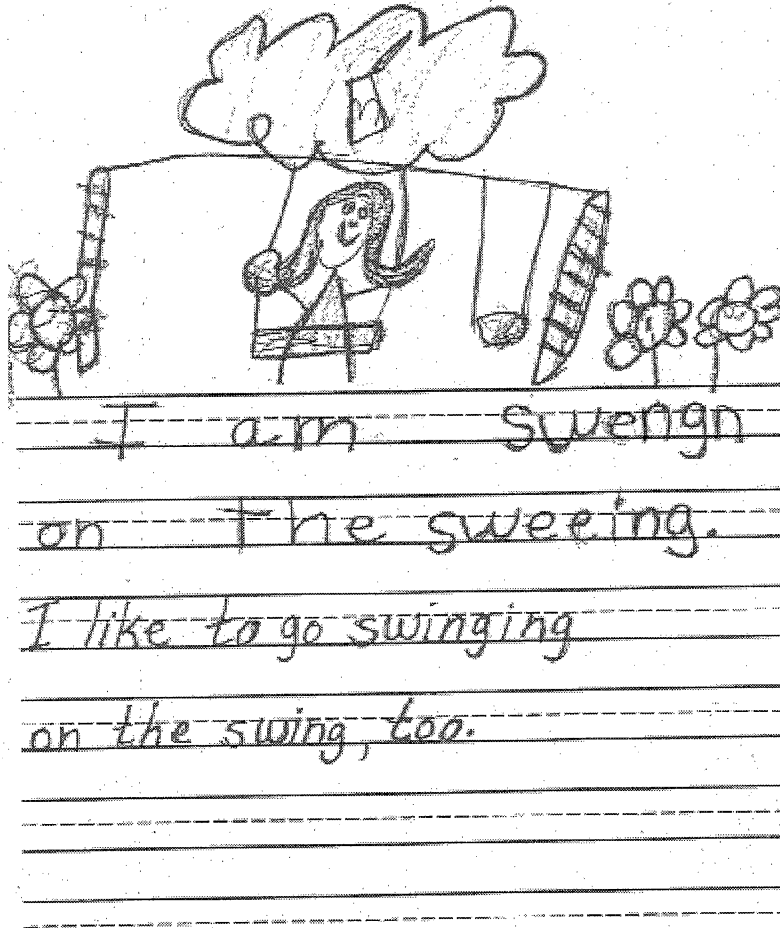


This was Marina's first journal entry. She was writing about a rainbow that she saw. She wrote about her favorite color: purple. She used a string of letters in this entry. Her favorite color was spelled the conventional way. She is using the presyllabic writing system.

Figure 20.

Student C - August Journal Entry

Marina

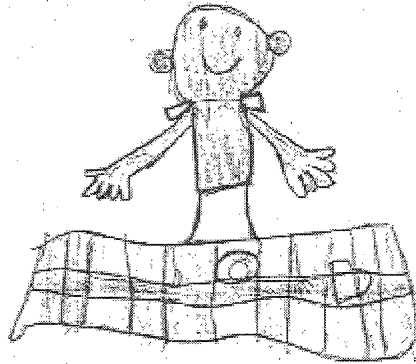


By August, Marina is using spaces between her words in this entry. She also used uppercase/lowercase letters. She was communicating an idea. Marina is now only a month later syllabic/alphabetic.

Figure 21.

Student C - September Journal Entry

Marina



CRUNCH CRUNCH

HUNGRY!

I like when he

ate Soup.

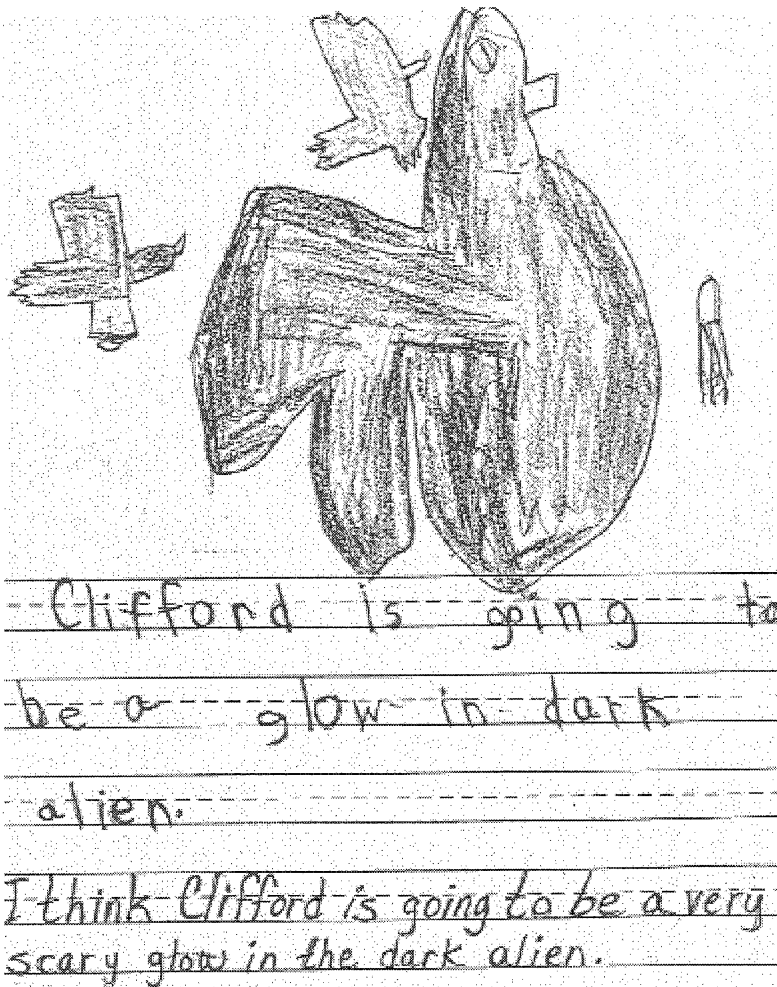
He was a happy boy when he ate

SOUP.

In September, Marina was at the alphabetic level in this entry. She wrote words that she knew how to spell and her sentence had meaning. She used an exclamation mark, to make her sentence more exciting. This journal entry, demonstrate her control of the alphabetic and orthographic principles.

Figure 22.

Student C - October Journal Entry



In October, Marina is using uppercase and lowercase letters. She is using her knowledge of the English language to tell her story. Within three months, Marina is using standard and conventional English, her second language.

Figure 23.

Student C. - November Journal Entry



I like The Book

Because It is The

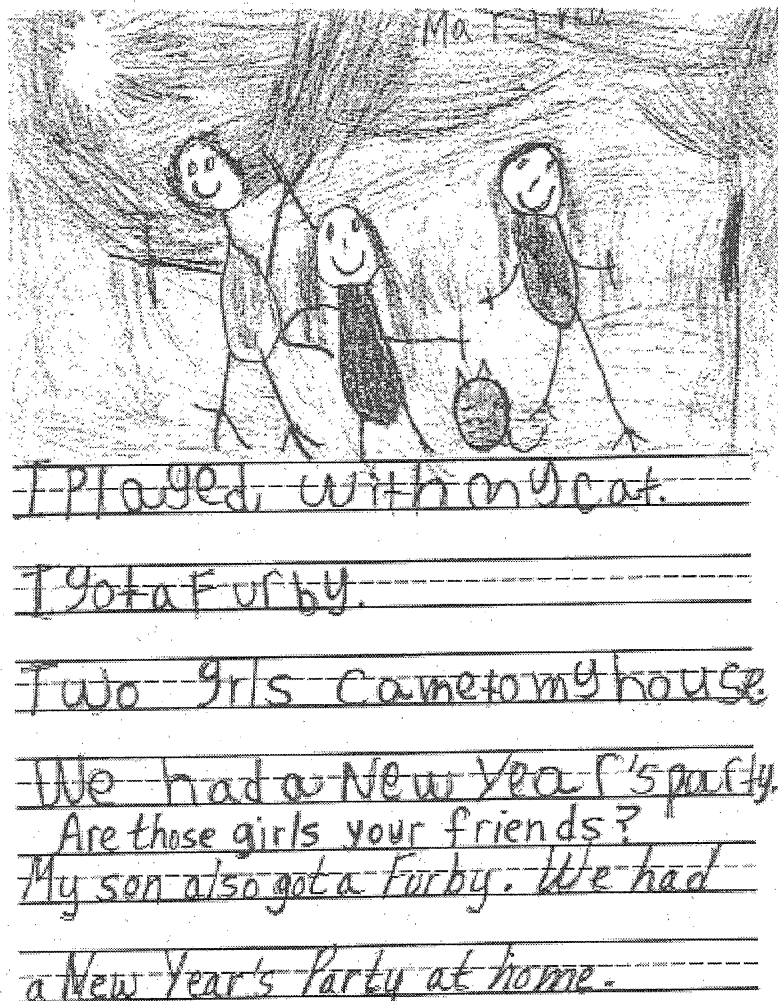
pictures are pretty.

I like this book. It has a good story
and the pictures are pretty.

By November, Marina is writing sentences that are highly conventional. She is writing more words on her journal and she is more careful when she uses her spacing between the words.

Figure 24.

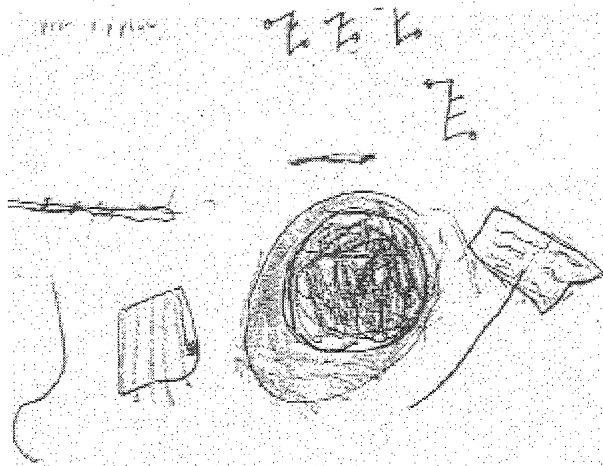
Student C - January Journal Entry



In January, Marina was completely alphabetic by this entry until the end of the year. She using uppercase and lowercase letters properly. Her spacing is a little crowded at this point, but she is writing conventional English.

Figure 25.

Student C - February Journal Entry

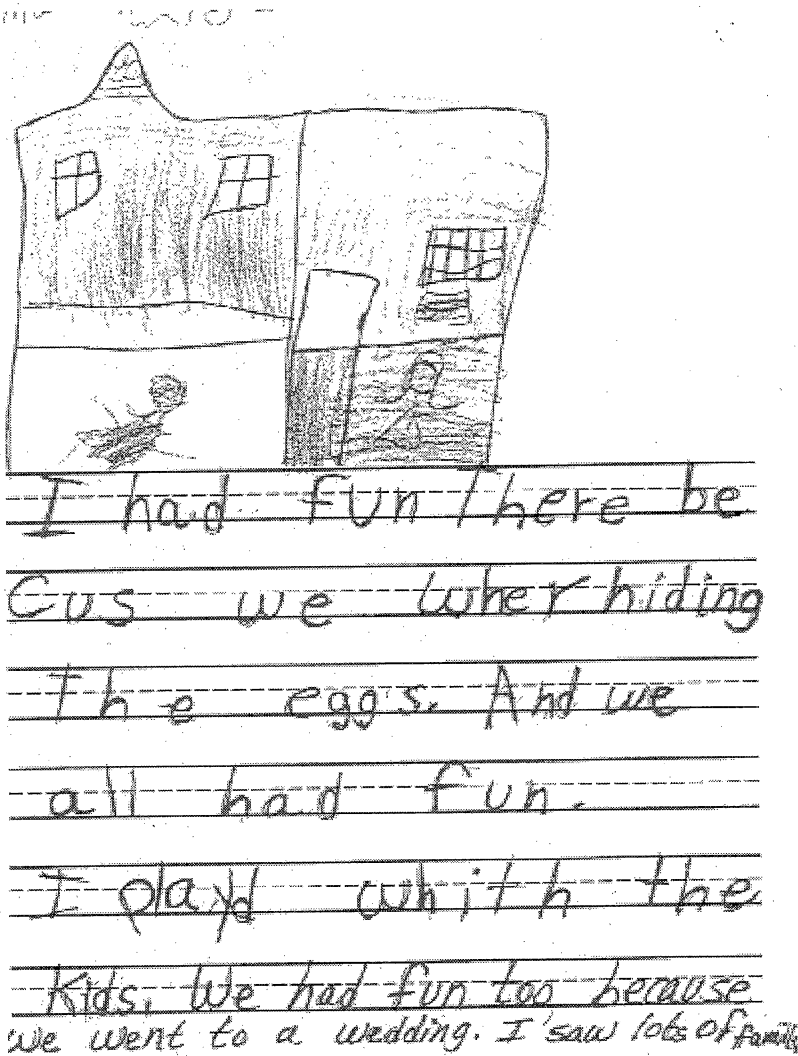


I like the drum.
I like the flutes.
I like the saxophone.
Because those
three sounds are all
pretty. The concert was fun. I
liked the saxophone too.

In February, Marina is using the proper punctuation on this entry. Her challenge is to learn the standard orthography. She is also experimenting with word spacing.

Figure 26.

Student C - March Journal Entry

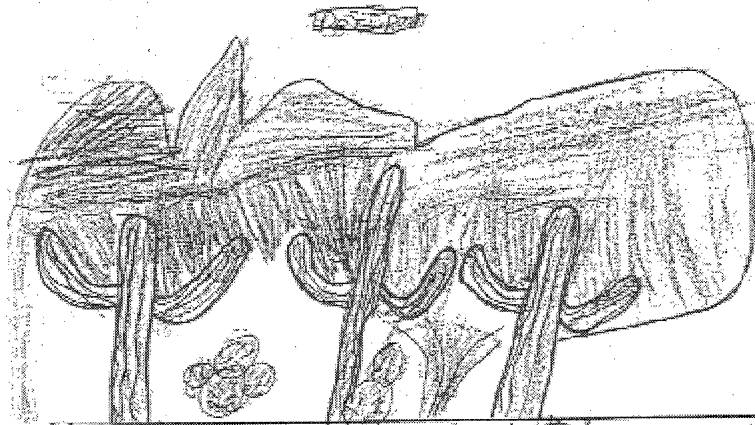


By March, Marina wrote self-generated sentences that are fully formed and they communicate an idea. She was really proud of her writing and she knew other persons were able to read her writing.

Figure 27.

Student C - April Journal Entry

The plant CASTLE



I Showd Beth The cacti
in the Sunny desert
room. These plants are
called succulents because
The cacti are very interesting plants.
They store water in
They live on the sunny desert.
their leaves.

In March, Marina is writing self-generated sentences that communicate and idea. She wrote this entry with words learned from a science lesson. Notice use of the word "succulent" in her writing. Her repertoire of words increased at the end of the school year. She was a great

writer. She truly believed in herself as a writer, as evidenced by this last entry.

Summary or progression. Marina was a child that wanted to write 'all perfect.' She progressed from using letters at the presyllabic level in July to using self-generated sentences at the alphabetic level by April. She stayed at this level till the end of the school year. Marina was also writing on the interactive journals to learn more English words, in order to increase her vocabulary. Marina was a student that truly believed that a writer could write everyday. She was a model student and probably a future writer or a teacher. She encouraged the rest of the students in the class when they were struggling with writing. Marina was an inspiration for the whole class and also for the teacher.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Interpretation

Children create meaningful writing when they read and write stories. As they invent or identify with a particular character, enter into a fantasy setting, experience a story's conflict or resolution, and attempt to explain and interpret stories from their real lives. Children learn more about themselves, the natural world, and the various kinds of actual and potential human words. The meaning children create when reading and writing stories is a fundamental meaning, tied to understanding their existence, their relatedness to other living things (Carini, 1979).

Also, when children create their own writing and when they respond to published stories they are expressing their personal ways. They are expressing what they are, what they feel. Elementary school children explore ideas about family, peace, love, friendship, and their own existence, when they read and write stories (Cameron, 1986). In all these experience ideas, meaning is created as a result of experimenting with writing

stories. First grade students can learn to write in a socially mediated context by using daily interactive journal writing as noticed from the case study data presented in this project.

Conclusions

Reyes (1991) states "Dialectical journals are said to be successful because students are free to select their own topics, determining the amount of writing, ask questions, and seek academic or personal help in a nonthreatening, nongraded context" (p. 292).

Teachers, who set up such opportunities and listen to this expression, are in a possible better position to understand about the individual child and the meaning he or she is exploring. An authentic curriculum, tied to the child's interest and knowledge can then be developed (Franklin, 1988).

It is essential that children grow their understanding on the process and conventions of print. This growth should be natural, appearing as a result of using literacy to support the development of personal meaning. As result, children can learn a great deal about the written language a knowledge gained by using

interactive journal writing, a form of literacy which supports their meaning making efforts. For example, in this project children fluctuated between writing levels and did not follow a linear pattern. The students used illustrations in order to develop ideas for writing in their journals. Also, they used print available to them in their environment. The students progressed from a string of letters to writing self-generated sentences.

Calkins (1986) reminds us to give children functional reasons for writing such as letter writing, taking messages, attendance taking, registering a vote for a pet's name, and making lists. This research suggests that it is important that teachers give children many opportunities and ample time to write, and receive their writing with interest.

In addition, by reading and writing stories, children can learn more about themselves, the human community, and the natural world that surrounds them. In the process of exploring and generating ideas in stories, they can also learn to read and write more effectively and progress toward conventional writing. Goodman (1986) states that in a Whole Language classroom oral and written language must be functional, fulfilling a

particular purpose for the language user. Smith (1993) believes that literacy is not a sequenced process but the internalization or regulations and rules through daily experience:

The learning process is identical with that by which infants develop set of internal rules for producing and comprehending spoken language without the benefit of any formal instruction. (p. 12)

Teaching writing should be a shift from isolate Skills approach to a more holistic approach offered by others (Bissex, 1980; Krashen, 1984; Edelsky, 1986) who view writing as an interactive meaningful process that is socially mediated.

Teachers need to recognize and accept the developmental level of children's writing, which will probably range from those who draw, write strings of letters, invent spelling, to those who are already conventional spellers. Children's writing, including spelling, will develop progressively to higher levels if they are given the opportunities to write, read, share their writing and reading, and to interact with teachers and peers about their writing in positive and responsive ways.

Ferreiro (1990) states that "knowledge of the psychological evolution of the writing system be teachers, psychologists, and diagnosticians is invaluable in order to evaluate children's progress and, even more important, to 'see' otherwise unnoticed signs of literacy development" (p. 23).

Implications

We need to remember that learners have many different learning styles, aptitudes, and levels of abilities. This research has shown the writing development of three students over a period of nine months. These students as evident in their writing took control of the English written language by delineating the scripting strategies and being risk-takers. Ferreiro (1990) believes that "accepting that everyone in the classroom is able to read and write - each at his or her own level, including the teacher" (p. 24). This is a very important fact to consider. Opportunities for reading and writing occur throughout the entire school day. Children should have time provided by the teacher to read and write. This is necessary for children at all levels of the primary school.

In addition, teachers should not only read to children from a range of material but should provide an equally wide range for the children's own reading. The well-read teacher provides constant guidance for the children by helping them select material appropriate to their ability, interest, and needs. Writing about literature experiences is highly enhanced through peer and teacher interactions in a community of readers. Not only do students grow in their knowledge in books available to read, but they also have the opportunity to make them think or feel about certain topic or certain story.

This research suggests that as students share reading or writing experiences characteristics of various genre and literacy features of stories become more clearly articulated. Even at the beginning level (presyllabic label), students can become engaged in the act of reflecting on their own work. The very fact that they are becoming responsible for judging the quality of their own work enables students to take control of their own learning.

Learners have many different learning styles, aptitudes and levels of ability. The researcher believes

that a single instructional method or instructional program might not be suitable for all students. Education might be intensified if more efforts were made to match instructional methods and instructional programs with the students who are best able to learn from them.

Teachers with an understanding of how children develop literacy know that reading and writing are processes in which children create meaning from print and prior knowledge. As children develop as readers, writers, and construction of knowledge, we need to be aware how they form knowledge about the world.

Heath (1986) states that academic success for all children depends, less on the specific language they know, but it is essential on the ways of using language. Children need to communicate by learning to read and write. Children's perceptions expand, because they write. Interactive journal writing is a powerful tool for the teacher and the student.

Children have problems learning written language in English when they come to school with a strong primary Spanish home language. This project examined the writing the development of English Language Learners in first grade, and their writing was done primarily in English.

It was very difficult for them to express themselves or their ideas when the writing language was in English. According to Goodman (1986) learning writing language at school is not much difficult than learning oral language, but it can be extremely difficult by teachers who teach print and isolate it from its functional use.

Language learning is social and natural for children. Language is learned in social contexts and mediated by others (Edelsky, Altwerger, & Flores, 1991). We, as teachers ought to regard reading and writing as natural extensions of early learning and focus in the language strengths children bring to school.

Ulanoff (1983) states that students view writing as an authentic means of communication and what is very important also is that the students have control of their own writing. Immersion in journal writing with a specific focus on process rather than product, is very essential to show improvement in spelling, vocabulary development, grammar, sentence structure, or writing fluency, according to Atwell (1987). By using this method of communication teachers can develop students' oral and written language proficiency by creating context for learning. Teachers can plan so children learn to use the

English language for, real purposes that touch their lives directly.

For reading this research suggest that children read self-selected literature and then have conferences with the teacher or interact with a small group of peers about a book they all read. Reading and writing must be a part of all content areas and not limited to a specific time slot of the day.

Also, Language Arts are social activities and are best learned through interaction with others. Children construct their knowledge from within rather than having it imposed on them from some outside source. It is important to remember that children do not progress in a linear way from one level to the next level. Flores (1990) states that these levels are not psychogenetically ordered. It is essential that we, as teachers, understand the writing process in order to teach it to the children so they can succeed in their future.

Children need choice in the curriculum. The reading and writing of stories allows such a choice. When planning classroom literacy activities, teachers need to consider whether their activities are tied actually to the interest, questions express by the children in the

classroom. Teachers have a better understanding about the special meanings that children are creating through reflecting on the ideas express by them in their writing and reading stories. Children need to write everyday, their writing and reading improves. Interactive journal writing serves as a documentation of child's progress in writing. Parents point with pride to their child's writing growth evidenced in the journal and many children are happy to share what they have written to an adult or a peer.

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