

# Systemic functional linguistics theory in practice: A longitudinal study of a school-university partnership reforming writing instruction in an urban elementary school

Author: Frank Daniello

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# **Boston College**

## **Lynch School of Education**

Department of Teacher Education, Special Education, and Curriculum and Instruction

Program of Curriculum and Instruction

SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS THEORY IN PRACTICE: A  
LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF A SCHOOL-UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP  
REFORMING WRITING INSTRUCTION IN AN URBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Dissertation  
by

FRANK DANIELLO

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of the requirements for the degree of  
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## ABSTRACT

Systemic Functional Linguistics Theory in Practice: A Longitudinal Study of a School-University Partnership Reforming Writing Instruction in an Urban Elementary School

Frank Daniello

Dissertation Director: Dennis Shirley

The ability to express meaning in prose is a foundational skill in our society. Given the importance of being a competent writer, concern with the quality of writing instruction is a recurring theme among American educators (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Gilbert & Graham, 2010; National Commission on Writing, 2003, 2004, 2006). Research shows that teachers are unprepared to teach writing (Gilbert & Graham, 2010) and devote limited amounts of time to it (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Gilbert & Graham, 2010). In addition, national assessment data indicates that most students are not proficient writers (Salahu-Din, Persky & Miller, 2008).

An embedded case study design (Yin, 2009), using mixed methodology (Greene & Caracelli, 2003a, 2003b; Hesse-Biber, 2010), was employed to determine whether a school-university partnership enacted systemic functional linguistics theory guided writing intervention changed fourth and fifth grade teachers' writing instruction over the course of three years in an urban elementary school. The study further investigated changes to 41 fourth and 27 fifth graders' writing performance during the third year of the invention. Examination of the relationship between students' performance in writing and the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) test in English

language arts was conducted. The study also explored how teachers articulated their experiences with the partnership.

Findings showed the content of teachers' instruction changed involving the use of metalanguage and the teaching of genre, language, and tenor. Similarly, instructional strategies evolved regarding negotiating field and deconstruction of text. Findings also indicated a significant improvement in writing performance for all students, and bilingual students had more growth over time than monolingual peers. Also, a moderate positive relationship existed between writing performance and MCAS performance, which suggests understanding of genre may support reading comprehension. Overall, teachers positively experienced the partnership and found value in the professional development. Implications of these study findings will benefit teacher education, administrators and policymakers, and allow for improved school-university partnerships.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Concern with the quality of writing instruction is a recurring theme among American educators (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Gilbert & Graham, 2010; National Commission on Writing, 2003, 2004, 2006). This stems from writing being such a foundational skill in our society. It is a skill required for employment in most sectors, and employers have communicated that an individual's writing ability is considered both in the hiring process and also when making promotional considerations (National Commission on Writing, 2004). The importance of being a competent writer is not limited to employment. Rather, this skill transcends years of schooling and can contribute to an individual's understanding of content across all subject areas.

In addition, writing "remains the only effective vehicle for transmitting and debating a culture's ideas, values and goals" (Sheils, 1975, p. 65). According to scholars, writing is

one of humankind's most powerful tools. It lets us communicate with others who are removed by distance or time, allowing us to maintain personal links with family, friends, and colleagues. Writing connects more than just our immediate circle of associates and loved ones, however. It can foster and preserve a sense of heritage and purpose among larger groups of people. (MacArthur, Graham, & Fitzgerald, 2006, p. 1)

Despite the overwhelming importance of being a proficient writer in America, teachers have not sufficiently taught writing to students (National Commission on Writing, 2003). Research shows that educators are unprepared to teach writing (Gilbert &

Graham, 2010) and devote limited amounts of time to it (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Gilbert & Graham, 2010). In addition, a recent national assessment indicates that most students are not proficient writers (Salahu-Din, Persky & Miller, 2008).

To alter these trends, teachers must be better prepared to teach writing. Teachers must develop students to become competent writers. Enacting this change will not be easy. However, by doing so the educational system will better prepare students to be competent writers, which will enable them to more effectively function in society.

This study aims to understand how writing instruction may be improved in schools and seeks to contribute to the body of research in writing instruction and educational change. It examines a writing intervention in an elementary school that was enacted by a school-university partnership. The writing intervention used systemic functional linguistics (SFL) to inform instruction.

SFL was developed by Michael Halliday and is a sociocultural theory of the study of language (Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Hasan, 1989). According to this theory, language exists in context, achieves varying social purposes (Halliday, 1994), and is viewed as dynamic and evolving (Derewianka, 1990). This perception of language is different from traditional linguistic theories that perceive language as structural (Halliday, 1994).

The study is divided into three parts. First, it undertakes an examination of changes to classroom writing instruction over a three year period. Second, the study documents changes to student performance in language arts during this time period. Third, it endeavors to understand how teachers experienced this school-university

partnership. Study findings are designed to inform writing pedagogy in elementary grades and educational reform of curriculum and instruction in schools.

### **Writing Instruction in American Schools**

The National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges was established by the College Board in 2002 to address the growing concern within education and business communities about the state of writing in the United States (National Commission on Writing, 2003). Concern stemmed from fourth, eighth, and twelfth grade students' performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 1999. Results showed most students had mastered writing basics, but few were able to develop clear and well constructed prose. Furthermore, results indicated that "about four of five students in grades 4, 8, and 12 are at or above the 'basic' level of writing. However, only about one-quarter at each grade level are at or above the 'proficient' level. Even more telling, only one in one hundred is thought to be 'advanced'" (National Commission on Writing, 2003, p. 16).

Based on the 1999 findings from NAEP and an examination of school writing instruction across public schools, the Commission made five recommendations to improve writing. The first recommendation was for educational leaders to focus more on writing in schools. The second was for educational agencies to work with writing specialists and to construct strategies to increase the amount of time devoted to student writing. The third recommendation was to strive for writing assessments that were fair and authentic. The fourth was for the private sector to work with curriculum experts and



incorporate new technology to teach, grade, and assess writing. The fifth and final recommendation was for state and local educational agencies to provide teachers with comprehensive professional development to improve classroom writing instruction. These recommendations involved the coming together of multiple stakeholders to improve instruction, assessments, and teacher professional development.

The Commission then added two follow-up reports to this initial report. One report was entitled, “Writing: A Ticket to Work...Or a Ticket Out” (2004). This report surveyed business leaders to understand if they thought writing was a fundamental skill needed by their employees. Results confirmed the Commission’s conviction that “individual opportunity in the United States depends critically on the ability to present one’s thoughts coherently, cogently, and persuasively on paper” (National Commission of Writing, 2004, p. 5).

The second report echoed a similar call from the commission’s initial 2003 report and provided more explicit ways to enact change to writing instruction across public schools (National Commission of Writing, 2006). Both the reports in 2004 and 2006 advocated for the five recommendations to improve writing instruction made by the commission in 2003 (see National Commission of Writing, 2003). Despite these three reports (see National Commission of Writing, 2003, 2004, 2006), recent research on the state of writing instruction in elementary schools has indicated these recommendations have neither been implemented nor achieved desired outcomes.

One study conducted in 2008 examined teachers’ instructional writing practices in first through third grade across the United States (Cutler & Graham, 2008). A random

sample of 178 elementary teachers was surveyed. Results from the data analyses addressed four of the five recommendations made five years earlier by the Commission.

The Commission's recommendation of more time to be allocated to writing was affirmed. This study showed student writing in the classroom per week varied and ranged from 0 minutes to 380 minutes ( $SD = 70.8$  min). The median amount of time dedicated to student writing was 105 minutes per week, which amounted to only 21 minutes per day.

The Commission also called for improvements in writing assessment. Study results showed that students' progress in writing at the classroom level was monitored only by approximately 2 out of every 3 teachers surveyed and 9 percent of teachers never or only rarely monitored progress. The Commission had made the recommendation that more technology be used to support writing development in the classroom. Results showed that 42 percent of teachers never used computers during the writing period and only 25 percent reported to use them several times a year. With regards to the recommendation that teachers receive more preparation to teach writing, study results showed that "of the 92% of teachers who had received certification through a teacher education program, 28% indicated that their preparation to teach writing was either very good or outstanding, 42% indicated that their preparation was adequate, and 28% indicated that it was poor or inadequate" (p. 911). These study findings appeared to indicate that the state of writing instruction in 2008, at least in first through third grade, had not changed to adequately address the problems outlined by the Commission in 2003.

Another recent study examined instructional writing practices in fourth through sixth grade across the United States (Gilbert & Graham, 2010). Out of a random sample

of 300 elementary school teachers, 34.33 percent (N=103) agreed to participate in the study. No statistically significant difference existed between participants and non-participants on eight variables: grade taught, school size, location, annual expenditures for materials per pupil, special education funding, percent of students living below the poverty level, or achievement scores for reading and mathematics. All of the teachers completed a survey about their instructional writing practices; however, only 97 of the 103 teachers indicated they taught writing. Teachers that reported not to teach writing were excluded from further analyses.

Initially, teacher preparation to instruct writing was examined. Analyses showed about 65 percent of the teachers reported to have received minimal to no preparation to teach writing during their college coursework. However, teachers indicated that they received preparation after college (e.g. in-service professional development), with 80 percent reporting their training was adequate to extensive.

Classroom writing instruction was next investigated. Analyses indicated commercial writing programs were used by 50 percent of the teachers. These included 6 Traits, Lucy Calkin's Writers Workshop, Step Up to Writing, and 4-Square (Gilbert & Graham, 2010). Writing activities for students commonly involved writing short responses, journal writing, and writing responses to reading material. Analyses showed that on average 197.77 minutes per week (SD= 98.77) were devoted to classroom writing instruction (M=76.86 minutes, SD=48.69) and student writing (M=121.74, SD= 73.51). Most of the teachers (89 percent) reported they used 17 of the 19 evidence-based practices, such as direct instruction, at least several times a year. However, almost 60

percent of the teachers reported they used them infrequently. Differentiation for weaker writers was inadequate. Encouragement, additional time to complete assignments and practicing writing skills or strategies were the ways in which teachers supported weaker writers.

Based on these results, Gilbert and Graham (2010) proposed their own five recommendations to improve writing instruction in fourth through sixth grade. The first recommendation was that teacher education programs provide teacher candidates with better preparation to teach writing. The second was that students in these grades must have more time devoted to writing. The third recommendation was that “teachers must assign a broader range of writing activities on a more regular basis, increasing the use of activities such as persuasive writing, writing to inform and describe, and writing research reports” (p. 515). The fourth was that teachers must increase the amount of time for writing instruction. The fifth recommendation was that “teachers must apply a larger range of evidence-based writing practices on a regular basis instead of periodically” (p. 515). These recommendations align closely with those made by the Commission (see National Commission on Writing, 2003).

Results from the two reviewed studies (see Cutler & Graham, 2008; Gilbert & Graham, 2010) indicate the state of writing instruction at the elementary grades had not changed significantly in regards to the recommendations made by the Commission in 2003. Reform of writing instruction is still needed. However, even with minimal systemic change in the instruction at the elementary level, recent student writing performance, as measured by the NAEP in 2007, showed an increase in performance for eighth and

twelfth graders (Salahu-Din, Persky & Miller, 2008). Despite this increase, more effective approaches to teaching writing continue to be needed as only 31 percent of students in eighth grade nationally were at the proficient and advanced achievement levels in writing (Salahu-Din, Persky & Miller, 2008).

Reforms may bring about robust instructional practices that enable more students to perform at the proficient and advanced levels. These high-level writing skills will support students beyond their years of schooling and well into their professional careers (National Commission on Writing, 2004).

### **Educational Change in the American Context**

In the American educational system, since the 1960s, multiple reform ways have driven changes in schools. Through the 1960s and 1970s, *First Way* approaches to change emerged that focused on social justice and granted educators autonomy to make curriculum and instructional decisions (Hargreaves, 2009). This pedagogical freedom led to tremendous variation in educational quality and focus among and within schools (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009b). This disparity fostered public mistrust in teachers and the educational system, which brought about a call for standardization and accountability.

Beginning in the 1990s and continuing to the present day, the *Second Way* has been the dominant approach to reform in the United States. These reforms focus on the achievement of government performance goals through market-driven competition among schools (Hargreaves, 2009; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009b). Commonly, initiatives take the form of

increased competition among schools, fuelled by publication of rankings of test results; prescriptive, paced, and sometimes scripted curriculum content in areas of learning that were more narrowly defined; the misuse of literacy coaches as compliance officers, along with periodic inspections and management walk-throughs to boost skill development and enforce curriculum fidelity; political targets and timetables for delivering improved results; sanctions such as involuntary teacher transfers, principal removal, and school closure when failure persisted; teacher training that moved away from the academy towards on-the-job training in schools; and replacement of broad professional learning by in-service training on government priorities. (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009b, p. 8)

A fundamental component of Second Way reforms is accountability, which functions to hold teachers, schools, districts, and states responsible for student performance. Accountability most often takes the form of student performance as measured by standardized assessments. There are extreme pressures to perform on standardized assessments; educators use performance data to drive decision making regardless of other indicators or professional knowledge (Shirley & Hargreaves, 2006).

Second Way approaches have often been detrimental to teachers. In these large-scale reforms, teachers can suffer a loss of professionalism. Their personal identity, autonomy, collegiality, and teaching culture can be negatively impacted (Day & Smethen, 2009; Hargreaves, 2003; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009a; Little & Bartlett, 2002).

This loss of professionalism is not isolated to teachers, but also may impact student learning:

In terms of power, it might be hypothesized that politics and policy hold greater value; yet, it is professionalism—the status, methods, character, views, expertness, and behavior of urban teachers who implement pedagogy in a manner that is conducive to learning and committed to the highest standards of educational practice—that exerts the most significant influence on pupil learning and achievement. (Friedman & Daniello, 2010, p. 184)

Despite this potential connection between teacher professionalism and student learning, teachers' voices have often been marginalized in these reforms (Cohn & Kottkamp, 1993).

In addition to a loss of professionalism and voice, teachers' learning through professional development can also be affected. Due to the over-emphasis on student performance expressed through standardized assessments in these reforms, teachers' professional development can become reduced to “‘training’ teachers to prepare their students for state tests...[rather than] development practices which are much more likely to effect [sic] deep and meaningful change in teaching practice” (Laguardia et al., 2002, p. 14).

The consequences of Second Way reforms on teachers, such as loss of professionalism and reduced high-quality professional development, may contribute to their ineffectiveness to enact school changes that benefit student learning. Also, these

reforms can make teachers more resistant to change (Goodson, Moore, & Hargreaves, 2006; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2008). Professional discretion should be part of an effective change process (Gitlin & Margonis, 1995; Sachs, 2003), but this form of resistance appears to stem from an increased rootedness in conservatism (Lortie, 1975). Teachers become unwilling to make pedagogical changes. This outcome is not beneficial to the teaching profession or to student learning. Second Way approaches appear not to be conducive to school changes that benefit teachers or student learning. Rather, these initiatives can de-professionalize teachers and inhibit their professional growth. Furthermore, they promote a professional climate that is resistant to reform.

Beginning in the late 1990s and continuing to the present day, *Third Way* approaches to reform have been used in Britain and Canada but not in the United States (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009b). The Third Way is driven by top-down government demands and performance targets. These performance goals are obtained through lateral learning and pressure from educators and the public in conjunction with bottom-up educator training and resources (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009b). The ultimate social goals of the Third Way approaches are public engagement, professional learning, and high educational standards. Despite these goals, “the educational reform strategies of the Third Way have distracted its founders and followers from their ability to achieve the Way’s original ideals” (p. 19).

A *Fourth Way* approach to reform has recently been proposed (Hargreaves, 2009, Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009b). This way has similar social goals of the Third Way, but strives to enact change differently. Change comes about from a national vision with



government support, educators' professional involvement, and public engagement.

Fourth Way approaches have not been used at the national, state, or provincial level.

However, this way may bring about reforms that empower educators and create powerful learning systems:

In Linda Darling-Hammond's terms, the Fourth Way brings about change through democracy and professionalism rather than through bureaucracy and the market. It transfers trust and confidence back from the discredited free market of competition among schools and reinvests them in the expertise of highly trained and actively trusted professionals. (p. 72)

The Fourth Way potentially could foster reforms that minimize negative forms of teacher resistance and instead promote teachers' active engagement in the change process.

### **Context for the Writing Intervention**

The Office of the Mayor in 2006 wanted the Boston Public Schools (BPS) to close the achievement gap between performing and underperforming schools. To accomplish this, Mayor Menino charged five local universities with the task of directing resources to ten schools identified as underperforming. The universities were Boston College, Boston University, Harvard, Northeastern, and Tufts. The project was termed the *STEP UP Initiative* and served to link local schools and universities.

This dissertation examines a school-university partnership within STEP UP that endeavored to change teachers' pedagogy in the area of writing. The school-university partnership was led by Maria Estela Brisk at Boston College, a professor in the field of

bilingualism and literacy development. The collaboration was a three-year partnership between the Morrison Elementary (a pseudonym) School (prekindergarten to fifth grade) in the BPS and Boston College. During the 2009-2010 academic year, the Morrison Elementary School had an enrollment of 386 students. The student population was 27.3 percent African American, 11.7 percent Asian, 54.5 percent Hispanic, 2.6 percent White, 0.3 percent Pacific Islander, and 3.4 percent Multi-racial (See Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 *Morrison Student Demographics*

Title	% of School	% of District	% of State
First Language not English	62.1	38.8	15.6
Limited English Proficient	43.6	20.4	6.2
Low-income	87.7	75.6	32.9
Special Education	13.0	19.6	17.0
Free Lunch	76.6	67.3	27.4
Reduced Lunch	9.1	8.3	5.6

The collaboration between these institutions was focused on reforming the school's writing pedagogy through a writing intervention. This intervention endeavored to enhance classroom writing instruction, aid in teacher evaluation of student writing, and better support student writing development. The intervention was a genre-based instructional approach to teaching writing that was developed and implemented by partnership stakeholders, such as Dr. Brisk, her doctoral students, Morrison teachers (general and specialists), and the school principal. The writing intervention used systemic functional linguistics (SFL) as a lens to examine and understand texts. The school-

university partnership provided ongoing teacher professional development in multiple forms.

Professional development was the core of the writing intervention and was offered year-round. In the first year of the partnership's implementation of the writing intervention (2008-2009), all third, fourth, fifth grade teachers, specialists (including art, physical education, computer, and science teachers), and the school principal attended a two day summer writing institute held at the university. During the institute, participants learned the theory of SFL and the language demands of the genres commonly taught at the elementary school level: recount, procedure, narrative, report, explanation, and exposition (persuasive writing). Teachers also collaboratively created annual writing calendars outlining which genres would be taught at each grade level and at what point during the school year they would be taught. The intent was that all students would receive writing instruction across the varying genres throughout third, fourth, and fifth grades. The planning aligned the reviewed genres within a specific grade level. Teachers were given time to collaborate with grade level colleagues around writing lessons for each genre. This had not been the case prior to the establishment of a common curriculum plan within and across grade levels.

During the school year, teachers met weekly in grade-level planning groups and Dr. Brisk attended these planning sessions monthly. The meetings provided opportunities for teachers in small grade-level groups to create lessons, construct student writing activities, and collaboratively evaluate student writing. During the first year of the writing intervention, teachers' classroom writing instruction was observed weekly by doctoral

students from the university. All doctoral students had expertise in elementary literacy instruction. The observations and detailed field notes documented the writing instruction provided to students. Collected data were analyzed for research purposes and to inform teacher professional development. These observations also functioned as a form of professional development as teachers and doctoral students collaborated about best instructional practices.

In the second year of the writing intervention (2009-2010), teachers again attended a three day summer writing institute at the university, which was run by Dr. Brisk. During the first two days of the institute third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers refined SFL-informed genre-based writing rubrics that had been constructed by university colleagues. The teachers piloted the rubrics with student writing. These rubrics, which extensively covered multiple language features, were deemed too lengthy by teachers for practical classroom use and were revised over the course of the following year. During the third day of the summer institute, kindergarten, first and second grade teachers from the elementary school came to the university and learned about SFL theory and genre-based writing instruction.

The third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers who had attended the institute the previous summer and had implemented the writing intervention for one year gave presentations about their work with students. Teachers shared what they had learned from the use of SFL theory to guide their practice and provided personal stories about implementing the writing approach. During the second year of the writing intervention, all teachers in kindergarten, first, second, third, fourth, and fifth grades, in addition to

science teachers, the principal, and specialists received ongoing professional development. This was the first year that the writing intervention was implemented school-wide. Teachers from all programs, general education, special education, and Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) classes were participants.

In the third year of the writing intervention (2010-2011), planned activities included providing ongoing support to teachers previously involved in the collaboration and expanding the writing intervention to other schools that were in need of writing curriculum reform. To facilitate expansion to other elementary schools, a summer institute was held that prepared over one hundred fifty teachers from nine different BPS elementary schools to teach using the SFL-informed genre-based writing intervention. Teachers involved in the school-university partnership since its inception received stipends to draft SFL-informed genre-based writing units that they had previously taught. These writing units contained detailed lesson plans that teachers, specifically those new to SFL-informed genre-based instruction, could use to support literacy instruction. Additionally, kindergarten, first, and second grade general education, special education, and SEI teachers attended a full day workshop during which they modified genre-specific rubrics previously designed for upper grades to meet the needs of their students. The rubrics created in the summer of year two of the partnership were revised by university stakeholders to include the most salient language features per genre. As a result, developmentally appropriate rubrics were constructed for kindergarten to fifth grade in all genres.

In the third year of the writing intervention, doctoral students continued to visit classrooms at the Morrison across all grade levels on a weekly basis. They provided feedback to teachers on writing instruction and Dr. Brisk continued to meet with grade-level teams monthly to analyze student work, further teachers' understanding of the implementation of the SFL-informed writing approach, and share mentor texts with participants. More resources were constructed to better support the goals of the partnership. For example, teachers had access to revised SFL-informed genre-based rubrics, student score sheets used to aid text analysis, sample teacher-constructed curriculum units, genre-based book lists, and other SFL-informed professional materials. Overall, the school-university partnership strived to enact changes in teachers' writing pedagogy through ongoing teacher professional development and collaborative learning through professional learning communities that included teachers and university educators.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study examines the impact of an SFL-informed writing intervention on teachers' writing instruction in classrooms and student performance. It also investigates how teachers experienced the curriculum and instruction reform through the school-university partnership. This study has five main research questions:

1. Does the content of the writing instruction in the fourth and fifth grades change in the areas of genre, language, tenor, and expressive during the three years of the writing intervention, if so, how?

2. Do teachers' writing instructional strategies change regarding the stages of the pedagogical cycle during the three years of the writing intervention, if so, how?
3. Does fourth and fifth grade students' writing performance change after exposure to an academic year of the writing intervention, if so, how?
  - a) If change occurred, do differences exist between fourth and fifth grade students?
  - b) If change occurred, do differences exist between monolingual and bilingual students?
4. Is there a relationship between students' writing performance and the MCAS test in English language arts?
  - a) If so, does this relationship vary as a function of language status?
5. How do teachers articulate their experiences with the school-university partnership?
  - a) Does professional collaboration happen during the partnership, and if so, how do teachers experience it?
  - b) How do teachers experience the professional development?
  - c) Do tensions exist in the partnership, and if so, what are they?

This study makes three contributions to the research. First, research has devoted little attention to how teachers operationalize SFL over time to inform writing instruction in classrooms. To address this gap, it investigates how writing instruction changed over three years across two grade-levels. During this time period, teachers received ongoing professional development in SFL to develop their understanding of the theory and of language.

Second, research in SFL-informed writing instruction in education has tended to focus primarily on language use in students' writing. To understand language use, most linguistic analyses of language features in a genre are carried out in studies on one student's writing (i.e., see Gebhard, Willett, Caicedo & Piedra, 2011) or a very small number of students' writing (i.e., see Brisk & Zisselsberger, 2011). The abiding interest in descriptive qualitative analyses is not surprising given most of the research has been conducted by linguists. Study findings in the profession are thus derived from very small samples. This study contributes to the literature as it examines a larger sample (N = 68) of students and their writing before and after receiving an academic year of SFL-informed writing instruction. Findings can inform the profession regarding changes over time to writing performance upon receiving SFL-informed writing instruction. In addition, identifying differences among changes to students' writing performance attributable to being monolingual or bilingual can further inform the profession.

Third, research tends to focus on outcomes of SFL-informed writing instruction. Little attention is devoted to how change to curriculum and instruction in schools emerges. This study examines how teachers experienced the reform approach through the school-university partnership. Findings will inform professional knowledge in writing pedagogy and school change and are valuable to teacher educators, administrators, policymakers, and scholars.



## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Systemic Functional Linguistics in Education

Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is a sociocultural theory of the study of language (Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Hasan, 1989). According to this theory, language exists in context. Context is comprised of cultural and social aspects that influence how language is constructed to make a semiotic system (Eggins, 1994). This theory of language was founded by Michael Halliday. According to Halliday (1978):

we are taking a functional view of language, in the sense that we are interested in what language can do, or rather in what the speaker, child or adult, can do with it; and that we try to explain the nature of language, its internal organization and patterning, in terms of the functions that it has evolved to serve. (p. 16)

Halliday observes that language is used to achieve varying social purposes (Halliday, 1994). SFL is synonymous with *functional grammar*, which is “essentially a ‘natural’ grammar, in the sense that everything in it can be explained, ultimately, by reference to how language is used” (Halliday, 1994, p. xii).

In SFL, language use is not interpreted from forms of words (morphology) and then from forms of sentence structures (syntax) to make meanings like in traditional western linguistics. Instead, SFL approaches language analysis from the perspective of language as a “system of meanings, accompanied by forms through which meanings can be realized” (Halliday, 1994, p. xiv). Language use is not fixed and does not follow pre-determined rules, but rather is dynamic and evolving (Derewianka, 1990). The

complexities of language are understood from the lens of its functions to achieve social purposes. This theoretical lens to language can be an effective way for teachers to educate students about language. An SFL approach to teaching language is not prescriptive. “Rather it is concerned with providing information about the development of effective texts for particular purposes, and providing it at the point of need within the context of real, purposeful language use” (Derewianka, 1990, p. 5). In SFL-informed language instruction, text meanings are context specific, and realized meanings that come from texts, written or oral, are nested in two contexts (Butt, Fay, Feez, Spinks, & Yasllop, 2000). These two contexts, one within the other, are *a context of culture* and a *context of situation* (Butt, et al., 2000). Both affect language use to make meaning.

### **Context of Culture**

The context of culture influences how language is used to achieve social goals and purposes (Eggins, 1994) and also determines the way text is interpreted in its context of situation (Halliday & Hasan, 1989). How speakers or writers use language to achieve varying purposes differs across cultures, but follows a common framework within cultures (Eggins, 1994). SFL broadly defines culture and includes shared practices among members of countries and ethnic groups, institutions like schools, and associations (Droga & Humphrey, 2003). Culture further represents group orientations, such as gender, age, and socio-economic status (Droga & Humphrey, 2003). Regardless of the specific characteristic used to parcel or define members of a specific culture, shared practices among members of a culture function to shape how language is used to achieve

social goals. For example, in Asian cultures, persuasive texts are structured differently than in Anglo-American cultures. Both cultures seek to persuade, but use language differently to achieve this social goal. In Asian-based persuasive texts, the purpose is delayed until the end of the piece of writing, causing it to be inductive rather than deductive...the goal of such discourse organization is to convince the reader of the validity of the writer's position and lead the audience to support the writer's stance, instead of employing overt persuasion, which may be considered to be excessively direct and forceful. (Hinkel, 2002, p. 31)

In Anglo-American texts, evident persuasion is practiced and used to influence the reader to embrace the writer's stance. This stylistic comparison shows how language in texts varies across two cultures despite both forms seeking similar social purposes.

According to SFL theory, a recurrent configuration of language to make meaning and to achieve a specific social purpose is defined as a *genre* (Martin & Rose, 2008). A functional definition of genre is a

staged, goal oriented social processes. Staged, because it usually takes us [referring to writers] more than one step to reach our goals; goal oriented because we feel frustrated if we don't accomplish the final steps...; social because writers shape their texts for readers of particular kinds. (p. 6)

More simply, texts in a culture with similar social purposes share comparable organizations and parallel language features and are classified as belonging to the same genre.

Genre and how the context of culture affects language can inform elementary and secondary teachers' writing instruction. Teacher instruction routinely focuses on genres with four purposes: to tell stories (recounts, fictional narratives), to give instructions (procedure), to organize information (reports, explanations), and to persuade (exposition) (Derewianka, 1990). The varying social purposes of these genres are enacted through language that is contingent on the context of culture and therefore must be explicitly taught to students.

### **Context of Situation**

The context of situation is nested within the context of culture. In this context, situational aspects have linguistic consequences (Butt et al., 2000; Eggins, 1994), but not all aspects of any situation have an effect on linguistics. For example, the weather, individuals' dress, and numerous other situational characteristics may not impact language.

SFL recognizes three aspects of any situation that affect linguistics and compose the register. These are *field*, *tenor*, and *mode* (Butt et al., 2000; Eggins, 1994; Halliday & Hasan, 1989). Field is what is spoken or written about (Butt et al., 2000). Tenor is the relationship between speaker or writer and audience. Mode is the form of text, such as written, oral, or multimodal. Field, tenor, and mode compose the register and are enacted in texts through metafunctions, which are defined as "highly generalized functions language has evolved to serve and which are evidenced in its organization" (Matthiessen,

Teruya & Lam, 2010, p. 138). Three metafunctions in SFL come about through language: *experiential*, *interpersonal*, and *textual* (Halliday & Hasan, 1989).

### *Experiential Function*

The experiential function achieves field and comes from units of meaning expressed in clauses. Most English clauses have a structure that is functionally explained through *participant*, *process*, and *circumstance* (Butt et al, 2000). The participant captures a unit of meaning about “who or what is involved (people, places, things, concepts, etc.)” (Droga & Humphrey, 2003, p. 29). Process is a unit of meaning that expresses “what is going on (events, activities, behaviours or states of being)” (p. 29). Circumstance represents a unit of meaning related to a condition “surrounding these events (where, when, how, with what, etc)” (p. 29). For example, in the clause, *The movie starts at seven*, the participant or unit of meaning about the event or subject is *The movie* (see Table 2.1). The process or unit of meaning about the concept related to the event (in this case the movie) is *starts*. The circumstance or unit of meaning about the condition is *at seven*.

This example illustrates how a clause can be deconstructed to identify its varying units of meaning. It is important to note that although most English clauses having a structure explained through participant, process, and circumstance, not all clauses follow this structure (see Butt et al, 2000).

Table 2.1 *Participant, Process, and Circumstance*

The movie	starts	at seven
<b>Participant</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Circumstance</b>

Teachers' knowledge of how the experiential function of language develops meaning in a clause can support classroom language instruction. The participant, process, and circumstance within a clause can be conceptualized to students as slots and "each of the possible 'slots' in the clause can be described in terms of its meaning potential and in terms of the structures which can realise that potential" (Butt et al., 2000, p. 77). Through this process, students can begin to develop a heightened awareness of how language and specifically clauses are constructed to make meaning.

### *Interpersonal Function*

The interpersonal function attains tenor within the register, and uses language to negotiate relationships between a speaker or writer and audience (Droga & Humphrey, 2003). This metafunction is enacted in text through two main aspects: the meaning exchanged and type of interaction, and the position held by a speaker or writer (Butt et al., 2000). In addition, the tenor is influenced by formality of the used lexis.

The first aspect deals with meaning and how it is transmitted to the audience. Writers and speakers present meanings to the audience through a variety of manners. It can happen through giving and demanding information, such as in reports and recounts, or through demanding goods and services, such as in procedures (Butt et al., 2000). Functionally they are enacted through various types of clauses: declarative, interrogative,

imperative, or exclamation. The type of clause selected to express meaning develops the interaction between speaker or writer and audience (Droga & Humphrey, 2003).

The second aspect deals with the position held by the speaker or writer. SFL defines this as a *modality*. Modalities are the “expressions of indeterminacy between the positive and negative poles, which interpersonally construct the semantic region of uncertainty and lies between ‘yes’ and ‘no’” (Matthiessen, Teruya & Lam, 2010, p. 141). More simply defined, the grammatical structures of text express “different degrees of probability, usuality, obligation or inclination” (Droga & Humphrey, 2003, p. 58). Modality is constructed in text by means of verbs, adverbials, adjectives, nouns, and other language features. For example, speakers or writers’ verb selection (need, should, might) changes the degree of modality in the text (see example in Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 *Degrees of Modality*

High Degree of Modality	<i>I <b>need</b> to become a teacher.</i>
Medium Degree of Modality	<i>I <b>should</b> become a teacher.</i>
Low Degree of Modality	<i>I <b>might</b> become a teacher.</i>

Teachers’ understanding of the interpersonal function can enhance language classroom instruction with students. For instance, teachers’ instruction can focus on types of clauses, such as declarative, interrogative, or imperative, to express meaning.

Furthermore, teachers could educate students regarding how types of clauses not only achieve the experiential function, but also affect the relationship between the speaker or the writer and audience. In addition, knowledge of this metafunction informs teachers’

instruction about how language use (e.g. verbs and adjectives) affects position or modality.

### *Textual Function*

The textual function enacts the mode within the register. This metafunction uses language to organize the experiential and interpersonal meanings in a coherent manner within texts (Butt et al., 2000; Matthiessen, Teruya & Lam, 2010). Text cohesion is developed through a variety of grammatical resources. They include theme and rheme, paragraph preview (topic sentences), nominalization, reference ties, ellipsis, lexical ties, and text connectives (see Droga & Humphrey, 2003). All grammatical resources are defined in a functional way (Halliday, 1985).

The grammatical resource theme and rheme is prevalent in SFL and function to develop meaning in clauses and enact text cohesion. Theme is “the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that with which the clause is concerned” (Halliday, 1985, p. 38). The theme is developed by the rheme. For example, in the clause, *The cat ran across the street to get away from the dog*. The theme is *The cat* and is the focus of the clause. The rheme is *ran across the street to get away from the dog* and develops the meaning of the theme. Consequently, a clause to make meaning “consists of a Theme accompanied by a Rheme; and the structure is expressed by the order— whatever is chosen as the Theme is put first” (Halliday, 1985, p. 38).

Text cohesion is contingent on the appropriate element being selected as the theme in a clause. Thus,



at the more micro-level, the flow of information in the text is controlled by the choice of theme...at the text level, the beginning of the clauses focus our attention on how the topic is being developed. This helps to make the text coherent and to enable the reader to predict how the text is unfolding.

(Derewianka, 1998, p. 104)

For instance, in the clause, *A dog plays with a boy* (Table 2.3), the theme of the clause is *A dog* and the rheme is *plays with a boy*. In this clause the concern is *A dog*. However, the focus of the clause can be changed by restructuring the clause to *A boy plays with a dog*. In this newly formed clause, the theme becomes *A boy* and the rheme turns into *plays with a dog*.

Table 2.3 *Theme and Rheme*

<i>A dog</i>	<i>plays with a boy.</i>
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Rheme</b>
<i>A boy</i>	<i>plays with a dog.</i>
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Rheme</b>

It is important to note that both clauses are syntactically correct, but the appropriate clause to use is contingent on the text's purpose or concern and thus is the deciding factor for the speaker or writer in selecting which clause to implement.

Teachers' comprehension of the textual function can enrich language classroom instruction with students. For instance, instruction focused on theme and rheme can develop students' awareness of how text cohesion is achieved. When students lack comprehension of theme and rheme, their writing is often comprised of clauses that lead

to inefficient progress with a topic. Most often this is due to the text containing too many themes, which results in an underdeveloped topic and a text that is holistically difficult for a reader to comprehend (Butt et al., 2000). Teachers who explicitly instruct students on how language functions to develop text cohesion can enable students to construct texts that effectively develop a topic and are less problematic to read.

### **The Metafunctions' Roles in Writing Instruction**

The context of situation affects text and has linguistic consequences on the register, which is comprised of the field, tenor, and mode (Butt et al., 2000; Eggins, 1994). In SFL, linguistic actions on the register are enacted by metafunctions: experiential, interpersonal, and textual. These metafunctions create textual meaning. In the words of Halliday (1994):

Following from this, the fundamental components of **meaning** in language are functional components. All languages are organized around two main kinds of meaning, the 'ideational'[experiential] or reflective, and the 'interpersonal' or active. These components, called 'metafunctions' in the terminology of the present theory, are the manifestations in the linguistic system of the two very general purposes which underlies all uses of language: (i) to understand the environment (ideational), and (ii) to act on the others in it (interpersonal). Combined with these is a third metafunctional component, the 'textual', which breathes relevance into the other two. (p. xiii)

Teachers' comprehension of metafunctions and how they enact meaning in text can lead to robust classroom language instruction. This instruction can focus on clause construction, language use to achieve position or modality, and grammatical resources to achieve text cohesion. Explicit language instruction that reviews these seminal topics can enable students to more effectively use language to achieve social purposes.

### **A Pedagogical Cycle to Guide Teachers' Classroom Instruction**

SFL theory is not a schooling program and therefore does not provide teachers with a developed curriculum and mode of instruction. To facilitate classroom instruction, linguists Jim Martin and Joan Rothery, in collaboration with school teachers, constructed a *pedagogical cycle*. This cycle is developed from insights acquired from child language studies involving adults teaching children language (Rothery, 1996). Study findings informed the cycle's construction, which is specifically developed to foster students' writing development.

The pedagogical cycle is made up of four stages: *negotiating field*, *deconstruction*, *joint construction*, and *independent construction* (Rothery, 1996). According to Rothery (1996), "the labeling of the stages of the cycle gives teachers and students a metalanguage for the pedagogy" (p. 103). This metalanguage enhances teacher instruction, which occurs across all stages of the cycle (Rothery, 1996).

In the first stage, called *negotiating field*, a teacher and his or her students articulate the field, assess prior knowledge, and then explore it in-depth. The label given to this stage is rather misleading, as across all stages of the pedagogical cycle knowledge

comes from negotiating the field of study. Some scholars have re-labeled this stage “preparation” (see Derewianka, 1990, p. 6). Regardless of the specific name of the stage, students acquire an understanding of a field’s content and how language is used. These two aspects are inseparable and must be taught in conjunction.

In the second stage labeled *deconstruction*, students actively engage in the deconstruction of a mentor text. This text is of the genre related to the field of study. In this process, students acquire a developed understanding of how a genre is structured and how language functions to make meaning and achieve a social purpose. Students’ understanding of a genre emerges through rich conversations with peers and teachers about mentor texts.

After deconstruction of text, the third stage called *joint construction* ensues. In this stage, teachers and students’ knowledge of a genre is enacted through collaborative construction of a text. Prior to this endeavor, students must “build up the field knowledge they will draw on in jointly constructing a text. In the early stages the students need to be taught research strategies such as locating sources of information, notemaking and summarising” (Rothery, 1996, p. 104). When carrying out joint construction of text, teachers guide text development, offer additional information, and provide explicit language instruction to students. This aids students’ writing development and results in a jointly constructed text that achieves its purpose.

In the final stage of the pedagogical cycle, defined as *independent construction*, students individually create a text. During this time, teachers continue to provide explicit language instruction to students in the form of both whole class and individual lessons.

This pedagogical cycle is used to teach writing in Australia. According to Rothery (1996), teachers in Australia “have tested it in their practice and found that it provides strategies for planning, teaching and assessment which enable them to work productively with students to promote development in language and learning” (p. 107). In the United States, however, this pedagogical cycle is still in its infancy.

### **SFL Informs Teachers’ Language Instruction**

For the past three decades in Australia, elementary and secondary teachers have used SFL to enhance literacy instruction (Gebhard, 2010). Initiatives focused on SFL-based pedagogy are often referred to as belonging to the ‘Sydney School,’ in reference to Hallidayan educators in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Sydney (Martin, 2009). These scholars further SFL theory and develop initiatives to inform teachers’ instruction in schools. A key part of SFL-based school initiatives is genre (see Martin, 2009) and explicit teaching of language to address needs of ELLs, disadvantaged students, and Aboriginal students (Christie, 1999).

In the United States, elementary and secondary teachers do not use SFL widely to teach writing and language development. Instead, most teachers remain unprepared to make the language demands of school unambiguous to students (Schleppegrell, 2004). For instance, in regards to academic texts, a teacher “typically devotes little attention to the language demands of such texts beyond word recognition, fluency training, vocabulary development, and background-knowledge-building activities” (Fang, Schleppegrell, & Cox, 2006, p. 248). This lack of explicit language instruction

perpetuates inequalities among members of different social classes in society (Schleppegrell, 2004). To enact social change, teachers can use SFL as a theoretical lens to teach language and specifically writing. SFL-based instruction can effectively educate students in the language demands of school genres and foster proficiency in writing (Christie & Derewianka, 2008).

Research on teachers using SFL in elementary and secondary school contexts suggests that this pedagogy supports teachers and students' literacy practices (Gebhard & Martin, 2011). One study examined how teachers in two elementary classrooms in Australia mediated students' linguistic ability in English with the content-based discourse demands of science (Gibbons, 2003). The two classrooms were comprised of 60 mostly ELL students between the ages of nine and ten. The study documented how the teachers assisted students in constructing the appropriate register for class responses. Findings indicated the teachers did this by building "linguistic bridges" for students that connected students' languages to the academic discourse of science (p. 257).

The teachers mediated language in four primary ways: "mode shifting through recasting, signaling to learners how to reformulate, indicating the need for reformulation, and recontextualising personal knowledge" (p. 257). In the first way, mode shifting through recasting, a teacher listens to a student's oral response and then reiterates the response back to the student. The newly constructed response follows a similar grammatical construction of the student's original response, but everyday language used by the student is recast into academic language by the teacher.

In the second way, signaling to learners how to reformulate, a teacher “signals a need for clarification [to the student’s response] and supplies a recoded version of the student’s meaning only after the learner has had an opportunity for self-correction” (Gibbons, 2003, p. 261). In the third way, indicating the need for reformulation, a teacher makes it clear to students that their response must be more “registrally appropriate” (p. 263). The teacher then provides a sufficient amount of time for students to reformulate their responses. For example, a student’s response may be reformulated to include clearer reasoning in discourse in order to better support an audience’s comprehension.

In the final way, recontextualising personal knowledge, a teacher explicitly educates students on how to take a science experiment finding and express it in a more registrally appropriate manner, which in the context of these two classrooms is generalization. Generalization is the process of taking findings and applying them to a larger setting not dependent on the “here-and-now context” (p. 266). In this case, a matrix is used to capture the discourse of science specifically in regards to language and content. Through this process, students are able to identify how the register changes when findings are written in a generalized manner.

This study by Gibbons (2003) displays how SFL-informed instruction can promote language development in classrooms. In this case, the teachers used functional grammar to explicitly build linguistic bridges between discourses for students, while teaching what is registrally appropriate. This type of instruction teaches students how to navigate and use language across a variety of contexts.

Another study examined teachers using SFL to support ELLs' learning. Twenty-one mainstream teachers, from three urban middle schools in California, attended a week-long professional development seminar. The professional development focused on an SFL-informed genre-based approach to teaching response-to-literature writing (Aguirre-Munoz, Park, Amabisca, & Boscardin, 2008). The training educated teachers on the varying linguistic choices ELLs make when writing. Prior to the professional development, teachers' feedback on ELLs' writing focused primarily on "spelling, mechanical errors, punctuation, and grammatical errors (e.g. noun-verb-agreement errors) in a manner that did not focus students on improving meaning" (p. 307).

A change in teachers' responses to students ensued after receiving the SFL-informed genre-based professional development. Teachers' feedback shifted and became more focused on "developing students' linguistic resources appropriate for academic language...such as expanded noun phrases, conjunctions and transitions, as well as clausal units to examine thematic progression" (p. 308). Also, analysis showed a statistically significant "increase in sensitivity to the identification of strengths and weaknesses related to field, mode, and tenor characteristics of expository texts" in teacher feedback following the professional development (Aguirre-Munoz, Park, Amabisca, & Boscardin, 2008, p. 312).

Classroom instruction also was affected. One-third of the teachers implemented some aspect of functional grammar in their classrooms when teaching academic language. In conclusion, this study is highly suggestive that SFL enhances teachers' classroom instruction to more effectively address the language needs of ELLs.



### **Fostering SFL-based Teacher Pedagogy Through Professional Collaboration**

SFL is not extensively used by teachers in the United States. In fact, only a few cases exist in this country of teachers using SFL in elementary and secondary schools. In the forthcoming section, three professional collaborations are described. In all cases, collaboration occurred among university faculty and school teachers. Through these relationships SFL-pedagogy was enacted.

#### *California History Project*

The first collaboration involves middle and high school history teachers from the California History Project in collaboration with linguistic scholars from numerous institutes of higher education working collectively to use SFL to develop curriculum and instruction to support the academic needs of ELLs in history. According to Achugar, Schleppegrell, and Oteiza (2007), language scholars and leaders in this project:

The work was guided by the notions that students need to develop literacy in important and authentic curriculum contexts, that the notion of genre is a way of highlighting patterns in the way language is used to write history, and that focusing on grammar as a meaning-making resource and using a functional analysis of grammar is a means to discussing and critiquing texts. (p. 14)

Observations of history classes showed teachers posed many questions to students about texts. For example, they asked: *What happened? Who was involved? Where and when did it happen? Why did it happen?* (Schleppegrell & Achugar, 2003). Observations further

indicated teachers did not provide needed language instruction to students, specifically ELLs, about how language is used in history texts to make meaning, which limited students' acquisition of content. Through the lens of SFL, teachers developed language activities to support students' learning.

During a summer institute, project members deconstructed texts to identify key language features that make up the "discourse of history" (Schleppegrell & Oliveira, 2006, p. 257). Project members then developed activities that focused on four aspects of language present in history texts. The first aspect was on types of processes in clauses. By indentifying verbs in writing, students could better understand "when authors are writing about events, when they are giving background information, and when they are giving opinions or telling what others have said" (Schleppegrell & Achugar, 2003, p. 23). The second aspect was on participants. It centered on nouns and noun groups associated with action verbs as well as "the different kinds of power relations between participants in historical events, which helps them [students] understand who or what is acting, and who is being acted on" (p. 23). The third aspect was on authors' or historians' point of view. It involved examination of verb types (thinking, feeling, or saying verbs) used to express meaning. The fourth aspect was on text organization: how the text was "presented as a series of events in time or as a series of causes and effects" (p. 25). These four language foci, taught through activities, enabled students to indentify how language functions in history and historical texts.

This case shows how teachers can pragmatically use SFL to inform instruction. It further demonstrates how a focus on language in the content areas can support all

students' learning, and can significantly benefit ELLs' learning. During this project, higher education scholars involved with this endeavor advocated for content-based instruction (CBI) (Schleppegrell, Achugar, & Oteiza, 2004). CBI is an approach to teaching ELLs that "attempts to combine language with disciplinary learning, suggesting that teachers can build students' knowledge of grade-level concepts in content areas at the same time students are developing English proficiency" (p. 67). Content-based and language-based instruction can both occur through the instructional lens of SFL, as demonstrated by the teachers in the California History Project.

*Access to Critical Content and English Language Acquisition (ACCELA) Alliance*

The second collaboration occurs in the Access to Critical Content and English Language Acquisition (ACCELA) alliance. This alliance was established in 2002. The ACCELA is a school-university partnership between two urban school districts and the University of Massachusetts with a focus on professional development (Gebhard, Willett, Caicedo & Piedra, 2011). Teachers in this alliance attended courses at the university and worked collaboratively with university faculty, some of whom are leading scholars in SFL.

An ethnographic case study of Amy Piedra, a fourth grade teacher at Lincoln Elementary School and member of ACCELA, recorded how one educator taught personal narrative using SFL. The case documents three approaches by Amy to teach this genre to her students over the course of an academic year. SFL did not inform the first of her three instructional approaches to teaching personal narrative. The study also captured how

Eloy, an academically struggling ELL in Amy's class, developed competency in narrative writing over the course of the year.

At Lincoln Elementary School, teachers had a prescribed curriculum. Amy's first curriculum unit required her to teach the key features of the genre of personal narrative. In her first approach to teaching personal narrative, she followed the prescribed curriculum exactly, which did not utilize SFL. The curriculum text had a broad definition of the genre as an "interesting event or experience in the writer's life" (p. 98), and listed features of personal narrative as using first person, having a beginning, middle, and end, and containing "detail" and "vivid words" (p. 98). Despite fidelity to the curriculum, Amy's instruction did not yield desired results in students' writing. For instance, Eloy's first written text about karate class was not a personal narrative but rather an expository text. It contained some elements of narrative like the marker "One day" but then shifted to explain the different types of karate moves rather than creating a narrative with a sequence of events (p. 98). Eloy's writing indicated that he did not have a well-developed understanding of this genre.

During the school year, Amy was enrolled at the university through ACCELA in a course entitled, "Teaching Content for Language Development." In the course, she learned SFL theory. Based on her coursework, Amy attempted to use SFL in her second approach to teach personal narrative. Also informed by her coursework, she used more cultural texts that might resonate with her students, most of whom were Puerto Rican.

In this second approach, Amy had a greater instructional emphasis on structural and linguistic features of narrative. Amy identified improvements in students' narrative

writing, but she concluded that they still were not at the level she desired. In interviews with the researchers, Amy “recognized that she still was unclear about how to use SFL to design instruction, provide feedback, and assess students’ writing” (p. 101). To improve her practice over the course of the year, Amy began to learn more about SFL and continued to take ACCELA courses. She also had numerous conversations with university faculty members Meg Gebhard and Juan Pablo about SFL and writing instruction.

In Amy’s third approach to teaching personal narrative, she used SFL to guide her instruction. Her instruction had five goals. The first goal was to use texts that are culturally relevant to her students (Gebhard, Willett, Caicedo & Piedra, 2011). The second goal was to engage students in a linguistic analysis of a text to understand how setting, character development and other features are constructed by the author. The third goal was to teach temporal and logical connectives to make students’ texts more coherent. The fourth goal was to make explicit to students the difference between oral and written language. The fifth goal was to model her own writing as exemplar texts (Gebhard, Willett, Caicedo & Piedra, 2011). It is important to note that a tremendous amount of class time was devoted to helping students deconstruct mentor text. Students also engaged in analyzing their own writing. Through these processes, text structure and language features were made explicit.

Analysis of Eloy’s final draft of his personal narrative shows he understands many aspects of this genre. At the discourse level,

Eloy's narrative included a brief orientation (e.g. *Ones my brother, sister and I were at the church dance*); a complication and sequence of events (e.g. *we went to see a fight. But I didn't know that my sister was the one that was going to fight*); a resolution (e.g., *My sister came back from juvenile jail*); and an evaluation comment that shifts from the narrative past to the present and brings the story to a close (e.g., *now we are happy she's back*). (p. 105-106)

At the lexicogrammatical level, "he exhibited greater control over a more written as opposed to oral register when compared to the narrative he produced during unit one...[and] he initiated far fewer clauses with 'and'" ( p. 106). Eloy's text also indicated his ability to use

adverbial and adjectival clauses to pack more information into single clauses while also managing more complex aspects of tense (e.g., *But I didn't know that my sister was the one that was going to fight; my aunt was at a party near w[h]ere my sister was fighting*). (p. 106)

In addition to his increased ability to use these linguistic features, Eloy's narrative also demonstrated where he needed further instruction. His text showed he lacked the ability to control for tense, punctuation, and dialogue. Despite these issues, Eloy's writing demonstrated overall growth, not only in this particular genre, but also in regards to differences in register between oral and written language.

The case study of Amy documents how a teacher used SFL-based instruction to improve the writing of an ELL student. SFL functioned as a theoretical lens for Amy to

examine text. An enlightening “moment for her was how writing and analyzing her own texts with student made her much more aware of the linguistic features of narratives in a way that she could transform into concrete teaching practices” (Gebhard, Willett, Caicedo & Piedra, 2011, p. 106-107). At the core of her instruction with SFL in the third approach is a well-developed understanding of the genre of personal narrative, which was required in order to successfully teach in this manner. A comprehension of the genre was not needed in her first approach that used the prescriptive curriculum.

Another important component to this case study is that Amy did not learn SFL and implement it on her own. She had ongoing support from university scholars through coursework and professional conversations to inform writing instruction. Scholars should not overlook this collaborative support, which informs part of the research agenda for this dissertation.

Another case of a teacher using SFL-informed instruction in ACCELA alliance is Wendy Seger, a fifth grade teacher, who used SFL-informed instruction to teach ELLs in her classroom how to effectively use academic language in persuasive writing (Gebhard, Harman, & Seger, 2007). Wendy applied SFL to language arts as a way to “unpack academic language” (p. 423). Her explicit instruction to students reviewed many aspects of academic language, such as lexical (e.g., modal verbs) and syntactic patterns (e.g., if/then syntactic structures). When reviewing these elements of academic language, students engaged in an authentic writing task. They wrote persuasive letters to their principal to convince him to reintroduce morning recess, which was suspended to make additional time for standardized test preparation.

Analyses of final drafts of persuasive letters by Julia, an ELL in Wendy's class, showed a heightened awareness of language (Gebhard, Harman, & Seger, 2007). This level of awareness was not present in Julia's initial drafts. Her final letters displayed language indicative of a writer who makes linguistic choices based on an understanding of academic language, audience, and context. The texts also contain features of the persuasive genre that Wendy taught, and included: an opening statement, thesis, arguments, evaluation, and conclusion. This development led the researchers to conclude:

In analyzing Julia's texts, from her free-write to her final letter, we see a movement away from a sophisticated cartoon-like register to a more academic use of language. In these later drafts, Julia uses organizational structures, syntactic patterns, and word choices to convey urgency in a more diplomatic, yet authoritative tone. (p. 428)

This case suggests SFL-informed instruction fosters ELLs' understanding of academic language.

### *A School-University Partnership*

The third collaboration occurs in yet another variation of a school-university partnership. The partnership is comprised of two urban elementary schools with high ELL populations and a university. The case study documents how Ms. Rallis, a kindergarten teacher in the partnership, taught fictional narrative using SFL-informed instruction over a course of three weeks (Brisk & Zisselsberger, 2011).



Ms. Rallis' initial instruction focused on structural elements of the genre, and included orientation, complication, resolution, and ending. These elements were taught to students through reading and writing instruction by deconstructing mentor texts. When deconstructing mentor texts, students explicitly identified varying language features in texts. The deconstructing method was introduced to Ms. Rallis through professional development conducted by university stakeholders in the partnership. Ms. Rallis also modeled the genre of fictional narrative through her own writing. To further develop students' awareness of the genre, Ms. Rallis taught structural elements through oral storytelling with puppets. During storytellings, students would specifically name story elements. Genre purpose and audience were also explicitly taught to students.

Analyses of three bilingual students' writing in Ms. Rallis' class indicated that these students were highly influenced by the teacher's writing. According to the researchers, "Students were perceptive and able to imitate what the teacher had done and to include the elements modeled and discussed..." (p. 121). Each student had varied degrees of success with the structural elements. However, across all students' writing it was deemed that "the close resemblance of the teacher's modeled text appears to have influenced some of the cultural contextual features for students' writing" (p. 123). These findings suggest that SFL-informed instruction benefited the language development of these bilingual students.

Writing approaches that use SFL as a theoretical lens to guide language instruction take time to have teachers implement in schools (Brisk & Zisselsberger, 2011). Teacher educators should adhere to five recommendations when collaborating

with teachers to use SFL (Brisk & Zisselsberger, 2011). The first recommendation is that professional development must provide SFL theory and a link to teachers' practice. The second recommendation is to remind teachers that genre "cannot be presented as a set of fixed rules" (p. 123). Context must always be considered as it affects language choices. The third recommendation is that teaching of genres and discussion of language in professional development should explicitly connect with all content areas. The fourth recommendation is to foster a "collegial attitude" among university and school stakeholders that promotes learning (p. 124). The last recommendation is to devote an extensive amount of time to SFL theory and its application to teaching. Ongoing teacher professional development, it appears, is required for successful use of SFL theory in the classroom.

### **The Teaching of Writing and Language in Schools**

The aforementioned school-university collaborations (see Achugar, Schleppegrell & Oteiza, 2007; Brisk & Zisselsberger, 2011; Gebhard, Willett, Caicedo & Piedra, 2011; Schleppegrell & Achugar, 2003) taught writing using SFL. However, explicit language instruction often does not occur in schools (Knapp & Watkins, 2005).

Many reasons exist for this lack of focused language instruction. One reason stems from the Progressivism of the 1970s and 1980s (Knapp & Watkins, 2005). During this era, many teachers viewed language acquisition as "an entirely natural individualistic phenomenon and thus relegated language learning to the personal domain" (p. 14). Since language is thought to be acquired naturally, teachers did not explicitly teach language to

students. Rather, teachers engaged students in various writing activities. Through these “learning experiences”, students were to acquire the “appropriate language” for writing (Knapp & Watkins, 2005, p. 14). This approach to language development, in some capacity, has continued in schools.

Contrary to this approach, research shows that clear teaching of language must occur in order to foster students’ knowledge of academic language (Solomon & Rhodes, 1995; Wheeler & Swords, 2004). This can support student learning across the curriculum subjects. In addition, research identifies that robust writing instruction encompasses the teaching of various textual elements, uses mentor texts to illustrate key textual features, and occurs in a language rich classroom environment (Pressley, Mohan, Fingeret, Reffitt, Raphael-Bogaert, 2007). Research further indicates that teachers need a well developed knowledge of language and linguistics in order to effectively teach language (Fillmore & Snow, 2000).

The belief that students acquire language naturally, without explicit language instruction, continues to exist in schools. This influences the approaches teachers use in their writing instruction. However, this is not the dominant paradigm.

### **A Process Approach to the Teaching of Writing**

Currently, a process approach to the teaching of writing is the dominant paradigm in education (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006). The process approach originally conceptualized the writing process as an activity (Bracewell, 1980). The activity linearly progressed through writing stages (see Day, 1947; Rohman, 1965), including the

prewriting stage, the writing stage, and the rewriting stage (see Rohman, 1965). Thus it was perceived that the process consisted of a writer constructing a text by transitioning from one stage to the next.

In accordance with this approach, students' writing ability was assessed through how well they could complete the various stages of writing (Flower & Hayes, 1981). Consequently, "teachers, charged with the duty to improving children's written language, relied primarily on the intervention of motivating the student to write well, and then evaluated the effectiveness of their motivating procedures by examining the subsequently written text" (Bracewell, 1980, p. 400).

Over time, through research, the profession developed a more robust understanding of writing and language acquisition. This led to the process approach transitioning from a stage-based to a cognitive-based approach to writing (see Bracewell, 1980; Flower & Hayes, 1981). Presently, the writing process is no longer seen as a behavioral activity carried out through linear stages, but rather as a "mental recursive process coupled with procedural strategies for completing writing tasks" (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006, p. 277). In accordance with this new way of thinking, an emphasis has been placed on mental processes required when students are writing (Flower & Hayes, 1981).

The writing process involves procedural and cognitive strategies. Educators "assert that writing and the writing process are best understood as complex phenomena that include not only procedural strategies for going through the writing process to generate text but also a multitude of other strategies to develop specific schemata"

(Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006, p. 285). Instruction in writing needs to include the teaching of procedural strategies and strategies that foster students' linguistic decisions, which are required when writing. The latter arguably is the most difficult to teach. It includes strategies

to help writers understand the context for writing, to tap general background knowledge and reading ability, to sharpen cognitive processes for problem solving, to create emotional dispositions and attitudes about writing, to develop micro-level understanding about organization, conventions, cohesion, audience, genre, and topic to name a few.

(Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006, p. 285)

Students must be educated in these strategies in order to be effective writers.

Instruction that explicitly teaches aspects of text, such as organization, cohesion and other elements like those mentioned by Pritchard and Honeycutt (2006), may be especially beneficial for developing bilingual learners' writing development. However, little research exists on best practices for writing instruction for bilingual learners (Fitzgerald, 2006). One reason for this lack of research is that the writing development process is not completely understood even for monolingual writers. According to Applebee (2000):

At present, writing development remains ill-defined and difficult to assess.

It is confounded with language development more generally, as well with the development of content knowledge in particular domains. (Even the best writers will write unsuccessfully in a completely unfamiliar domain.)

Indeed, performance on most of the components of writing achievement

varies with topic and type of writing: vocabulary, syntactical patterns, fluency, patterns of errors, organizing structures, and even writing processes will all vary from one topic or type of writing to another. (p. 103)

The complex nature of this process makes it difficult to isolate writing ability from other aspects of language development, such as oral language proficiency. Despite not having a full understanding of the writing development process, available research does indicate that this process is irregular and not linear (see Edelsky, 1982; Newkirk, 1985).

The irregularity is attributable to the writing development process being less about learning individual skills and more about reorganizing systems or interconnected linguistic features used to produce meaning. According to Edelsky and Jilbert (1985), “Examining the idea of textness reveals even stronger evidence against the idea that children accumulate separate and separable skills in favor of the idea that they construct and successively reorganize total systems” (p. 63). This provides potential insight into why a student may successfully write in one genre and then unsuccessfully write in another, since each genre produces meaning in different ways. Research also shows that young ELLs “can write [in English] before being able to read, write before being orally fluent, and use drawing to explore their thoughts” (Samway, 2006, p. 26).

More research about writing development related to bilingual learners and ELLs is needed in order to better understand how to best instructionally support their writing growth in schools. This is a significant challenge facing educational leaders (National Writing Project & Nagin, 2006). Given that the “racial and ethnic composition of

American public schools is rapidly and dramatically changing” (Valdes & Castellon, 2011, p. 24), educators need to better understand the writing development process to meet the needs of the changing pupil population in schools. Meeting the needs of bilingual and ELL students is particularly difficult since

these students, from many countries and with many languages, are by no means a homogeneous group. Even in their native languages, some ELLs write above grade level while others have limited literacy; and some students’ native language lacks a written form entirely. (National Writing Project & Nagin, 2006, p. 39)

Given this lack of research to guide teachers’ pedagogy, researchers should study scholarship on bilingual students to inform their writing instruction in schools with diverse student populations. Writing instruction can also be informed by linguistic theory.

### **Linguistic Theory in the Teaching of Writing**

A properly developed understanding of the English language enables students to make the appropriate linguistic decisions when writing. Knowledge of the English language can be fostered through instruction in grammar. The effect of grammar instruction on student learning has been debated (see Aguirre-Munoz, Park, Amabisca & Boscardin, 2008; Hartwell, 1985). Debates most often stem from how *grammar* is defined. For the purpose of this dissertation, grammar is defined as “systematic description, analysis, and articulation of the formal patterns of a language” (Smith,

Cheville & Hillocks, 2006, p. 263). This definition differs from a traditional definition involving the parts of speech.

Grammars of language come from linguistic theories. The grammars function as theoretical lenses to describe, analyze, and explain language. Three grammars that have influenced the teaching of writing in the English language are structural grammar, transformational-generative grammar (TGG), and SFL (Smith, Cheville & Hillocks, 2006).

#### *The Grammars Views of Language*

Structural grammar views language as a “conglomeration of speech acts” (Derwing, 1973, p. 29). Moreover, language is viewed as a static system made up of interconnected parts. It focuses on the construction of a sentence, through the parts of speech.

TGG contests this view of language. Rather, TGG advocates “to see it instead as an abstract system of organizing principles which *underlies* these acts” (Derwing, 1973, p. 29). According to Chomsky (1957), the founder of TGG,

a grammar of English is based on a finite corpus of utterances (observations), and it will contain certain grammatical rules (laws) stated in terms of the particular phonemes, phrases, etc., of English (hypothetical constructs). These rules express structural relations among the sentences of the corpus and the indefinite number of sentences generated by the grammar beyond the corpus (predictions). (p. 49)



TGG strives to develop transformational rules or organizing principles for language that can explain “native speakers’ intuitive knowledge and use of grammar” (Smith, Cheville & Hillocks, 2006, p. 267).

Similarly, SFL identifies language as containing an internal organization (Halliday, 1978). While TGG recognizes the internal organization as coming from pre-determined universal rules (Chomsky, 1957), SFL identifies the internal organization as socially and culturally constructed and contingent on purpose (Eggins, 1994). According to SFL, internal organizations or patterning of language emerge from how a culture uses language (Eggins, 1994; Halliday, 1994). These recurrent configurations of language are genres (Martin & Rose, 2008).

SFL views language as dynamic and evolving (Derewianka, 1990), rather than static and predetermined, like structural grammar. SFL identifies language as existing in context (Halliday, 1978). Therefore, it is a sociocultural theory of the study of language (Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Hasan, 1989).

### *Advantage of Using SFL*

The advantages of using SFL to inform the teaching of writing stem from its focus on function and context. In SFL, knowledge of language is derived from its function—how language is used to make meaning. The focus on meaning is different from structural grammar and TGG. These grammars do not focus on meaning. Instead, structural grammar and TGG acquire knowledge of language primarily from analyses of native speakers’ utterances. Analyses primarily focus on the parceling of the parts of speech (see

Mellon, 1969; Searles, 1965) and do not emphasize the function of language. This difference among these grammars is significant with respect to the teaching of writing.

Language instruction should focus on the function of language. Instruction that does not focus on how language is used to make meaning is inadequate. Furthermore, this type of instruction can easily confuse students. This stems from the complexity of the English language. In English, the parts of speech can be modified through a conversion or a functional shift, “which permits a word to be transferred to almost any function the user wishes it to perform” (Searles, 1965, p. 3). For example, the words, *green*, *yellow*, and *orange* can be either used as nouns or adjectives. How these words are used determine their part of speech. Grammatical usage is contingent on the desired meaning expressed by the writer or speaker.

SFL does not gloss over form or syntax. Rather, “linguistic form is best viewed as functional in nature” (Painter, 1989, p. 20). According to SFL, grammatical structures are constructed through the process of meaning making. Thus, they are not dichotomized. In this way, SFL is unique from other grammars as “rather than form preceding function, the two are seen as mutually dependent” (Painter, 1989, p. 21).

The advantage of SFL is that it provides this functional approach to language. Writing becomes a cognitive process that involves linguistic decision making by the writer to effectively achieve a social purpose. Instruction that views the writing process in this way may more effectively support student learning. For example,

since the grammatical system is functional, error of ‘form’ made by students (a different matter from mother-tongue dialect differences) can be

seen as arising from problems in creating particular kinds of meaning in context. Since form is functional, the attention of teacher and pupil should be directed to what the language user is or should be trying to do, and how this be effectively achieved linguistically, rather than on mere 'correction' of forms. (Painter, 1989, p. 62)

Reasons for linguistic decisions are evident given the purpose and context for the writing. These reasons can be made transparent to students through instruction and engagement in authentic writing tasks.

Another advantage to using SFL is that knowledge of language is acquired through involvement in authentic language-based activities, such as report writing. Other approaches to writing that embrace structural grammar and TGG often teach language through inauthentic language-based tasks, such as sentence combining (see Mellon, 1969). Teachers

cannot realistically expect children to develop their linguistic resources further unless they are engaged in tasks in which they achieve something by means of language. Our approach should not be based on attempts to 'teach' language items that have not arisen in any functional context for the learner, in the expectation that they will then be available to the child to use when an appropriate opportunity arise. (Painter, 1989, p. 62)

SFL has an advantage over other grammars as language is taught through authentic writing endeavors. Through these experiences, students receive explicit language

instruction from teachers, while applying their knowledge of language to achieve a specific purpose.

### **Educational Change**

Educators are endeavoring to improve writing instruction by using SFL theory in the American educational system (e.g., Achugar, Schleppegrell & Oteiza, 2007; Gebhard et al. 2011; Brisk & Zisselsberger, 2011). This is promising given the state of writing instruction in schools. However, it is not sufficient to merely have a viable theory to inform curriculum and instruction. How change is enacted in schools must also be understood in order to more effectively bring about sustainable change to writing pedagogy. Research shows that some change approaches can be detrimental to teachers (Day & Smethen, 2009; Hargreaves, 2003; Little & Bartlett, 2002) and foster a teaching culture that is resistant to change (Goodson, Moore, & Hargreaves 2006; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2008). Therefore, to better understand change initiatives in schools, this section first reviews reform literature regarding processes of restructuring and reculturing. Understanding these two processes can guide reforms. Next, key features of teaching culture are reviewed. It is important to comprehend this culture if sustainable change is to come about in schools.

Finally, the Fourth Way is discussed. This change strategy is new and differs from previous approaches. The Fourth Way seeks to bring about reforms that capitalize on teacher professionalism to develop robust pedagogical practices and foster a teaching culture that is more resilient in adapting to and leading change. These different aspects of

change can inform endeavors to improve writing instruction in the American school system.

### **Restructuring**

During the First Way and Second Way eras efforts to restructure American public education intensified (Elmore, 1990; Murphy, 1991). These stemmed from the public's concern with economic growth, global competitiveness, social justice, and the perceived crisis in the quality of the teaching force (Elmore, 1990). This concern came from Americans' fear that our country was falling behind other developed nations (Murphy, 1991). Published reports at the time further exacerbated these fears (i.e., Carnegie Forum, 1986; Education Commission of the States, 1983; National Commission of Excellence in Education, 1983).

By the late 1980s, *restructuring* was a key word in educational reform literature to represent changes to school organizations (Peterson, McCarthy, & Elmore, 1996). A clear definition of restructuring was not evident despite its wide use (David, 1991; Fink & Stoll, 1998; Peterson, McCarthy & Elmore, 1996; Tyack, 1990). Restructuring in this review is conceptualized as a process of making changes to school structures to improve teacher instruction and student learning.

This process encompasses systemic change in work roles, organizational structures, and relationships among stakeholders (Murphy, 1991). Restructuring is based on an assumption that "changes in school organization and the workplace conditions for teachers will result in changes in teachers' and students' roles and the provision of new

opportunities for student learning in the classroom” (Peterson, McCarthy, & Elmore, 1996, p. 120). This approach views schooling based upon a factory-model, where work is technical, concrete, and formulaic (Miller, 1998). Educational reformers’ reasons for supporting restructuring occurred because structures are visible, such as daily schedules, and that these tangible changes indicate something of significance has occurred; structures are easier to change than other school features; structures can be barriers to learning and thus changes can result in student development and better teaching practices (Elmore, 1995)

Common dimensions of restructuring initiatives and their held assumptions are described by Elmore (1990). In *reforming the core technology of schools* model, restructuring brought about conformity across classrooms and schools. Conformity formed through professional knowledge and best instructional practices. A held assumption in this model was that teaching and learning are predictable, and thus improvements in pedagogy come about through a correct combination of practices given conditions. In *reforming the occupational conditions of teaching* model, restructuring focuses on organization of schools to promote professionalization in the workplace. Elmore (1990) comments,

Among these conditions are a well-defined occupational hierarchy based on knowledge and competence, collegial control of hiring and evaluation, regular access to the knowledge required to cultivate higher levels of competence in practice, and strong lateral ties to professional associations rather than dependence on bureaucratic hierarchy for status. (p. 15-16)

One assumption is teachers' knowledge is comprised of professional understanding and personal judgment. Thus to improve schooling, teachers require access to professional development in order to advance their knowledge. In *reforming the relationship between schools and their clients* model, restructuring facilitates an increase in parent and student choices and school-site management. A held assumption is that success of public schools should be evaluated by how well they meet the demands and requirements of their clients (parents and students). These models illustrate the dimensions and the assumptions common among restructuring initiatives. Variations of these models are present in many of the initiatives.

One study examined three elementary school restructuring approaches over two years to understand the nature of restructuring in relation to its effect on teaching practices in writing (Peterson, McCarthy, & Elmore, 1996). Across the schools, varied aspects of the organizations were updated and included development of new roles for teachers, increased teacher professional development, construction of grade-level teacher teams, creation of multi-age classroom groupings, changes to curriculum and development regarding alternative student assessments. Despite these variations, all aspects of change held a vision or ideology related to student learning.

Four hypotheses regarding school change emerge from study findings. First, teaching and learning are primarily based on teachers' beliefs, understandings, and behaviors in the context of their classrooms. This came from a finding that teachers' writing instruction did not necessarily come from received professional development. Second, changing teachers' practices is mainly a problem of learning, and not a problem

of an organization. This stemmed from the study finding that teachers who identify themselves as learners worked to develop new knowledge to improve their instructional practices. Third, school structures can promote teacher learning of new pedagogical practices, but structures independently do not cause learning. This hypothesis came from the finding that changes to structures facilitated opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively, allowed them to participate in site-based decision-making, and fostered an increased feeling of empowerment. Fourth, successful relations must occur among school structure, teaching practice, and student learning. These relations enable educators to develop and share common views about education and instructional practices and “school structure follows from good practice not vice versa” (p. 149). In conclusion, this study identifies that structural changes to an organization are not on their own sufficient to enact the reform in teachers’ instructional practices that affect student learning.

### **Reculturing**

Reforms that only seek to restructure schools are widely criticized by change scholars (i.e., Darling-Hammond, 1990). Since the 1990s, scholars have advocated for reforms to reculture and restructure schools when bringing about change (Fullan, 1993; Hargreaves, 1995, 1997). Fullan (2001), a prominent scholar in school reform, argues that structural changes are important and can make a difference, but “reculturing is the sine qua non of progress” (p. 44). Central to this argument is a belief that for reform to be effective it must go beyond structural changes and explore the essence of what it means to teach and what stimulates teachers to work (Hargreaves, 1997).



The organizational culture of a school is not easy to define (Fink & Stoll, 1998). A scholar in organizational studies and business management, Schein (2004) defines *organizational culture* as

a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 17)

This culture can be understood as comprised of three levels: artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions. The first level represents aspects of the culture that are visible. An individual can see, hear, and feel these characteristics, for example teachers' routine behaviors. The second level comes through actions taken by members of an organization to a problem and are assumptions regarding what will or will not work. Through this process of action, common beliefs, values, and philosophy become held and shared by members. The third level represents underlying assumptions made up of members' unconscious beliefs and perceptions. These are difficult to alter, but are required for reculturing to occur.

Reculturing in schools involves altering members' held beliefs and perceptions about learning, teaching, and education. This task is not easy, but is required to enact systemic change. Schein (2004) states,

Basic assumptions, like theories-in-use, tend to be nonconfrontable and nondebateable, and hence are extremely difficult to change. To learn

something new in this realm requires us to resurrect, reexamine, and possibly change some of the more stable portions of our cognitive structure...such learning is intrinsically difficult because the reexamination of basic assumptions temporarily destabilizes our cognitive and interpersonal world, releasing large quantities of basic anxiety. (p. 31)

Research on school change often documents initiatives that challenge teachers' professional and personal beliefs and shows tensions and dilemmas teachers encounter during these reforms that can result in high teacher attrition and other negative consequences for teachers (i.e, Little & Bartlett, 2002). Reformers need to be aware of tensions and dilemmas for teachers that emerge during these reculturing initiatives.

These initiatives can benefit teachers and student learning by fundamentally shifting how teachers work in schools. Six shifts in teachers' work in recultured schools have been proposed to improve schooling (Miller, 1998). The first is a move from a focus on the individual to the professional community. Teachers change the norm of isolation evident in traditional schools to norms of collaboration and trust. The second shift alters pedagogical approaches from teaching to learning. Rather than a focus on how to teach, teachers focus on how students learn. The third is from technical to inquiry. Teachers embrace what it means to be a professional and view their work as intellectual. Inquiry is used to investigate problems and to generate professional knowledge. The fourth shift is from control to accountability. Thus, "instead of working as individuals to establish standards of behavior, teachers work together as colleagues to develop standards of learning to which they hold themselves and their students accountable" (p. 531). The fifth

is from a focus on managed work to leadership. Teachers hold leadership roles beyond classrooms and “gain responsibility in areas traditionally reserved for administrators— instruction, assessment, rules, procedures, and governance” (p. 531). The sixth shift is from a focus solely on the classroom to that of the whole school. Teachers become concerned with how to best support and develop the school culture and less centered on their own individual classrooms. These shifts may form a schooling culture that is more focused on collaboration, learning, and shared accountability, which may result in better instructional practices that more effectively support student learning.

### **A Culture of Teaching**

Reforms are often ineffective because they fail to adequately understand school cultures: institutional politics, organizational leadership, community, and the teaching tradition (Sarason, 1971). Sarason, a prominent educational reform scholar, identified relationships and power dynamics that are inherent in school culture and that complicate reform. He advocated for two primary questions to be considered when conceptualizing the change process. Firstly, what knowledge must the change agent have of the target group? And secondly, how does he accurately acquire that knowledge? These questions enable change agents to begin to understand the organizational culture they seek to alter. Research provides some insight into aspects of the teaching culture and should inform reform approaches.

Seminal research on the culture of public school teaching identifies that this culture is entrenched in presentism, conservatism, and individualism (Lortie, 1975).

Presentism captures a process of teachers working in isolation and a tendency to center on short-term goals. Conservatism represents teachers' mistrust of change initiatives and resonates from their strongly held belief in established pedagogical practices. The research further identifies teachers as possessing a heightened level of individualism, which manifests in a desire to work in isolation. These three characteristics are deemed not to exist in isolation of one another, but rather are interrelated and function to reinforce each other within the culture. There is recent evidence that these features of the teaching culture persist. For instance, one recent study determined that large-scale reform efforts can exacerbate presentism in the teaching culture and bring about addictive presentism (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009a). Addictive presentism is driven by increased pressure on teachers to raise student performance. These excessive demands from performance-driven organizations result in teachers becoming too focused on short-term strategies:

instead of building people's confidence to break out of the existing culture of presentism in teaching and to engage in the step-by-step struggle toward long-term goals, the spectacular and affirming success of the short-term strategies entrenched in schools in the culture of presentism even more deeply. They become ends in themselves. (p. 2524)

In conclusion, this study suggests teachers' moral purposes and long-term professional development could be compromised by large-scale reform (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009a). Reformers should consider the cultures they seek to change and be aware of the consequences actions may have on the change participants, particularly teachers.

School restructuring and reculturing are both required to enact sustainable educational change. Restructuring can alter schedules, curriculum, and make other structural changes. These changes can facilitate implementation of initiatives such as professional development and educational collaboration that lead to reculturing. Through interactions with colleagues, educators can share beliefs, values, and philosophies about teaching, learning, and best instructional practices. This process can enact pedagogical change in schools that improves instruction, promotes student learning and empowers teachers. Further benefits could also include changes to the values and beliefs of teachers that ameliorate undesirable aspects of the teaching culture.

### **The Fourth Way of Change**

Effective change processes cause structural and cultural changes to schools. A foundational component to reform is teachers, as “teachers are the ultimate arbiters of educational change. The classroom door is the open portal to innovation or the raised drawbridge that holds innovation at bay. No plan for sustainable educational change can ignore or bypass the teacher” (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009b, p. 88). Second Way approaches continue to drive reform in American education. As previously discussed, these initiatives are often detrimental to teachers and new change orthodoxy is needed.

Internationally, some jurisdictions such as England and Ontario, Canada have embraced Third Way change strategies. In this approach, teachers’ professional judgment is valued, but reform is driven by imposed government performance targets and standardized assessments that are levers for change (Hargreaves, 2009). In schools “what

often transpires is a hyperactive professionalism where educators rush around, energetically and enthusiastically delivering the government's narrowly defined targets and purposes, rather than also developing and realizing inspiring purposes of their own" (p. 19). Teacher collaboration and inquiry are promoted, but seldom center on professional discussions about teaching and learning. Rather, they focus on less professional tasks during collaborations, such as test preparation schedules and consequences of pressures stemming from performance targets. Instead of the American education system using this change way, an inclusive way to change is proposed, and is entitled the Fourth Way (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009b). This new approach may better promote teacher professionalism and develop professional learning communities allowing teachers to construct knowledge, skills, and understanding. This process leads teachers towards development of new approaches to teaching and learning (Fullan, 2007), which can benefit student performance.

The Fourth Way is different than previous change ways. It links government policy, school-level professional involvement, public engagement in a meaningful and democratic manner, and mindful learning and teaching. The Fourth Way is guided by purpose and partnership, and supported by six pillars: "an inspiring and inclusive vision, strong public engagement, achievement through investment, corporate educational responsibility, students as partners in change, and mindful learning and teaching" (p. 73).

This change way holds three principles of professionalism. The first principle is high-quality teachers. A key component to high-quality educational learning systems is high quality teachers. Attracting and preparing preservice teachers is vital to the

profession. And once in the profession, providing teachers with expert professional development focused on teaching and learning. The second principle is a renewal in teachers' associations that are less bureaucratic and instead place the "well-being of children at the heart of its vocation" (p. 90). The third principle of professionalism is lively learning communities. These communities are fundamentally different than collaborations in Second and Third Ways where teachers focused on performance goals and rarely on teaching and learning. In these newly conceptualized learning communities, teachers concentrate on

transforming the learning that is responsible for results; valuing each other as people in relationships of care, respect, and challenge; and using quantifiable evidence and shared experience to inquire into teaching and learning issues and make judgments about how to improve them. (p. 92)

These principles of professionalism may enact reforms that empower teachers, while harnessing their expertise to improve curriculum and instruction to more effectively support student performance.

This change way is fundamentally different than previous ways as it is not top-down or bottom-up:

The Fourth Way, rather, is a democratic and professional path to improvement that builds from the bottom, steers from the top, and provides support and pressure from the sides. Through high-quality teachers committed to and capable of creating deep and broad teaching and learning, it builds powerful, responsible, and lively professional

communities in an increasingly self-regulating but not self-absorbed or self-seeking profession. Here, teachers define and pursue high standards and shared targets, and improve by learning continuously through networks, from evidence, and from each other. (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009b, p. 107)

In conclusion, teachers are important change agents. Their knowledge, expertise, and professionalism should be used to improve pedagogical practices to support student performance.

### **School-University Partnerships for School Change**

In the United States, historically one of the earliest school-university partnerships in education was the Committee of Ten in 1892 (Clark, 1988). Since then, school-university collaborations have existed in many capacities to bring about educational change. In these partnerships, reform is enacted through collaboration (Edwards, Tsui, Stimpson, 2009; Robinson & Darling-Hammond, 2005). Collaborations comprise teachers, administrators, and university faculty (Winitzky, Stoddard, & O'Keefe, 1992). These stakeholders have valuable knowledge and expertise that are contingent on their organization: school or university. Most often, school-based stakeholders have knowledge regarding educational practices and university-based stakeholders possess understanding of theory (Robinson & Darling-Hammond, 2005). In school-university partnerships, enacting change comes from stakeholders collaborating and sharing



professional knowledge in order to develop their instructional practices that will benefit student learning (Allen & Hensley, 2005).

This change process is most often examined within the context of Professional Development Schools (PDSs) (Edwards, Tsui, Stimpson, 2009), as these schools for the last twenty years make up the most common partnership model (Breault, 2010).

Established by the Holmes Group in 1986, PDSs strive to improve schooling through research, professional development, and learning (Holmes Group, 1986). These schools are a type of school-university partnership. Consequently, significant overlap exists in how PDSs and school-university partnerships are defined (Sandholtz & Dadlez, 2000; Teitel, 2004). For this literature review, the phrase *school-university partnership* encompasses all school and university collaborations focused on educational improvement and learning. Impact of these partnerships is examined in regards to preservice teachers, inservice teachers, and student achievement.

### **Impact on Preservice Teachers**

Preservice teachers in school-university partnership schools, in comparison to peers in tradition schools, typically receive longer clinical experiences; have more involved school-based faculty; have more supervision and receive additional feedback; implement more varied learning assessments, such as portfolios; expose students to more authentic learning experiences; and strive to be more supportive, reflective, and empowering (Abdal-Haqq, 1998). Differences further include a greater focus on student performance (Castle, Fox & O'Hanlan Souder, 2006), a more well-developed sense of

reflection and inquiry (Mitchel & Hindin, 2008), and more participation in professional collaborations (Castle, Fox & O'Hanlan Souder, 2006; Mitchel & Hindin, 2008). These differences among preservice teachers in partnership schools in contrast to teachers in traditional schools are suggestive that school-university partnerships may also contribute to professional learning of preservice teachers.

Preservice teachers educated in partnership schools feel well supported during their field training (Sandholtz & Dadlez, 2000) and are prepared for the teaching profession (Brindley, Rosselli, Campbell, & Vizcain, 2008; Paese, 2003; Sandholtz & Dadlez, 2000; Watson, Miller, Johnston & Rutledge, 2006). Once in the profession, these teachers have a strong level of efficacy (Brindley et al., 2008; Paese, 2003). This perception of effectiveness is also shared by school principals who believe partnership schools produce better prepared teachers than traditional schools (Watson, Miller, Johnston & Rutledge, 2006). Preparation is not isolated to classroom activities. Teachers trained in partnership schools often embrace a broader vision of what it means to be a teacher. They embrace a traditional sense of what it means to be an educator and also identify themselves as change agents (Cobb, 2001) and leaders (Flynn, 2001). This highly developed training that preservice teachers receive in school-university partnership schools may affect why teachers trained in these schools have less of an attrition rate than those prepared in traditional settings. This finding comes from a longitudinal study that examined attrition rates of elementary teachers prepared in PDSs (N=506) to those prepared in non-PDSs (N=559) (Latham & Vogt, 2007). In summary, school-university partnerships may enrich preservice teachers' training and contribute to the development

of strong practitioners, leaders, and educators who are willing to participate in school reform endeavors.

### **Impact on Inservice Teachers**

In addition to impacting preservice teachers, school-university partnerships also have an effect on inservice teachers. Many benefits for teachers come about from participation in collaborations. The most promising is an improvement in classroom instructional practices (Abdal-Haqq, 1998). Moreover, less tangible benefits also have been noted. These include teachers feeling less isolated, more empowered, a heightened level of professionalism, and more willingness to take pedagogical risks (Abdal-Haqq, 1998). These benefits to teachers may contribute to their development of more effective instructional practices. Another possible contributing factor to this outcome is the professional development they receive in school-university partnerships.

In partnerships, teachers are often provided valuable professional development that benefits their teaching practices (Brink, Granby, Grisham & Laguardia, 2001; Davies, Brady, Rodger, & Wall, 1999; Snow-Geron, 2005; Utley, Basile, & Rhodes, 2003). This professional development is different than what teachers receive in traditional school settings (Abdal-Haqq, 1998). In partnerships, teachers tend to actively participate in constructing the professional development as well as partake in its implementation. Not only is this process dissimilar from traditional school settings, but the difference further exists in the type of content provided to teachers during professional development. The content in partnerships is more aligned with site-based needs and is

less focused on specific instructional skills and strategies. It is “intended to increase the capacity of teachers to actively participate in the change processes associated with school and teacher education renewal” (Abdal-Haqq, 1998, p. 21-22). This content is acquired by teachers through numerous forms of professional development: inservice sessions, summer institutes, retreats, site-based study groups comprised of teachers and university faculty, and coursework. The professional development teachers receive in partnerships likely contributes to the enactment of robust classroom instructional practices.

In conjunction with the professional benefits teachers may receive from school-university partnerships, these collaborations can also create varying difficulties for teachers. For instance, teachers in partnerships often work as liaisons between schools and universities. In this role, teachers encounter issues with time, ambiguity of the role, conflict with expectations, and having a professional voice (Utley, Basile & Rhodes, 2003). In traditional schools, teachers typically devote most of their time to working with students. However, as liaisons in partnership schools, they work with students, but also with teaching colleagues, preservice teachers, and university faculty to facilitate relationships and shared goals. This involves an extensive amount of time and teachers often struggle to “achieve ‘balance’ across their varied responsibilities” (p. 521). In this role, teachers further face issues that stem from the ambiguity of the position. As liaisons, teachers must navigate school requirements and university demands that most often connect with preservice teachers’ assignments. These varying expectations across institutions require liaisons to be innovative and adaptive based on different contexts. Despite best efforts, issues and dilemmas exist. Another aspect of being a liaison that

sparks dilemmas for teachers is conflicting expectations. Expectations of liaisons vary across schools and universities and within these institutions. Teachers, principals, university professors, school-based clinical faculty, and preservice teachers often hold different expectations for liaisons, which can bring about problems for liaisons.

In addition to issues stemming from time commitments, role descriptions, and expectations, liaisons also encounter dilemmas associating from developing a “‘voice’ of leadership” (p. 525). In this role, the work must bridge schools and universities that possess different professional cultures. The demand of navigating these two institutional cultures is captured in a comment from a liaison, who said, “It’s like wearing one shoe from each world” (p. 526). Teaching colleagues often are surprised and reluctant to embrace “broader perspectives on schools issues” (p. 525) that come from a developed holistic perspective of the school setting. This function of bridging both institutional cultures is a zone of tension for liaisons.

### **Impact on Student Performance**

The impact of school-university partnerships on student performance is difficult to determine. It is not easy to conclude, because research has not adequately examined this relationship (Book, 1996; Teitel, 2000). In the profession, most studies examine how partnerships affect preservice and inservice teachers and limit attention to how collaborations affect student performance (Abdal-Haqq, 1998). A plausible reason may stem from challenges researchers have in establishing causal relationships between student performance and partnership activities (Imig, 2003; Wong & Glass, 2005).

However, regardless of these difficulties, more studies that use research designs to make causal relationships between student performance and partnership endeavors are needed to better determine this impact. An example of one such study examined the effects of professional development schools on student achievement in comparisons with traditional schools (Cooper & Corbin, 2003). In this case, no statistically significant difference in student achievement existed between the types of schools. More studies like this are needed in the profession to better determine the effect school-university partnerships have on student performance.

These partnerships can lead to development and implementation of learning programs or endeavors that address school-based needs (Brisk & Zisselsberger, 2011; Klinger, Ahwee, Garderen & Hernandez, 2004; Knight, Wisemen & Cooner, 2000; Linek, Fleener, Fazio, Raine & Klakamp, 2003; Pine, 2003). An example of such a partnership occurred between Longfellow Elementary School and Oakland University. This partnership effectively caused school change to instruction in reading and mathematics, which was a school-based need (Pine, 2003).

The collaboration enacted a Reading Recovery program and a Beginning School Mathematics program at the school. Also, based on school need, a parent involvement committee and a health service program were constructed. To determine impact of this endeavor, analysis of student performance, as measured on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), was conducted and showed significant gains in student performance over time. A causal relationship could not be determined given the study's design. However, Pine (2003), a scholar on school-university partnerships, proclaimed

the combination and interaction of many significant resources and program activities concentrated in one school could account for the test gains collectively by creating a culture of teacher and school change, developing a supportive climate for instruction and learning, and integrating the delivery of instructional, human, and community services to ameliorate psychological and social issues that impede learning. (p. 44)

Although still difficult to establish a true causal effect, this study illustrates that gains may indeed emerge in student performance when partnerships are active.

A review of the literature on school-university partnerships suggests they can be beneficial to preservice teachers and inservice teachers. The review also indicates partnerships can support student performance. However, caution must be used when making generalizations as limitations exist regarding research on school-university partnerships. A limitation is that most of the inquiries use case study designs that are descriptive in nature and seldom use quantitative methods (Book, 1996). Also, the studies often “lack sufficient description of the methodology used in collecting and analyzing the data, leaving the reader with questions about the validity of the findings, as well as the replicability of the studies” (Book, 1996, p. 197). Research on partnerships further tends to focus less on outcomes of stakeholders (Wong & Glass, 2005) and this may be due to difficulty in connecting partnership activities to outcomes, such as student learning (Imig, 2003). Outcomes regarding student performance are complicated, as measured by a standardized assessment, which may be too far removed from activities of the partnership to provide meaningful information regarding actual impact (Anderson & Herr, 1999;

Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001). In summary, research suggests school-university partnerships are beneficial to educators and increase student performance. However, specifically due to the type of studies conducted, limitations exist to study findings and therefore drawn conclusions about partnerships and their impact in education should be adhered to cautiously.

### **The Complexity of Collaboration**

School-university partnerships are inherently collaborative and cooperation enacts change. This work is dynamic and involves the coming together of stakeholders from school and university organizations. This section examines the complexity of collaboration among school and university stakeholders. It first describes professional learning communities and outlines key characteristics of them that are required to enact change. It then reviews cultural differences among school and university stakeholders regarding held assumptions. These differences can foster tensions and issues in partnerships. The section then examines relationships in partnerships. Certain relationships can alleviate tensions among stakeholders. And finally, the section reviews situational factors, structural factors, and process that can affect collaborations. Comprehension of cultural differences, varying relationships, and factors affecting collaborations in partnerships provide an understanding to difficulties associated with school-university partnerships as well as guidance of how to best proceed in these change approaches.



### **Professional Learning Communities**

School-university partnerships can develop communities of practice (Edwards, Tsui, & Stimpson, 2009). Communities of practice in organizations are not a novel concept to educational profession. They exist across multiple professions and encapsulate the coming together of “people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 4). Communities of practice are diverse in nature and can be small or big, long-lived or short-lived, collocated or distributed, homogenous or heterogeneous, inside or across boundaries, spontaneous or intentional, and unrecognized or institutionalized (p. 24-27). Regardless of variability across communities of practice in organizations, three fundamental elements compose all of these communities: *a domain*, *a community*, and *a shared practice* (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). A domain consists of a common purpose and shared value among stakeholders. It inspires members to participate and focuses learning and guides actions. A community fosters a “social fabric of learning” (p. 28). It promotes interactions and relationships among stakeholders and is founded on mutual respect and trust. And lastly, a shared practice is the knowledge and ideals among stakeholders. “Whereas the domain denotes the topic the community focuses on, the practice is the specific knowledge the community develops, shares, and maintains” (p. 29). Collectively the three essential elements develop a community of practice as a “knowledge structure—a social structure that can assume responsibility for developing and sharing knowledge” (p. 29).

Communities of practice in education are often referred to as professional learning communities (PLCs). PLCs are environments where educators are committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve.

Professional learning communities operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators. (DuFour, DuFour & Eaker, 2008, p. 14)

To foster this learning environment, six characteristics are evident in PLCs. The first is a shared *purpose and vision*. Educators possess a collective commitment to student learning that functions as a foundation to clarify their day-to-day work. The second is a *collaborative culture* focusing on professional learning. In these learning communities, collaboration is a “systemic process in which teachers work together, interdependently, to analyze and impact professional practice in order to improve results for their students, their team, and their school” (p. 16). The third characteristic is *collective inquiry* into best practice. Collective inquiry fosters new shared knowledge that functions to inform decision-making. The fourth is that *members are action-oriented*. In order to enact change, educators understand that the organization must try different means in order to achieve different results. Educators in these communities “avoid paralysis by analysis and overcome inertia with action” (p. 16). The fifth characteristic is a *held commitment to continuous improvement*. Improvement of practice and achievement of organizational goals permeates the cultures of PLCs. This culture views innovation and experimentation not as isolated tasks, but as means to conduct daily business. The sixth characteristic is

PLCs are *result oriented*. In these learning communities, educators realize “that all their efforts in these areas—a focus on learning, collaborative teams, collective inquiry, action orientation, and continuous improvement—must be assessed on the basis of results rather than intentions” (p. 17). These characteristics are described by many scholars (i.e., McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006), but a common theme across most explanations is that they are required to promote educational learning and can foster instructional practices which benefit student learning.

### **Differences in Organizational Culture**

To enact PLCs, school-university partnerships must bring together stakeholders from very different organizational cultures (Brookhart & Loadman, 1992; Fountain & Evans, 1994). Cultural differences primarily stem from “views of schooling, teaching, coping, problem-solving, accountability and reward systems” (Fountain & Evans, 1994, p. 224). Four categories of assumptions related to cultural differences can create problems in collaborations: *focus*, *tempo*, *rewards*, and *power* (Brook & Loadman, 1992). The first category, *focus*, captures assumptions about which knowledge and understanding is valued and favored. Universities aspire to build theory and carry out research, while schools place an emphasis on pragmatic knowledge. This difference in focus “creates culturally different perceptions of what is important to know” (p. 56). The second category of *tempo* represents assumptions on allocation of time and commitment. Differences in culture exist around the concept of working speed and what constitutes a long and short period of time, for instance “work usually feels busier in schools than in

universities” (p. 58). Commitment to work also is perceived differently among the schools and university cultures. Due to the structure of school schedules, school personnel are more restricted than university stakeholders. When university personnel request meetings, school personnel interpret it as a lack of understanding of their limited time and situation. However, university personnel feel the struggle as lack of commitment from the school personnel.

The third category of *rewards* represents cultural differences about what will result from the collaborative work. School personnel and specifically schoolteachers seek intrinsic rewards and place emphasis on “reaching, influencing, shaping, and inspiring students” (p. 60). University personnel’s rewards are more extrinsic and take the form of scholarly publications and recognition in academia. These cultural differences manifest in partnership disagreements among participants about the purposes and reasons for collaborative endeavors.

The fourth category, *power* captures cultural differences that exist in how university and school personnel are perceived. University personnel have a cultural expectation that one can be powerful. For example, “seeing one’s thought in print, supervising graduate students, and receiving grants. Trafficking in ideas itself suggests a high level of accomplishment” (p. 61). School personnel have a cultural expectation of limited power. This comes from practical demands and constraints of school work. Teachers often receive messages that they are not powerful. These cultural differences in how stakeholders’ perceive their level of power affect collaborations.

School-university partners should understand and address cultural differences that are present in these collaborations (Fountain & Evans, 1994). How collaborations negotiate these variations in cultures can affect goals and outcomes. One study examined school-university partnerships within teacher education programs (Cochran-Smith, 1996). The partnerships held varied assumptions about knowledge, power, and language in teaching. Based on these assumptions, the partnerships prepared preservice teachers differently and emphasized varied purposes for teaching, such collaborative inquiry or critical pedagogy.

School-university partnerships should address cultural differences as tensions often arise from disparity. One study identified how cultural differences can manifest into tensions in school-university partnerships (Edens, Shirley & Toner, 2001). Tensions centered on discrepancies between what school and university stakeholders saw in the partnership. Differences were in regards to frequency of required meetings, organizational structure, and partnership committees. Another aspect of tensions stemmed from school stakeholders wanting more financial support for school resources and tuition reduction for courses. University stakeholders could not comply with this demand due to funding level reductions and pre-established university policies on tuition. These differences in expectations that manifested in tensions in the partnership resulted from school and university stakeholders having misconceptions regarding each others' organizations. These findings show how tensions can emerge in collaborations due to differences in organizational culture.

### **Relationships Involving Partnerships**

School-university partnerships collaborate with the goal of change. This process involves the development of relationships between schools and universities. From 1998 to 2007, two forms of relationships primarily made up school-university partnerships: *complementary* and *collaborative* (Edwards, Tsui & Stimpson, 2009). A complementary relationship comprises a school and university with separate and matching responsibilities. In this relationship, dialogue among stakeholders is minimal to nonexistent. Contrasting this relationship is the collaborative relationship. This relationship is guided by a collective vision constructed by all stakeholders. This relationship is superior because it “requires personnel from schools and universities to engage mutually in negotiating the meaning of a shared agenda in which neither party’s meaning is privileged” (p. 13).

Relationships can also be either *symbiotic* or *organic* (Schlechty & Whitford, 1988). Symbiotic relationships emphasize mutual self-interest, while organic relationships focus on the common good. Scholars advocate for partnerships to transition from symbiotic relationships to organic relationships, because in an organic relationship “explicit attention to the identification and development of common interests would receive the institutional support necessary to sustain the collaboration” (p. 192). Shared interest among stakeholders guide leadership and function as mechanisms to “generate the general will necessary for otherwise independent entities to bond themselves and willingly to forego short-term interest for long-term, common good” (p. 195). An influential change scholar, Goodlad (1994) argued for partnerships to develop symbioses

and, ultimately, organic fusion. For partnerships to develop this type of relationship they must view distinctive differences as assets, and not liabilities; identify how these differences can be complementary; possess participants that are committed and engaged; and contain participants that receive developed satisfaction or rewards from the relationship. A mutually beneficial relationship, like an organic relationship, may alleviate tensions from differences in organizational cultures and enact change. These relationships take tremendous amounts of time and effort to nurture and sustain (Dixon & Ishler, 1992).

### **Factors Affecting Relationships**

In addition to constructing relationships among schools and universities to enact change, partnerships must also overcome organizational, administrative, and individual factors that can inhibit reform. Research using meta-ethnography analyzed 20 studies from 1990 to 1998 to identify factors that affect school-university collaborations in PDSs (Rice, 2002). This study defines collaboration as a “process that utilizes resources, power, authority, interests, and people from each organization to create a new organizational entity for the purpose of achieving a common goal” (p. 56). Twelve themes capture issues in the collaboration process across the analyzed case studies and are displayed in a framework (see Table 2.4). This framework is comprised of four dimensions: *situational factors*, *structural dimension*, *process dimension*, and *relational dimension*. The *situational factors* are conditions required for a new organization to function. The *structural dimension* captures administrative arrangements needed to define relationships

between partnership members. The *process dimension* refers to the flow of information across the organization. And the *relational dimension* illustrates how individuals interact with each other, and includes trust building and conflict management. Most themes across the dimensions interface with the relational dimension. This finding is significant. It shows that in order to “implement and sustain the collaboration process in PDSs, individual PDS participants must have the relational skills to work with others. Without these skills, the collaboration process is plagued with power, leadership, trust, and communication issues” (p. 66).

Table 2.4 *Issues in the Collaboration Process*

<b>Framework</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Situational Factors	(1) the unwillingness to collaborate	(1) School and university faculty are unwilling to break out of their traditional roles and work collaboratively for a common goal
	(2) prior relationships and attitudes affect the PDS	(2) Preconceived beliefs and feelings about the university-school partnership formation carried over to the collaborative work once the PDS has been formed
	(3) difficult sustaining funding	(3) Time between the stakeholders is hindered due to funding issues
Structural Dimension	(4) lack of formalization	(4) Collaborations lack policies and rules that are needed to maintain order
	(5) issues of parity and control	(5) The idea that equal partnership between stakeholders exists, but appears to dissipate when decisions need to be made



	(6) the importance of the principal	(6) The principals of schools are identified as being a vital element to the success or failure of the collaborative work
Process Dimension	(7) miscommunication	(7) A common problem between stakeholders
	(8) intraorganizational strain	(8) Internal debates often create excess stress
	(9) conflicting goals between organizations	(9) Affects stakeholders work
Relational Dimension	(10) initial distrust and skepticism	(10) Lack of participant buy-in to the obtainment of the common goals as well as distrust between parties hinders productivity
	(11) the importance of key individuals	(11) An individual that can explicitly communicate and work well with all parties can have a tremendous effect on the success of the partnership
	(12) the importance of informal meetings	(12) Informal meetings provide opportunities for the formation of relationships between stakeholders.

In conclusion, school-university partnerships enact change through collaborations among stakeholders (Edwards, Tsui, & Stimpson, 2009). Most often these collaborations develop PLCs within organizations, such as schools, to foster pedagogical practices that intend to benefit student learning. Collaborations among schools and universities may take different forms, but mutually beneficial relationships are desirable (Goodlad, 1994; Schlechty & Whitford, 1988). These relationships often are complicated due to differences in organizational cultures (Brookhart & Loadman, 1992; Fountain & Evans, 1994). In addition, organizational, administrative, and individual factors can make partnership work difficult (Rice, 2002). Regardless of the difficulties inherent in school-

university partnership work, this approach can enact school change to benefit preservice teachers, inservice teachers, and student learning.

### CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An embedded case study design (Yin, 2009), using mixed methodology (Greene & Caracelli, 2003a, 2003b; Hesse-Biber, 2010), was employed to determine whether the SFL-informed writing intervention affected teachers' writing instruction at Morrison Elementary School and, if so, how. The study also investigates changes to students' writing performance, the relationship between writing and language arts performance, and examines how teachers experienced this partnership. This study has five main research questions:

1. Does the content of the writing instruction in the fourth and fifth grades change in the areas of genre, language, tenor, and expressive during the three years of the writing intervention, if so, how?
2. Do teachers' writing instructional strategies change regarding the stages of the pedagogical cycle during the three years of the writing intervention, if so, how?
3. Does fourth and fifth grade students' writing performance change after exposure to an academic year of the writing intervention, if so, how?
  - a) If change occurred, do differences exist between fourth and fifth grade students?
  - b) If change occurred, do differences exist between monolingual and bilingual students?
4. Is there a relationship between students' writing performance and the MCAS test in English language arts?
  - a) If so, does this relationship vary as a function of language status?
5. How do teachers articulate their experiences with the school-university partnership?

- a) Does professional collaboration happen during the partnership, and if so, how do teachers experience it?
- b) How do teachers experience the professional development?
- c) Do tensions exist in the partnership, and if so, what are they?

To examine these questions, data came from observations of classroom writing instruction, interviews with teachers, student writing, and students' scores on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). All data for this study are part of a longitudinal study conducted by university researchers in the partnership. Data were analyzed to provide a robust picture of the writing intervention and results described classroom writing instruction in Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 of the writing intervention, identified changes to student performance during the intervention, and explained how teachers experienced this partnership. These findings provided a holistic understanding of the writing intervention.

### **Morrison Elementary School for the Writing Intervention**

The writing intervention is situated in Morrison Elementary School, located in Boston, Massachusetts. Recent school demographic data from Year 3 of the writing intervention shows the school had a total of 29 teachers and a total enrollment of 386 students. All teachers were licensed by the state and met the requirement for being *highly qualified*. Of the teachers, 52.6 percent were white, 28.9 percent were Hispanic, and 18.4 percent were black.

Of the students, 97.4 percent were classified as non-white and 85.7 percent qualified for free or reduced lunch. In addition, 60.8 percent were in regular education, 15.2 percent were in special education, and 23.8 percent were in Sheltered English Immersion (SEI). The student daily attendance rate was 96.2 percent and the student mobility rate was 21.5 percent.

In regards to education, guiding principles for Morrison Elementary were learning, collaboration, and results. Posted at the main entrance to the school building was the school vision statement: *“The Morrison Elementary School is a professional learning community that cultivates a welcoming school climate and continuous learning in a collaborative environment which results in all students meeting or exceeding grade level benchmarks in preparation for middle school.”*

The outlined principles were enacted through a professional learning community that strived to develop students who were “life-long learners who read and write well, solve mathematical problems and think critically” (acquired from a report document made by school administrators about learning in 2009).

### **Study Participants**

Study participants were 23 teachers and 68 students. The participating teachers were selected using convenience sampling (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). All teachers were involved in the writing intervention. Eight teachers began their participation in the intervention in Year 1, 13 teachers started in Year 2, and 2 teachers began their participation in Year 3.

Variation among teachers existed regarding taught grade-level, subject taught, and type of class (see Table 3.1). Table 3.1 displays the classes taught by the participating teachers in the year in which interview data were collected. Some teachers had interview data collected in both Year 2 and Year 3, which is why totals sum is higher than 23 in Table 3.1. In addition, some teachers changed grades from Year 2 to Year 3. Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) classes in Massachusetts were designed to provide English language support for new, arriving, non-native speakers.

Table 3.1 *Teachers Taught Grade or Subject and Type of Class*

Year 2			Year 3		
#	Grade	Type	#	Grade	Type
1	Third	Mainstream	1	K1	Mainstream
1	Third	SEI	1	K1	SEI
2	Fourth	Mainstream	2	K2	Mainstream
1	Fourth/Fifth	SEI	1	K	SEI
1	Fifth	Mainstream	1	First	Mainstream
2	Science		1	First	SEI
			2	Second	Mainstream
			1	Second	SEI
			1	Second	SPED
			2	Third	Mainstream
			1	Third	SEI
			2	Fourth	Mainstream

	2	Fifth	Mainstream
	1	Fifth	SEI

In addition, study participants included 68 students, of whom 41 were in fourth grade and 27 were in fifth grade during Year 3 of the writing intervention. Table 3.2 displays the demographics of the students.

Table 3.2 *Demographics of Students (N=68)*

Variable	Level	Frequency	Percent
Grade	Fourth	41	60.3
	Fifth	27	39.7
Teacher	Mason	20	29.4
	Gates	21	30.9
	Sudbury	13	19.1
	Prince	14	20.6
Gender	Male	37	54.4
	Female	31	45.6
Race	Black/African_American	22	32.4
	Hispanic/Latino	35	51.5
	Asian	6	8.8
	White	2	2.9
	Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic/Latino	2	2.9
Free_Lunch	Yes	59	86.8

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	No	8	11.8
High_Needs	Yes	63	92.6
	No	4	5.9
LEP	Yes	24	35.3
	No	43	63.2
LANGUAGE	Bilingual	41	60.3
	Monolingual	26	39.7
SPED	Yes	9	13.2
	No	58	85.3

---

The fourth grade students were comprised of 29 bilingual and 12 monolingual speakers. Of the 29 bilingual students, 15 were classified as limited English proficient (LEP) and thus were in the early developmental stages of acquiring English. The fifth grade students were made up of 12 bilingual and 15 monolingual speakers. Nine of these bilingual students were labeled as LEP.

The students were selected using purposive sampling (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). All students were in one of two fourth grade classes or one of two fifth grade classes. These students were selected from the other enrolled students in the intervention based on the length of exposure they had to writing instruction informed by the intervention. The fourth grade students received two years of this writing instruction and the fifth grade students received three years.

The second reason they were sampled was due to their enrollment in mainstream general education classes. Only students from mainstream general education classes were



sampled for this study. This decision was made to reduce the amount of variables that affect English writing development, such as emotional and cognitive disabilities.

### **The Researcher**

The researcher of this study participated in the school-university partnership as a member of the university research team. In this role, his duties included: working in classrooms during the teaching of writing, conferencing with teachers about writing practices, developing and carrying out teacher professional development, creating assessment writing rubrics, and gathering research data. Involvement in these activities led to experiences that fostered knowledge of the writing intervention.

The researcher worked with both teachers and students at the school. Sociologists term this level of participation “active membership” (Adler & Adler, 1987, p. 50). As an active member, a researcher becomes more than an observer of the social activities, but is a participant in the activities. This positionality to the study participants alters the researcher’s status and “instead of merely sharing the status of insiders, they interact as colleague: coparticipants in a joint endeavor” (p. 50).

The researcher never obtained “complete membership” (Adler & Adler, 1987). To obtain this level of membership, a researcher must “immerse themselves fully in the group as ‘native’” (p. 67). Despite the researcher being a former elementary school teacher and district writing coach, he never obtained complete membership because he did not work daily alongside the teachers at the school. However, as an active member,

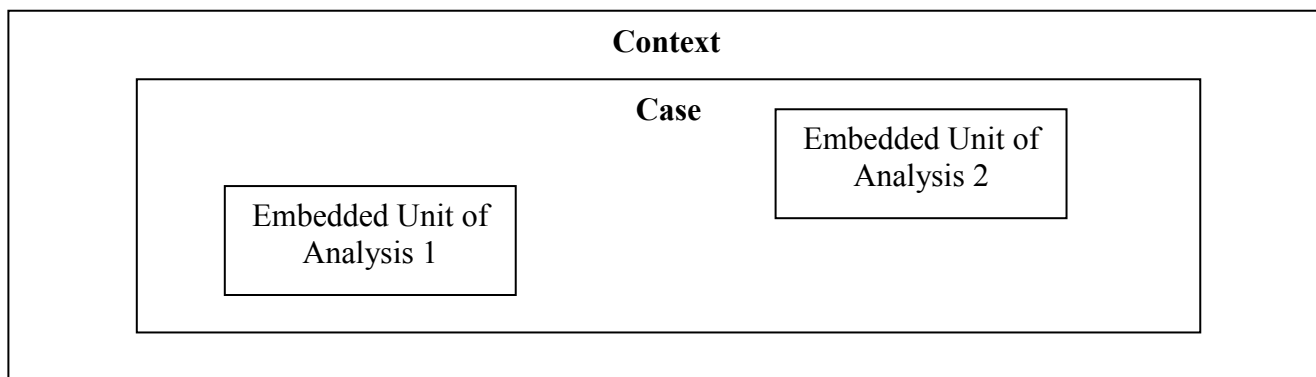
his positionality in regards to the studied phenomena yielded nuanced understanding from the data analyses.

### **Research Design**

An embedded case study design was used to carry out this research. This design is useful for describing and explaining a phenomenon (Yin, 2006, 2009). In addition, a case study design allows for the studied phenomenon to be investigated in its nested context, rather than in isolation from its setting (Yin, 2009). A case study is an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009, p. 18).

In this study, the case or examined phenomenon is the writing intervention carried out within a school. To develop understanding of the writing intervention, two embedded units of analysis within the case were analyzed (see Figure 3.1). These two units of analysis were constructed to gain insight into the research questions.

Figure 3.1 *Embedded Case Study Design*



*SOURCE: Adopted from Yin, 2009, p. 46*

The first embedded unit of analysis is composed of all fourth and fifth grade teachers in Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 of the writing intervention. These teachers' writing instruction during the three years was analyzed to understand how the writing intervention affected classroom writing pedagogy.

The second embedded unit of analysis was composed of students in two fourth and two fifth grade general education mainstream classes. Students' competency in writing, as measured by a writing assessment, was analyzed to understand how academic performance changed during Year 3 of the writing intervention. In addition, the relationship between students' performance in writing and performance on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) test in English language arts was examined to better understand the relationship between writing performance and reading ability.

These two units of analysis assisted in answering the research questions. This yielded findings that described changes to teachers' writing instruction and changes to student performance during the three years of the writing intervention.

### **Mixed Methods**

This study utilized a mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis to investigate the research questions. The approach involves combining “elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration” (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007, p. 123). Specifically, this study used a concurrent mixed model design (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

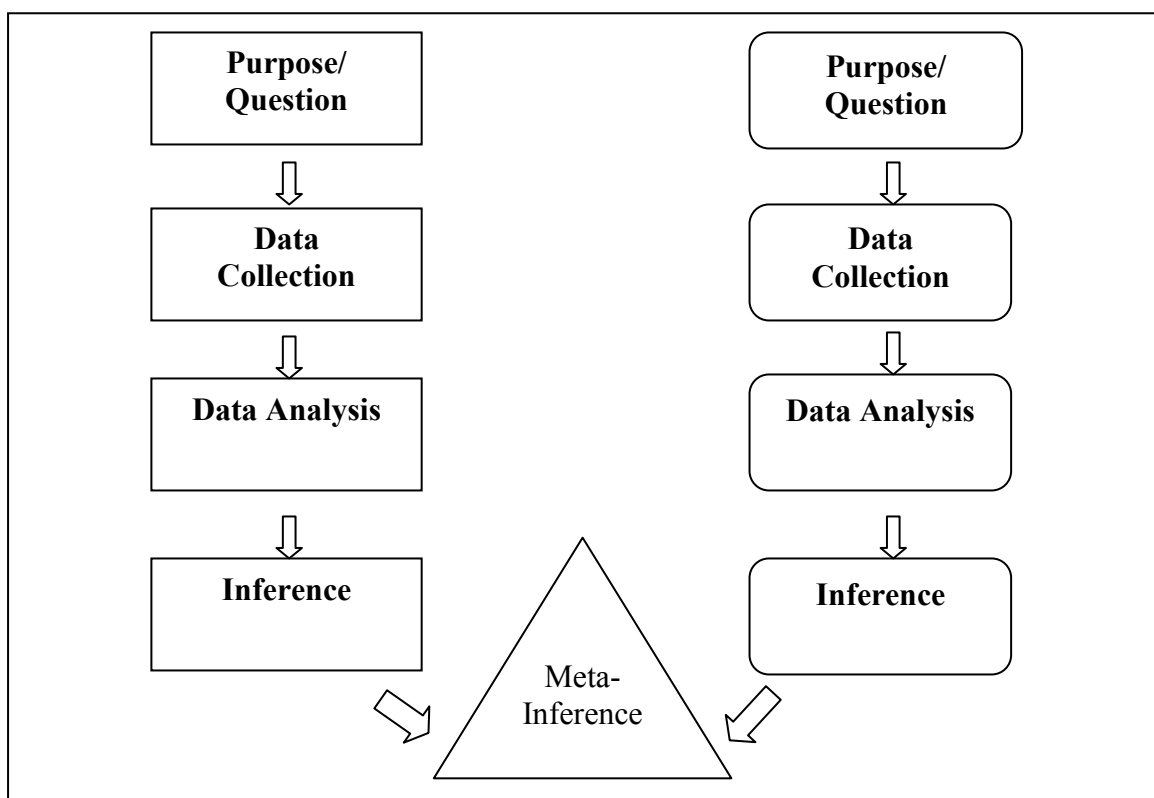
In the concurrent mixed model design, research uses either qualitative or quantitative data. However, both data types are not used to answer the same research question. Rather, analyses of these data “reside side by side as two different pictures that provide an overall composite...” of the studied phenomenon (Creswell, 2009, p. 214).

In this study, the qualitative and quantitative data and analyses addressed various aspects of the writing intervention. The qualitative data and analyses examined how teachers' writing instruction changed during the writing intervention as well as investigated how teachers experienced the writing intervention through the school-university partnership. The quantitative data and analyses examined changes to student

performance. Combined, the qualitative and quantitative data and their respective analyses, aimed to develop a robust understanding of the writing intervention.

The concurrent mixed model design uses inferences that are derived from findings regarding study questions. Specifically, in this mixed methods approach, inferences are used to construct meta-inferences about the studied phenomenon, which was the writing intervention (see Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2 *Concurrent Mixed Model Design*



*SOURCE: Adapted from Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. 688.*

This mixed methods approach complements an embedded case study design, as units of analysis function to inform understanding of the case.

As previously discussed, this mixed methods approach was implemented in this study to gain a thorough understanding of the writing intervention. Advantages exist to using a mixed methods approach compared to a single approach design (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). These advantages include, but are not limited to, answering research questions other methodologies cannot answer, developing stronger inferences due to counterbalancing weaknesses of certain methods on their own, and generating a greater diversity of views regarding the studied phenomenon. These advantages may have yielded a more well-developed understanding of writing intervention.

### **First and Second Research Questions**

Observations of fourth and fifth grade teachers' writing instruction from Year 1 to Year 3 of the intervention were analyzed to answer the research questions:

- 1) Does the content of the writing instruction in the fourth and fifth grades change in the areas of genre, language, tenor, and expressive during the three years of the writing intervention, if so, how?
- 2) Do teachers' writing instructional strategies change regarding the stages of the pedagogical cycle during the three years of the writing intervention, if so, how?

### **Observation Data**

Observations of fourth and fifth grade teachers' writing instruction were selected as a data source for this study since these grades were involved in the writing intervention

since Year 1. All observations of teachers' writing instruction in the fourth and fifth grades, over the three years of the writing intervention, were conducted by doctoral students who were members of the university research team. Most of the doctoral students had previous elementary school teaching experience. During the writing intervention, the number of doctoral students performing observations in the fourth and fifth grades ranged from two to four.

A total of 97 observations were conducted. Of the total number of observation, 54 observations were in Year 1, 17 observations were in Year 2, and 26 observations were in Year 3 (see Table 3.3). A total of 10 teachers were observed during the intervention. Many of these teachers during the three years taught both fourth and fifth grade due to grade-level reassignment by the school principal. Teacher attrition led to the loss of a few teachers from Year 2 to Year 3. Variation in the number of observations specifically from Year 1 to Year 2 can be attributed to the intervention going school-wide in Year 2. Teachers began requiring more assistance across all grade-levels, which limited the amount of time doctoral students had to conduct observation in these grades.

Table 3.3 *Observation by Year, Grade, and Teacher*

	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3	
Total # of Observations	54		17		26	
	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>
# of Observations	13	41	9	8	9	17
# of Teachers	3	5	3	2	2	3

Observations were conducted weekly. They ranged in length of time, and on average were from 25 to 60 minutes. The range is attributed to the complexities of the schooling context in which the writing intervention was nested. Most teachers allocated 60 minutes of writing four to five times a week. However, it was not unusual for this instructional time to be interrupted. For example, teachers at times had to break from instruction in order to address student behavioral problems or to attend mandated meetings outside of the class. These interruptions affected instructional time and thus the observations.

The primary purpose for the observations was to document the teachers' writing instruction. To capture this, observers conducted field notes. These field notes focused on how teachers verbalized writing content to students, captured used teaching strategies, documented teachers' writings on the whiteboards, reported students' responses, and described resources employed such as graphic organizers. In addition, writing posters created by the teachers between observations, which were located on the classroom walls to aid students, were transcribed. Overall, the field notes strived to illustrate teachers' writing instruction as "an event or process can be neither interpreted nor understood until it has been well described" (Denzin, 1994, p. 505).

Field notes were chosen rather than other data collection methods, such as audio and video recordings, in order to be less intrusive in the classroom. The intent was to capture the most authentic instruction in the classroom setting. Field note methods may collect less reliable data in that capturing verbatim teachers' instructional language with students is difficult compared with audio and video recordings, but the validity of these



data may be greater than recordings, as teachers potentially feel more at ease being observed and therefore employ instruction similar to what they do when not being observed. Thus, field notes were employed in order to capture the most authentic instruction possible. Regardless of the exact method employed, “you cannot document everything that happens in a social setting regardless of time spent in the field” (Saldana, 2011, p. 48).

### **Analyses of Observation Data**

The observation data were coded using Atlas.ti. Codes were informed by SFL theory and the pedagogical cycle. SFL theory provided a theoretical lens to examine the content of the instruction. Nine codes were developed that focused on the content of the writing instruction (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4 *SFL Informed Content Codes*

Code	Description
Genre/Purpose	Discussion of genre or purpose
Medium	Reference to medium (essay, poster)
Metalanguage	Use of SFL metalanguage
Vague language	Use of a general term when discussing language, such as ‘details’
Expressive	Reference to punctuation or spelling
Language	Reference to language features
Text Structure	Reference to text structure
General Content	Reference to instructional content not associated with expressive,

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	language, or text structure.
Tenor	Reference to audience or voice

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The pedagogical cycle provided a conceptual framework to examine teaching strategies employed by the teachers during their writing instruction. Five codes were used for these data regarding teaching strategies (see Table 3.5).

Table 3.5 *Pedagogical Cycle Informed Teaching Strategy Codes*

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Code	Description
Negotiating Field	Reference to what the field is (what is written about)
	Reference to how to organize and record information from activities
Deconstruction	Reference to the deconstruction of texts
Joint Construction	Reference to teachers and students jointly constructing text
Independent Construction	Reference to students independently constructing text
General Teaching Strategy	Reference to general teaching strategy

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### **Third Research Question**

Students' written responses to a prompt from Time 1 to Time 2 were analyzed to answer the research questions:

- 3) Does fourth and fifth grade students' writing performance change after exposure to an academic year of the writing intervention, if so, how?

- a) If change occurred, do differences exist between fourth and fifth grade students?
- b) If change occurred, do differences exist between monolingual and bilingual students?

### **Writing Data**

The fourth and fifth grade students' Time 1 and Time 2 written responses to a prompt were collected in Year 3. Students' Time 1 written responses were drafted at the beginning of the academic year in October and the Time 2 written responses were constructed at the end of the academic year in June. A total of 68 students participated from one of four mainstream general education classes (see Table 3.6).

Table 3.6 *Distribution of Students by Grade and Class*

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4
Fourth (N = 41)	20	21		
Fifth (N = 27)			13	14

Purposive sampling was used to select the classes. Only fourth and fifth grade classes were chosen in order to complement findings from the observation data. One fifth grade class was excluded since it was an SEI class. Reasons for limiting the number of classes was due to the amount of time allocated to carrying out data analyses and limited resources to pay writing scorers. Furthermore, scoring of students' writing was extremely time consuming and therefore restrictions were made regarding the number of classes and ultimately students involved in this study.

Two of the four participating classes had teachers that began working with the intervention in Year 1. The remaining classes had one teacher that started in Year 2 and one that began working with the intervention in Year 3 (see Table 3.7).

Table 3.7 *Start of Teachers' Participation with the Intervention*

	Fourth		Fifth	
	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4
Teacher	Year 1	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2

Despite differences in amount of time involved in the intervention, three of the four teachers collaboratively planned genre units of study and shared lesson ideas and resources, such as texts and graphic organizers. Therefore, across these three classes instruction was commonly aligned. The only teacher not to participate in this collaboration was the fifth grade teacher that had been involved with the intervention since Year 2. Her expertise and knowledge of SFL theory potentially was greater than most of the teachers involved in the intervention since Year 1. She had specific expertise because she had immersed herself in the literature and was particularly passionate about using SFL to inform writing instruction.

All students in the four classes were allocated 45 minutes to craft a written response to the writing prompt. The prompt read:

*Think about your favorite thing to do in your free time. Maybe you like to pretend, play sports, read, play a musical instrument, dance or do something totally different. Write a story for your teacher about a fun time*

*that you had doing your favorite thing. Give enough details to show the reader what happened and why it was fun.*

This prompt was designed to elicit personal recounts from students. The same prompt was used for both Time 1 and Time 2 and was administered, following a protocol, by the researcher of this study.

The protocol included visually displaying the prompt to the whole class. Also, each student received a copy of the prompt for their desk. The prompt was read aloud prior to the start of the writing time. Once the writing time started, students were allowed to individually request a re-reading of the prompt. It was deemed appropriate to read the prompt to the students, as the purpose was to measure their writing ability and not their reading ability. At the end of the allocated writing time, students' written responses were immediately collected.

### **Analytic Rubric**

Students' Time 1 and Time 2 writings were scored using an analytic SFL-informed writing rubric (see Appendix C). The analytic rubric measures 27 language features in writing. Eleven language features are measured on a 4-point scale and 16 language features are measured on a 3-point scale. This results in a rubric with a score range from 27 to 92. In addition, the rubric has a space to record word count.

The analytic rubric was developed by the university research team specifically to assess change in students' score between Time 1 and Time 2 written responses. The research team, in collaboration with teachers, developed other SFL-informed genre-based

grade-level specific rubrics for each genre taught at the elementary level, which were used during the writing intervention. However, these genre-based rubrics were not used to score students' Time 1 and Time 2 written responses, because they were genre specific and students' writings varied by genre. The prompt was intended to elicit personal recounts from students. However, many students drafted responses in other genres. Genre variation among written responses occurred between students and within students' Time 1 and Time 2 written responses. To account for this variation, the research team developed an analytic SFL-informed rubric. It was general enough for use across genres and specific enough to capture nuances of language associated with text purposes. This analytic rubric was developed using language features and aspects of descriptions from previously constructed genre-based rubrics.

#### *Validity and Reliability of the Rubric*

In the forthcoming section, the content-related validity (see Messick, 1989) of the rubric is discussed. In addition, the reliability of the constructs measured through the language features in the rubric is reviewed. Both aspects function to make this rubric a valid research instrument.

The content-related validity for the rubric is related to the language features measured and their importance to writing. The content for this rubric derives from the grade-level genre-based rubrics developed by a number of professional collaborators. The content-related validity of the rubric is increased by the number of professional collaborators involved in content development. The collaborators included Dr. Brisk, her

doctoral students, Morrison Elementary School teachers, and a district literacy coach. They worked in various capacities to construct the content of the rubric. This occurred through three phases.

In phase one, Dr. Brisk and her doctoral students developed the content for the genre-based rubrics. Dr. Brisk is a seminal scholar in literacy development and an expert in SFL theory, her expertise and knowledge significantly contributed to the construction of the genre-based rubrics. Her professional knowledge increases the probability that the language features contained in the genre-based rubrics are important to achieving the written purposes of each genre. In addition, her doctoral students, many of whom were former classroom teachers and literacy coaches, provided expertise that further contributes to the validity of the content. The construction of the content of the rubric was an iterative process between revising, reviewing, discussing, and evaluating.

In phase two, the grade-level genre-based rubrics were evaluated by third, fourth, and fifth grade Morrison Elementary School teachers and the district literacy coach. They critiqued the validity of the various language features related to the purpose of the genre. In addition, the teachers and the literacy coach reviewed the content of each language feature. Their feedback informed revisions to the genre-based rubrics. The expertise of the classroom teachers and the literacy coach further increases the content-related validity of this rubric.

In phase three, Dr. Brisk and her doctoral students scored a corpus of student writing using the genre-based rubric for personal recount. Dr. Brisk and her doctoral students used an iterative process involving scoring and making revisions to the content

of the rubric. Revisions primarily focused on further disaggregating language features in the rubric.

Through these three phases, the content of the rubrics were refined. The content of the scoring rubric primarily came from the personal recount rubric. The expertise of Dr. Brisk, her doctoral students, the classroom teachers, and the district literacy coach contributed to increasing the content-related validity of this rubric. Overall, the purpose of the rubric is to measure students' competency in writing. Writing proficiency is measured by the 27 language features that compose the rubric.

### *Reliability of Scores*

Two doctoral students, who were members of the university research team, used the rubric to score the 136 writing pieces (Time 1 = 68 and Time 2 = 68). They were selected given their expertise in SFL theory, involvement in the construction of the rubric, and knowledge of written language. These doctoral students each received a stipend to be scorers for this study.

To increase reliability of the score data, all written pieces were assigned a random number. In addition, any indicators regarding students' names, date, and classroom teacher were removed from the text. This ensured that the scorers remained unbiased in their scoring. It was particularly important that the scorers did not know if the writing was from Time 1 or Time 2. In addition, in order to further increase the reliability of the score data, the two scorers were required to come to consensus on each score. This process brought about one hundred percent inter-rater-reliability.



### **Analyses of Student Writing Data**

Student writing data were analyzed using SPSS. Initially, descriptive statistics were generated for the data in order for it to be described and summarized. Then inferential statistics were run in order to identify changes to students' writing from Time 1 to Time 2.

The Pearson correlation coefficients (Pearson  $r$ ) were generated between the 26 rubric items on Time 1 and Time 2 data to determine the strengths of the relationships. Also, correlation coefficients were generated within variables between Time 1 and Time 2. These correlations provided understanding to how scores in these language features were associated with one another.

Next, Paired-Samples  $t$  tests were carried out on all 28 items (27 rubric measures and word count) to determine if significant differences existed between scores on Time 1 and Time 2. The Cohen's  $d$  effect size statistic was reported for all  $t$  tests. This statistic is interpreted as being small ( $d \leq .2$ ), medium ( $d \leq .5$ ), or large ( $d \leq .8$ ) (Cohen, 1992).

Principal components analysis was used in search of the simplest structure to determine writing performance. This analysis was appropriate for the study because the procedure provides the means to derive a simple representation from among a series of intercorrelated variables (Afifi, Clark & May, 2004). Principal components analysis was conducted with promax rotation. Promax rotation was chosen because of the belief that the extracted variables could be theoretically correlated (Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum & Strahan, 1999). Scores from variables on Time 2 were used to carry out this analysis. Time 2 scores were used rather than Time 1 scores given they theoretically better

represented desired writing performance. The constructed latent variable, *Writing Performance*, was used to determine changes to writing performance from Time 1 to Time 2.

Two repeated-measures ANCOVAs were then performed to examine changes to *Writing Performance* over time. Both analyses reported partial eta-squared as an effect size indicator whereby estimates between .01 and .05 are considered small, .06 to .14 are considered medium, and estimates greater than .14 are considered large. The first repeated-measures ANCOVA was performed to test the effects of time and grade on *Writing Performance*, covarying out the effect of change to word count from Time 1 to Time 2. Forty-one participants were in fourth grade and 27 participants were in fifth grade. Change to word count was used as a covariate in order to parcel out the variance attributed to changes in word count from Time 1 to Time 2. This was done given the study focused on quality of writing and not quantity of writing.

The second repeated-measures ANCOVA was carried out to test the effects of time and language on *Writing Performance*, covarying out the effect of grade and change to word count. Forty-one participants were bilingual and 27 were monolingual English speakers. The bilingual participants were comprised of 24 limited English proficient and 17 former limited English proficient participants.

#### **Fourth Research Question**

Fourth and fifth grade students' scaled scores on the MCAS test in English language arts from Year 3 and the students' writing scores from Time 2 were analyzed to answer the research questions:

4. Is there a relationship between students' writing performance and the MCAS test in English language arts?
  - a) If so, does this relationship vary as a function of language status?

#### **MCAS Test in English Language Arts**

The MCAS test in English language arts measured students' performance on standards outlined in the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy for Grades Pre-kindergarten to Twelfth. This MCAS test was grade-level specific and assessed students' performance on grade-level standards related to reading.

MCAS performance reports documented both students' raw scores and scaled scores. Since fourth and fifth grade students each received different MCAS tests, scaled scores were used in this analysis rather than raw scores in order to allow for comparability.

MCAS data came from 65 fourth and fifth grade students (see Table 3.8), rather than 68 students because data on 3 students were not reported by the state.

Table 3.8 *Student Demographics for MCAS Data*

Fourth Grade (N = 40)		Fifth Grade (N = 25)	
Monolingual	Bilingual	Monolingual	Bilingual
11	29	14	11

### **Analyses of MCAS Data**

Students' MCAS scaled scores and students' writing performance scores on Time 2 were analyzed using SPSS. First, the Pearson correlation coefficient (Pearson  $r$ ) was generated between the MCAS scaled scores (N = 65) and students' writing performance scores (N = 65) to determine the strength of the relationship. Next, the Pearson  $r$  was generated between monolingual students' MCAS scaled scores (N = 25) and students' writing performance scores (N = 25). Finally, the Pearson  $r$  was generated between bilingual students' MCAS scaled scores (N = 40) and students' writing performance scores (N = 40).

### **Fifth Research Question**

Interviews with teachers in Year 2 and Year 3 of the intervention were analyzed to answer the research questions:

5. How do teachers articulate their experiences with the school-university partnership?
  - a) Does professional collaboration happen during the partnership, and if so, how do teachers experience it?
  - b) How do teachers experience the professional development?
  - c) Do tensions exist in the partnership, and if so, what are they?

### **Interview Data**

Interviews with teachers were conducted in the spring of Year 2 (see Appendix A) and Year 3 (see Appendix B) of the writing intervention. The interviews elicited teachers' responses on a range of topics. These topics included how SFL theory affected their writing instruction with students, impact on student writing, the teacher professional development offered through the school-university partnership, the partnership itself, and the school reform approach.

The interviews were conducted by members of the university research team. A total of 27 semi-structured interviews (Merriam, 1998) with teachers were performed. All interviews were audio-recorded and the recordings were then transcribed. Of the total number of interviews, 8 were conducted in Year 2 and 19 were conducted in Year 3 (see Table 3.9). Interviews ranged in length of time, but on average ranged from 12 to 40 minutes.

Table 3.9 *Teacher Interviews by Year and Grade*

Year 2		Year 3	
Grade	#	Grade	#
Third	2	K1	2
Fourth	2	K2	2
Fourth/Fifth	1	K	1
Fifth	1	First	2
Science	2	Second	4
		Third	3
		Fourth	2
		Fifth	3

The 8 semi-structured interviews in Year 2 were with two third grade teachers, two fourth grade teachers, one fourth and fifth grade teacher, one fifth grade teacher, and one science teacher. The interview protocol used to facilitate these interviews was comprised of 12 questions (see Appendix A) that were developed by the university research team. Purpose sampling was used to select the 8 teachers. Six of the teachers were chosen because they were involved with the intervention since Year 1. The two science teachers were selected in order to acquire understanding of how they experienced the intervention as specialist teachers. They had been specifically working with one of the doctoral students to improve science-based writing.

The 19 semi-structured interviews in Year 3 were with two kindergarten-one teachers, two kindergarten-two teachers, one kindergarten teacher, two first grade

teachers, four second grade teachers, three third grade teachers, two fourth grade teachers, and three fifth grade teachers. The protocol used in Year 3 was different than the protocol used in Year 2. Based on a review of teachers' elicited responses to questions from the interview protocol used in Year 2, the interview protocol used in Year 3 was informed by the methodology of narrative inquiry (see Riessman, 1993). This methodology was embraced in order to more effectively foster richer responses from teachers for the purpose of understanding how teachers' experienced the writing intervention through the school-university partnership.

Using narrative inquiry, qualitative researchers acquire stories from participants in order to understand how they experienced a phenomenon (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Riessman, 1993; Webster & Mertova, 2007). This methodology involves harnessing the lived experiences of participants to foster understanding, which is particularly useful in education:

Unlike many of the stories we meet elsewhere, those we read and hear in the teaching and learning context are usually intended to help us learn—either directly about the subject matter of instruction or, alternatively, about the strengths or shortcomings of the teaching itself. This fundamental link of narrative with teaching and learning as human activities directly points to its value as an educational research tool.

(Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 15)

The interview protocol in Year 3 was developed to elicit teachers' stories of participation. To facilitate teacher narratives, the protocol was crafted to address larger

topics that allowed for teachers to share their stories (see Appendix B). Reissman (1993), a scholar in narrative inquiry, states that

certain kinds of open-ended questions are more likely than others to encourage narrativization. Compare ‘when did X happen?’ which asks for a discrete piece of information, with ‘tell me what happened,’ which asks for a more extended account of some past time. (p. 54)

In addition to using a new interview protocol in Year 3, interviews were carried out with more teachers than in the previous year in order to better understand how the Morrison Elementary School faculty was experiencing the school-university partnership.

### **Analyses of Interview Data**

The methodology of grounded theory was used to analyze interview data that were coded using Atlas.ti. This methodology uses an inductive approach to data analysis (Charmaz, 2000; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory is different from other qualitative methodologies, as theory comes from the data and is not imposed on it.

According to Charmaz (2000), a scholar in grounded theory, “grounded theorists cannot shop their disciplinary stores for preconceived concepts and dress their data in them. Any existing concept must earn its way into the analysis” (p. 511). Theory and frameworks are developed from the data. In the words of Charmaz,

A grounded theory must work; it must provide a useful conceptual rendering and ordering of the data that explains the studied phenomena. The relevance of a grounded theory derives from its offering analytic



explanations of actual problems and basic processes in the research setting. (p. 511)

To develop a theory or explanation from the various data, initially the technique of open coding or line-by-line coding was performed (see Glaser, 1978). This coding technique is not used to merely apply “simple and deterministic labels to the data” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 30). Rather, it is valuable to researchers as it

helps us to remain attuned to our subjects’ views of their realities...[and] sharpens our use of sensitizing concepts—that is, those background ideas that inform the overall research problem. Sensitizing concepts offer ways of seeing, organizing, and understanding experience; they are embedded in our disciplinary emphasis and perspectival [sic] proclivities. (Charmaz, 2000, p. 515)

The constructed codes developed through line-by-line coding were used to reassemble the data through axial coding (see Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Through axial coding, smaller units of data and their assigned codes were compiled to make larger units of data represented by categories or concepts. Multiple codes made up a category and multiple categories were constructed. The categories functioned to shape the “developing analytic frameworks” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 516).

The categories enabled memo writing, which were drafts used to further explore and develop findings from the sorted data. According to Charmaz (2000),

memo writing aids us [the researcher] in linking analytic interpretation with empirical reality. We bring raw data right into our memos so that we

maintain those connections and examine them directly. Raw data from different sources provide the grist for making precise comparisons, fleshing out ideas, analyzing properties of categories, and seeing patters.

(p. 517)

The process of memo writing developed understanding of identified themes. Moreover, it assisted with validating findings through cross checking interpretations with raw data, which occurred throughout the memo writing process.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS FOR THE FIRST AND SECOND RESEARCH

### QUESTIONS

#### Content of the Writing Instruction

Analyses of the fourth and fifth grade teachers' writing instruction were conducted to answer the first research question: *Does the content of the writing instruction in the fourth and fifth grades change in the areas of genre, language, tenor, and expressive during the three years of the writing intervention, if so, how?*

The analyses of the writing instruction during the intervention indicated changes occurred to the content of instruction in the areas metalanguage, genre, language, and tenor. Analyses also showed that the content regarding expressive, such as spelling and punctuation, remained unchanged. The forthcoming section reviews the findings from the analyses.

#### Metalanguage

Analyses indicated changes to the content of writing instruction involving metalanguage occurred during the intervention. Metalanguage is defined differently in this dissertation than its traditional definition, which is typically language used when discussing language. Instead, metalanguage for the purpose of this paper is defined as language used when discussing language, genre, and text structure features.

Instruction transformed in the third year of the partnership and began to commonly use metalanguage to discuss language and features of text. The use of metalanguage cut across most areas of content: discourse, language, and tenor. For

instance, the word *genre* was so frequently used it became part of the lexicon of instruction across classes. Instruction mostly used metalanguage to reference aspects of text structures associated with the genres. During instruction, this precise language came about in posed questions to students, for example, “*Who can recall what the thesis statement was?*” and “*Ok, what was their claim?*” Similar metalanguage usage occurred in the first and second years to discuss aspects of text structures, such as *claim, argument, reasons, resolution* and *orientation*. However, incidents involving this language were less frequent than in the third year. Across the classes, the metalanguage usage appeared to be contingent on the years of the intervention and increased accordingly.

In the initial years of the intervention, vague language was more commonly employed during instruction. For example, in the second year, when teaching the persuasive genre, a teacher commented, “*Now remember what you need to answer this prompt—details. Use your vocabulary and include details to describe your three reasons why this person is your favorite person.*” In this example, the instruction used imprecise language, *details*, to reference the text structure feature ‘evidence’.

Instruction using vague language was pervasive in the first year. This resulted in ambiguous language used to reference text structure features. For instance, Table 4.1 displays instruction from multiple teachers during that year. It shows how the word ‘*details*’ was used interchangeably to reference the text structure features of *reasons* and *events*. This type of instruction that employed imprecise language may have hindered students’ understanding of the genres.

Table 4.1 *Use of the Word 'Details' to Reference Text Structure Features*

Instruction Using Imprecise Language	Text Structure Feature Referenced
<i>And now is your chance to chalk up your details.</i>	Reasons
<i>Ok, but we are not going to come up with more ideas, we want to think of supporting details.</i>	Reasons
<i>Remember our writing boss, Dr. B. said we must put more evidence into the details so we have a strong, convincing argument.</i>	Reasons
<i>Yes, you really need that one good main idea and then add lots of details to it.</i>	Reasons
<i>You guys [referring to student] are great about picking up details.</i>	Reasons
<i>Again, we could leave some of those details of the story for later, but how could we put that?</i>	Events
<i>Did he give any really unimportant details that weren't important to explaining the tradition?</i>	Events
<i>So he stayed on task and gave important details related to the story.</i>	Events
<i>So am I writing all the details here?</i>	Events
<i>Can you take these big ideas and then go back and add some details?</i>	Events

---

*[Student's name] has been working very hard on her piece.* Events

*I want you to notice how much detail she has!*

---

In addition to teachers' instruction in the third year using more metalanguage than in previous years, students' responses during writing instruction began to use metalanguage to reference text structure features. One teacher in particular held students accountable for using this precise language. For example, in Table 4.2, the teacher explicitly requested the student be more specific regarding *what kind of statement*. The posed question from the teacher required the student to specifically use the metalanguage, *thesis statement*, in his response. It is important to note that students in other classes also used metalanguage in their class responses, but it appeared they were not as specifically prompted to do so by their teachers.

Table 4.2 *Conversation Between a Teacher and Student Using Precise Language*

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Teacher	<i>So in the first paragraph all of the reasons for the argument were there.</i>
	<i>So I hope you noticed after the first paragraph each paragraph, like the second one here, contained a reason with evidence to support the reason.</i>
	<i>In the first paragraph, what was in it?</i>
Student	<i>The reasons and the statement.</i>
Teacher	<i>What kind of statement?</i>
Student	<i>Thesis statement</i>
Teacher	<i>Ok, so notice the introduction had the thesis statement and reasons for this piece.</i>

---

In the third year, instruction further evolved and began to employ metalanguage to discuss language features. Primarily, the metalanguage was used to teach *adjectives*. For instance, a teacher commented, “*These are all words that describe. All words that we call adjectives.*” Despite some examples, instruction only rarely employed metalanguage to reference language features and instead used vague language to identify these features. For example, in the third year, a teacher commented, “*I want you to listen to Slinky, Scaly, Slithery Snakes and listen for descriptive words*” and another teacher stated, “*Include details! This makes your reading interesting!*”

Instruction using imprecise language to reference language features occurred more frequently in the initial years of the intervention. For instance, Table 4.3 displays a conversation between a teacher and student. This interaction occurred when they were discussing another student’s writing and the teacher asked the student to identify what the other student did well in the text. The example shows the teacher using vague language, *imagery*, rather than metalanguage: *adjectives*. The widespread continued use of instruction that contains imprecise language to reference language features may have contributed to limiting students’ awareness of language features in texts.

Table 4.3 *Conversation Between a Teacher and Student Using Vague Language*

---

Student	<i>She wrote lots of descriptions.</i>
Teacher	<i>What do we call that?</i>
Student	<i>Descriptions? [Student pauses] Images?</i>
Teacher	<i>Yes, imagery! Good.</i>

---

During the intervention, instruction changed and began to more frequently use metalanguage rather than vague language to specifically discuss text structure features. This shift in language usage may have resulted in further developing students' understanding of the genres. In addition, students' responses about text structure features started to include use of metalanguage. Although change did occur, instruction using metalanguage to reference language features in text continued to be very limited. Most instruction in the final year of the intervention continued to employ ambiguous language.

## **Genre**

The areas comprised of genre that were examined for changes to content included purpose, text structure, and medium. Analyses indicated that changes occurred to the content across all three areas.

### *Purpose*

In the third year of the intervention, teachers' instruction focused on educating students about various written purposes. This instruction took the form of teaching students about one specific genre or purpose of writing for approximately four to six weeks and then transitioning to a new genre study. Overall, despite instruction that reviewed different genres, the content expressed across the taught genres emphasized similar aspects of discourse. For instance, instruction commonly involved teachers explicitly naming the genres being studied, such as *persuasive*, *historical recount*, or *fictional narrative* and then providing students with the purposes of the genres. This



focus existed throughout the intervention, but a greater emphasis was placed on teaching the purposes of the genres in the third year (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 *Teachers Articulating the Purpose of a Genre to Students*

	<i>Remember her piece was supposed to inform the reader.</i>	Report
Third Year	<i>If you are writing in a persuasive genre, it is your job to convince.</i>	Persuasive
	<i>Remember the purpose for the author is to inform.</i>	Report
	<i>It is your job to convince or make the reader think like you.</i>	Persuasive
	<i>Remember, the purpose is to share information.</i>	Report
Second Year	<i>We are also working on writing to convince people to move to our colonies in Social Studies.</i>	Persuasive
	<i>A good persuasive piece by the end convinces the reader in the end...so we have to convince our reader.</i>	Persuasive
	<i>We just want to inform our reader.</i>	Report
First Year	<i>A memoir can be about a special person, an event, a memory that is important to you.</i>	Memoir
	<i>It is a piece of writing that convinces someone to do something.</i>	Persuasive
	<i>What is the purpose of writing this essay...we are trying to convince people to eat ice cream.</i>	Persuasive
	<i>Their job is to persuade the reader...</i>	Persuasive

This increased focus on the purposes of the genres often occurred in conjunction with other teachings. For example, in Table 4.5, a teacher instructed students about the use of *word webs*. During the instruction, the teacher deviated from the content about word webs to reinforce the purpose of report writing: *to inform*. In previous years, these types of incidents rarely occurred. Rather, the instruction primarily taught the purposes of the genres only when the genres were first introduced to students and then were seldom reinforced during the genre units.

Table 4.5 *Conversation Between a Teacher and Students Regarding Genre Purpose*

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Teacher	<i>We are now going to look at [student's name] piece. Notice how on the corners of the poster she provided some bulleted information. What was [student's name] purpose in using the word web?</i>
Student (1)	<i>I think it was to inform.</i>
Teacher	<i>Remember the purpose for the author is to inform. What should the reader come away with when reading you posters?</i>
Student (2)	<i>You should know more about snakes.</i>
Teacher	<i>Even if they do not want to learn about snakes, your job is to get them to learn more so you have to be creative.</i>

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In addition, to the increased emphasis on the purposes of the genres, the instruction in the third year began to use more robust language to better define the genre purposes. This richer language emerged when explaining the purpose of the persuasive genre. In previous years, the instruction frequently stated the purpose of the persuasive genre as *to persuade* or *convince* and rarely elaborated. For example, Table 4.6 displays a

conversation that happened in the first year amongst a Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) teacher and English language learning students. The teacher defined the purpose of persuasive writing as to *persuade* or to *convince* someone to do something and then proceeded to use these two words interchangeably during the genre unit. The teacher did not provide any additional language to further explain the purpose of the genre. This example reflects the type of instruction that commonly occurred in the first two years.

Table 4.6 *Conversation Between a Teacher and Students Insufficiently Defining Genre Purpose*

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Teacher	<i>Who can remember what a persuasive essay is?</i>
Student (1)	<i>When you write...?</i>
Student (2)	<i>Convince someone to move to your colony.</i>
Teacher	<i>Right! It is a piece of writing that convinces someone to do something.</i> <i>What is a synonym of convince?</i>
Student (1)	<i>Persuade [Spanish].</i>
Teacher	<i>Persuadir [Spanish]. A cognate! And what are we persuading people to do?</i>
Student (1)	<i>To move to Jamestown.</i>

---

In comparison, the instruction in the third year began to give more robust explanations of the purposes. Specifically, in regards to the persuasive genre, the instruction started to contain synonyms for *persuade* or *convince*. For example, a teacher wrote synonyms of persuade and convince on the board for students, which included:

*argue, induce, lead on, get, talk into, win over.* These synonyms provided students with a better understanding of the purpose of the studied genre.

Overall, instruction changed regarding the teaching of genre during the intervention. The instruction evolved to include the explicit naming of the taught genres for students. Also, a greater emphasis was placed on defining the purposes of the genres and used richer language to better explain these purposes to students. These changes to instruction provided students with a more robust understanding of the taught genres.

### *Medium*

During the intervention, instruction changed involving the use of mediums. In the third year, the instruction used various mediums of texts other than traditional essays to teach the genres. In comparison, in the first year of the intervention, limited instruction occurred that involved mediums other than essays. When this instruction did happen, it lacked depth and connection with the purposes of the genres. Most often it merely mentioned how the genres could be expressed through the referenced mediums. For example, in the first year, a teacher commented, “*It [referring to the genre of persuasive] could be a letter or an ad.*” The teacher provided no additional discussion about these two mediums. This lack of instruction rarely occurred in the final year of the intervention, where the instruction about mediums was genre focused.

The changes to instruction regarding mediums began in the second year of the intervention. The instruction started to emphasize text features within the mediums. These text features were linked to their functions in achieving the purposes of the taught

genres. For instance, when studying the genre of reports, teachers had students examine posters and how they expressed topics to audiences. The instruction specifically focused on how various text features within the posters, such as maps and diagrams, contributed to developing the audiences' knowledge about the topics. Moreover, these features were often juxtaposed with the taught features within essays. This better developed students' understanding of the report genre. At times, teachers had students write in different mediums other than essays. For example, a teacher commented to students, "*We will write another report [previous report crafted in the medium of essay], but we [referring to fifth grade teachers] are thinking that this report will be done on a poster, and you can include maps and diagrams.*" This form of instruction did occur in the second year, but was very limited.

In comparison, the instruction in the third year changed significantly regarding the use of mediums. It began to focus on a greater array of mediums. For instance, when educating students about the genre of reports, the instruction included examining posters, newspapers, and nightly news reports. Across the fourth and fifth grade classes, instruction tended to use multiple mediums when educating students about the genres. Moreover, students' responses during writing instruction demonstrated a developed understanding of the different ways a genre could be expressed through various mediums. For instance, when teaching reports, a fifth grade teacher had students list the different "*forms it might take.*" Students' responses included a plethora of mediums: *a magazine article, a book, a letter, a speech, an advertisement, a poem, a jingle.*

In addition, the instruction in the third year devoted a greater amount of time to examining the mediums. These analyses of the mediums tended to focus on their text features. The instruction often discussed the text features and their function in achieving the purpose of the genre. For example, when teaching the genre of reports, a fourth grade teacher commented:

*We have been reading about snakes and I had you all record important facts about snakes. Then you were told to take the facts and make a poster with them. [Teacher holds up a student's poster as an example] Notice how she [referring to the author of the poster] bulleted the facts and illustrated, which helps the reader understand your facts better.*

*Remember when you read reports, the illustrations help you understand the text better.*

In this example, the teacher identified the text feature of *illustrations* and then highlighted its function to *help you understand the text better*. Another example also illustrates this instruction. When teaching the genre of persuasive, a teacher used online videos to illustrate how they persuade viewers to accept or adopt an expressed political stance. The teacher commented:

*We are going to watch one more [referring to online videos]. Another musical interpretation of a message they [referring to political figures] are trying to give. It is another video using the work of MLK [Martin Luther King] and Obama—with a rock group called U2—one of the best rock groups in the whole world. In addition to making really good music,*

*they try to make the world a better place. Think of the message [when listening to the video]. You are thinking of what are the claims, the reason, [and] the evidence.*

The instruction explicitly outlined the goal of the video, which was to persuade listeners to believe its political message. It also required students to identify the text features of the taught persuasive genre within the examined medium. These features were *claims*, *reasons*, and *evidence*. In comparison, no instruction in the first year and only rare instruction in the second year taught text features of the genres within different mediums other than essays.

In the third year, instruction further evolved and began to teach text features and how they can vary within a medium. For example, report posters created by students were examined to illustrate how variations existed within the medium of posters. When examining these posters with students, a teacher commented, “*We saw three very different looking reports: one with bulleted facts, one with paragraphs, and one that mostly used illustrations.*” The students continued to examine the posters and then discussed how the purposes of the posters were similar, which were to report about a topic, but that they achieved the goal differently using various text features of the medium, such as *bulleted facts*, *paragraphs*, or *illustrations*. In comparison, instruction in the second year did not focus on the nuances of text features within a medium. Regardless of this identified change, it is important to note that this type of instruction only rarely occurred even in the third year of the intervention.

In the third year, instruction also changed in regards to requiring students to write in different mediums. For example, instruction across the classes required students to craft prose in different mediums, such as posters, brochures, advertisements, and letters. In comparison, previous years of instruction at times required students to write in a range of mediums, but these incidents were less frequent within classes and did not systemically occur across all classes.

Instruction also began to strategically use different mediums to scaffold students' writing development in the third year. Upon starting a new genre, the instruction required students to write in a medium that was less language dense than traditional essays. For example, in a fourth grade class during a genre unit about reports, students created posters about snakes, which was the topic the students had selected to write about. Initially, the students, in collaboration with the teacher, immersed themselves in learning about snakes. After that, the students crafted facts they had learned about snakes and then they organized and grouped them accordingly. The teacher finally had the students report the facts in bulleted form on posters, which was appropriate given the medium. This shift to the medium of posters likely enabled more students in the class to be successful in crafting a text in the report genre.

Moreover, upon completing the posters, the fourth grade class then transitioned to a new genre, but the classroom teacher informed the students of the plan to revisit the posters and the genre of reports later in the year: "*When we move on to our other genres of writing, we are going to come back to report and take our poster pieces and put our bulleted points into paragraph form.*" As the teacher had planned, a few months later, the



teacher and students revised the report genre. This time they focused on genre in the medium of essays. Despite the transition to a new medium, the teacher continued to use the topic of snakes. In addition, the content from the snake posters was used to create the snake essays.

By using the content of the snake posters to scaffold the content of the snake essays, students were able to primarily focus on the language demands of essay writing without having to also concentrate on the content of the topic. Instruction that used different mediums to scaffold student writing occurred across multiple classes. It is important to note that instruction emphasized to students that reconstructing initial written products in a medium into another medium did not merely involve copying of the text. For example, a fifth grade teacher commented, *“I don’t want you to copy your brochures. This [referring to a poster] is not a giant version of the brochure.”* Rather, instruction reviewed how differences between the two mediums existed despite both achieving similar purposes involving the same topic.

In conclusion, instruction changed involving the use of mediums during the intervention. These changes included using more mediums than in previous years to teach students about the genres and devoting a greater amount of time to examining the mediums. Also, instruction further evolved and emphasized text features within the mediums and their functions in achieving the purposes of the genres. Moreover, the instruction started reviewing the nuances of the text features in the mediums. Changes to instruction further included requiring students to write in multiple mediums and also the

use of mediums to scaffold students' writing development and understanding of the genres.

### *Text Structure*

During the intervention, instruction evolved regarding the teaching about text structures and specifically their features in text. The taught features composed the structures of the introduction and body of the genres. The features that make up the structure of the conclusion of the genres were seldom taught and this instruction remained unchanged during the intervention. Regardless of this lack of change, instruction transformed involving the features composed of the other structures and a greater amount of time was dedicated to teaching these to students. Also, the quality of the content about these features improved and led to more robust instruction.

In the third year, the instruction routinely discussed the text structure features of the genres. For instance, when teaching the persuasive genre, the instruction reviewed the features of *thesis statement* or *claim*, *reasons*, and *evidence* and examined texts in order to identify the features. Moreover, the instruction included explanations of the features' functions in text. For example, Table 4.7 displays a fourth grade teacher's instruction with students.

Table 4.7 *Conversation Between a Teacher and Students About Text Features*

Teacher	<i>What did you notice in the first paragraph compared to the other ones?</i> <i>Did the author have a plan?</i>
Student (1)	<i>It was clear the author had a plan because all the reasons were in the</i>

- 
- first paragraph in order.*
- Teacher      *So in the first paragraph all of the reasons for the argument were there, so I hope you noticed after the first paragraph each paragraph, like the second one here, contained a reason with evidence to support the reason. In the first paragraph, what was in it?*
- Student (1)    *The reasons and the statement.*
- Teacher      *What kind of statement?*
- Student (1)    *Thesis statement.*
- Teacher      *Ok, so notice the introduction had the thesis statement and reasons for this piece. So do you think the author had a plan before starting to write?*
- Student (2)    *Yes!*

---

Instruction in the first and second years reviewed the text structure features within the taught genres. However, the content of the instruction was rather unclear and often incorrect. The reason for this ambiguous instruction came about from the use of imprecise language or wrong terminology to define the features. For instance, in the first year, a teacher stated, *“What is the other big argument, reason?”* Similarly, in the second year, a teacher commented, *“So our intros have three things that need to happen. They state our reason, give our three reasons, and grab your attention.”* These examples illustrate how incorrect lexicon was used.

During these years, instruction that used incorrect metalanguage to reference the text structure features may stem from the teachers’ lack of understanding them and their functions in text. For example, in the first year of the intervention, instruction routinely

referred to *thesis statement* as an *introduction* or *topic sentence* and used this lexicon interchangeably. It is important to note to students that an introduction does contain a thesis statement, but a thesis statement does not constitute an introduction. Furthermore, a thesis statement is not a topic sentence and they serve different functions in text: A topic sentence introduces the topic of a paragraph and functions to foster text cohesion, while a thesis statement functions to state the claim or position of the author in the text. In comparison, the instruction in the third year consistently employed precise language when referencing the text structure features, such as *thesis statement* or *claim*, *reasons*, and *evidence*. Also, the instruction provided accurate explanations of the features and their functions in text.

In the third year, instruction further evolved and began discussing the interconnectedness of the text structure features. For example, a teacher commented to students, “*Does [student’s name] evidence support her reason? Does her argument match her reasons?*” The instruction focused on the connection between the features of *argument* and *reasons* and between the features of *reasons* and *evidence*. These text structure features collectively function to develop text cohesion and to foster discourse meaning. This change was significant as prior instruction taught them in isolation of one another. This change in instruction may have come about from teachers possessing a better understanding of the text structure features than in previous years.

Changes in instruction occurred regarding features within the text structures of introduction and body across the taught genres. The changes included an increased focus on teaching the features to students. Moreover, the content of the instruction was richer in

the third year compared to the first and second years of the intervention. The content in the third year discussed the functions of the text structure features in text. In addition, it started to review how the features are interconnected and collectively work to foster text cohesion. These changes in instruction likely came about from teachers developing a better understanding of the text structure features during the intervention and specifically from the offered professional development. The professional development extensively taught the features within the structures of introduction or orientation and body across the genres. However, limited attention was devoted to educating teachers about the features present in conclusions. This may explain why teachers' writing instruction remained unchanged in regards to teaching these features to students.

### **Language**

Changes occurred to the content of instruction in regards to language during the intervention. The instruction about language was very limited. Moreover, the quality of the instruction that did occur extensively varied among the teachers. The changes included more effective use of writing activities to teach language and better reinforcement of previously taught language features during instruction. In addition, instruction began educating students about the functions of the language features in text and their role in achieving the purpose of the taught genres.

In the third year, instruction more effectively engaged students in writing activities in order to teach language compared to previous years. The activities most often were facilitated by the teachers and engaged the students in using taught language

features. For example, a SEI teacher commented to her English language learning students:

*So today we [referring to the class] are going to write adjectives that describe the snake. Yesterday, we put together a list of adjectives that describe the size, texture, and shape of the rocks. Today we will do that for the snakes. And later we will come up with more adjectives for the rocks.*

In this case, content about adjectives was provided to students and supported their use of adjectives during the activity.

Also, instruction began to better reinforce previously taught language features in the third year compared to previous years. This took the form of the teachers briefly naming the previously reviewed language features and their functions in text. For instance, the SEI teacher from the previous example, following the teaching of adjectives a week later, reiterated to students the function that adjectives have in text. The teacher stated, *“These are all words that describe. All words that we call adjectives.”*

Instruction in the third year further evolved to include a greater emphasis on teaching the functions of the language features in text. For example, in Table 4.8, a teacher explained possessive nouns by providing an example, naming the language feature, and providing an explanation of its function. This instruction provided students with an understanding of the role possessive nouns serve in text.

Table 4.8 *Teacher and Student Discussing the Function of Language Features in Text*

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Teacher	<i>[Reads the sentence aloud: The boy looked into my father’s eyes.] What do you notice in that sentence? What do you suppose that apostrophe is</i>
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	<i>about?</i>
Student	<i>To show what that boy is doing to that father or like [pause], kinda what the father owns.</i>
Teacher	<i>We put an apostrophe to show ownership—my father's eyes. A singular possessive noun shows one person's possession where as plural means more than one. To make a singular noun show possession you add an apostrophe s like I did here [pointing to the board].</i>

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In comparison, instruction in the first and second years seldom emphasized the functions of the language features in text. For example, a fourth grade teacher taught students about the difference between first and third person and provided this explanation to students:

*So when you are telling a story from your own point of view that is called first person. I am not too worried about if you remember this, but I want you to know that it has an official name. So when you use 'I', you are using the first person, from your point of view. So [student's name] could use 'I' to mean the crab [reference to a story the class had just read]—'I was minding my own business, and suddenly got carried away by the ocean,' so you are telling the story from the point of view of the crab. Now other stories use the third person, telling a story about the crab, telling the story like you are watching things happen. So if I went to the movies, say...hmmm, Cars [title of a movie], I have to do way back! And I am telling you that Lightning McQueen [character from the movie Cars] did*

*this, he did that, then I am telling you the story outside the story. So you are going to see the words 'he' and 'she'.*

The instruction identified the taught language feature, explained its function, and provided examples.

In comparison, except for rare cases, instruction in the first and second years of the intervention seldom emphasized the functions of the language features. Rather, the instruction about the language features lacked depth and connection with their purposes in text. For instance, a SEI teacher stated to her ELL students, *“We have some issues with ‘in’ and ‘on’ in English. And this is hard.”* The teacher then wrote an example on the board, which read: *“He was born ON [original contained all capitals] August 14<sup>th</sup> IN Italy.”* This instruction included no content about prepositions. Instead, the English language learning students were required to infer the function and proper use of prepositions in text solely from the teacher’s example. Overall, during the first and second years of the intervention, the instruction about language was very vague. It often tended to merely reference language features, such as *transitions, proper nouns, pronouns, tense, conjunctions, and person*. At times, the instruction even excluded the naming of the taught language features. For example, in the first year, a teacher commented, *“This is the time to bring in the colorful language.”* In this case, the teacher was referring to adjectives, but never explicitly stated it to students.

Instruction in the third year also changed and made connections between the functions of the taught language features with the purposes of the genres. This instruction illustrated how language usage functions to achieve the purposes of the genres. It is



important to note that this instruction infrequently happened and did not occur systemically with all teachers.

Instruction focused on the functions of the language features and the purposes of the genres most often occurred through examinations of text. For example, in Table 4.9, a teacher, in conjunction with students, analyzed the language used in a persuasive text. This text persuaded readers that staying at home to watch a movie is better than going to the movie theater. This text was used during the teacher professional development to illustrate how language functions to achieve the purpose of the genre.

Table 4.9 *Conversation Between a Teacher and Students Examining Text*

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Teacher	<i>Can you tell us what the title of this piece is?</i>
All Students	<i>The Hazards of Movie Going.</i>
Teacher	<i>So what do you think this piece is about? What is another word we can use for hazard? Before we look at the thesis statement let's first read the text again and listen for the language used to make the author's point.</i> <i>[text is reread]</i> <i>So what are some strong words that the author uses to make his point?</i>
Student (1)	<i>Comfort of my own living room.</i>
Teacher	<i>So 'comfort.' What other language was used?</i>
Student (2)	<i>Shouting at the screen and running around the aisles.</i>
Teacher	<i>Notice he [referring to the author] did not just say kids running. He is telling the reader exactly what happens when he is at the movies. What else?</i>

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- 
- Student (3) *Thirty-five minute drive down a congested highway.*
- Teacher *Right! He did not just say the highway. He said the 'congested' highway. So think [long pause], when your nose is congested, what does that mean?*
- Student (4) *Your nose is stuffy.*
- Teacher *Right it is filled with stuff, just like a congested highway is filled with cars. So what other language was used?*
- Student (5) *I usually have to wait in a long line at the concession booth.*
- Teacher *Yes. What else?*
- Student (6) *A musty smell*
- Teacher *Yeah! Not just a smell, but a musty smell...So not only did the author carefully craft his argument with a good thesis and reasons with evidence, he was also careful with the language he used. On that note, I would like you to think about the type of language you used on your turkey piece. I want you to go into our writer's notebook and add some extremely descriptive language to your turkey piece.*
- Student (7) *We already did that.*
- Teacher *I want you to look at the piece you planned and wrote in paragraph form and now think about the type of language this author used to help you see his argument in your mind.*
- 

This example shows how instruction linked language and the purpose of the genre for students. It engaged students through extracting the language used to persuade readers to

the author's point of view. Then, it required students to examine their texts in order to determine language they had used to persuade.

Another example from a different teacher is displayed in Table 4.10. It shows how the instruction required students to list words used to persuade an audience towards the author's point of view. The teacher had the students identify the persuasive language in the text.

Table 4.10 *Conversation Between a Teacher and Students Identifying Persuasive Language*

Teach	<i>Is this some place you would like to live?</i>
All Students	<i>No!</i>
Teacher	<i>Can you describe it?</i>
Student(1)	<i>Ugly</i>
Student (2)	<i>Stinky</i>
Student (3)	<i>Disgusting</i>
Teacher	<i>So those are some strong words that are persuasive.</i>

In comparison, instruction in the first and second years did not explicitly link the taught language features with the genres. At times, the instruction alluded to this connection, but never clearly identified this link for students. For example, in the first year when teaching the genre of report, a teacher commented to students, "*I don't want to see 'I' or 'We'. I want you to take out all of those pronouns.*" The reason for omitting the first person was associated with the genre; however, the instruction did not make this connection for students.

The instruction in the third year juxtaposed with the instruction in the first and second year showed many changes. These changes involved more effective use of writing activities to teach language, better reinforcement of previously taught language content, instruction that reviewed the functions of the language features, and instruction that connected the language feature functions to the taught genres. These identified changes resulted in more robust instruction about language. Despite these changes, in general the modifications still appeared to be very much limited and more of an emphasis needed to be placed on the teaching of language.

### **Tenor**

Analyses showed changes occurred to the content of the writing instruction in regards to tenor during the intervention. In the third year of the intervention, instruction began to call attention to tenor. Teachers did not use the term *tenor* with students. Rather, they commonly referenced the relationship between the writer and audience or ‘voice’ in text. This newfound focus on tenor was operationalized in the form of having students write for many audiences. The audiences included peers, students in different grades, the school district superintendent, school principal, and teachers within the school. Instruction in previous years did not require students to write for different audiences. Instead, it most often had students write for their classroom teacher. For instance, in the first year of the intervention, a teacher stated, “*You [referring to students] are sharing your information with me.*” At times, the instruction never explicitly named the audience

for whom the students were writing and required the students to infer that their audience was their classroom teachers.

In comparison, instruction in the third year frequently referenced audience. For example, a teacher commented to students, *“Remember before you can make a commercial, you have to know your audience in order to persuade them.”* Most often this connection to audience emerged from posed questions to students regarding general reminders about audience. For example, a teacher asked this question to students, *“Who is your audience for your report?”* Moreover, another teacher commented, *“Okay, so who is your audience?”*

In addition, instruction occurred that explicitly named the audience. One teacher commented, *“You have to persuade other fifth graders, that is your audience...”* Instruction that specifically named the audience occurred less frequently than the more general reminders about audience. Similar instruction happened in the first and second years of the intervention, however, the frequency in which they occurred across teachers and within a teacher’s instruction was significantly less than in the third year. In the third year, instruction involving audience became common practice.

In comparison, instruction in the first and second years lacked emphasis on tenor. When it was taught, instruction primarily made the connection between audience and content. This most often took the form of simple comments to students, such as a teacher stating, *“You need to tell you audience what you are talking about.”* Moreover, at times, teachers’ instruction was more specific. For example, when discussing a student’s historical report about Patriots during the American Revolution, a teacher commented,

*“If I was a third or a fourth grader, I would wonder what you meant that people were in your house.”* This statement referenced how Patriots occupied peoples’ residences for military purposes. The example captures how the teacher’s instruction focused on the importance of an author considering their audience’s background knowledge about a topic when writing. Similar instruction that linked audience and content continued into the third year of the intervention.

In the third year, the instruction about tenor evolved and started to teach students how audience affects language in text. It is important to note that most of this instruction did not explicitly name this connection. Rather, the instruction tended to provide scenarios for students in which they had to employ their understanding of appropriate oral language usage given a context. For instance, in Table 4.11, a teacher provides a scenario to students that involves them speaking with the state governor.

Table 4.11 *Conversation Between a Teacher and Students Focused on Context*

Teacher	<i>Who governs the entire state?</i>
Student 1	<i>Obama</i>
Student 2	<i>Is it that black dude that just won?</i>
Teacher	<i>Let’s all say Deval Patrick.</i>
Students	<i>Deval Patrick</i>
Teacher	<i>What would we say to Deval Patrick? Would we say, ‘hey, the black dude who just won? Is that what it would sound like?</i>
Students	<i>No! [laughing]</i>
Student 3	<i>It would say, ‘dear and his name, please...</i>

---

Teacher            *Okay, so your language is much more polite.*

---

In this example, the students identified the appropriate type of oral language to use when speaking with the governor and this comprehension was expected to transfer to students' writing. The instruction gave students some understanding of how audience affects language. Table 4.12 displays another teacher's instruction that made the association between audience and language. In this example, the teacher explicitly states that language use must be appropriate for one's audience.

Table 4.12 *Conversation Between a Teacher and Student Focused on Audience*

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Teacher	<i>Your audience is the Superintendent. So you would write, 'What's up!'</i>
Students	<i>No!</i>
Teacher	<i>You need to use language appropriate for your audience.</i>

---

In addition, instruction began to emphasize audience when teaching language features, such as adjectives and vocabulary. For example, when educating students about adjectives, a teacher commented:

*Your readers, people who read your writing, can't see what is in your head. So, when you are writing, you have to describe something to your readers. So when you write, I want to be able to see what is in your mind. If you are writing about a volcano, you want to describe the hot lava coming out on top.*

Also, students' comments suggest they were developing an understanding between audience and language. For instance, when discussing a report about volcanoes written for second graders, a student commented, *"I told them about the volcanoes when they*

*erupt. I gave them some vocabulary words they might now know.*” In this case, the student recognized that the audience, second graders, may not have the background knowledge to understand some of the vocabulary in the text and provided brief definitions of key words associated with the topic.

Instruction seldom linked audience and language with voice in text. Only rarely did teachers briefly mention this connection in their comments with students. For instance, a teacher posed the question: *“How will audience determine the writer’s voice?”* Despite stating this question, explicit instruction from the teacher was not forthcoming. In a different situation, another teacher provided some instruction with students about audience, language and voice. The teacher commented, *“In writing if we can hear someone’s voice, we can see it in the words they choose—the words I use convince people to buy my artwork [referring to a persuasive piece of writing].”* Then, the teacher had students examine a text. The students were asked to highlight words in the text that they thought fostered the author’s voice. Upon completing this task, the teacher and students discussed the highlighted words in regards to how they potentially developed the author’s voice. Despite these examples, instruction focused on the link between audience and language with voice rarely occurred across all teachers and happened infrequently within an individual teacher’s instruction.

Overall, changes occurred to instruction about tenor during the intervention. These changes included an increased emphasis on teaching about audience and its influences on text, having students write for an array of authentic audiences, highlighting the connection between audience and content, and beginning to teach the link between



audience and language use. Analyses also indicated that more work is required in order to improve instruction about tenor. This includes further developing teachers' knowledge about tenor since analyses of third year instruction indicated that some teachers possess misunderstandings about tenor. For example, a teacher commented, "*Even in one piece of writing there might be different voices.*" In addition, despite the discussed changes in instruction, more instruction devoted to teaching tenor is required as instruction remains very limited.

### **Expressive**

Analyses indicated changes did not occur to the content of the writing instruction regarding expressive, which included the content about spelling, punctuation, and grammar. In all three years of the intervention, instruction did not emphasize this content during writing. Rather, the content was only briefly referenced during instruction (see Table 4.13).

Table 4.13 *References to Expressive Across Intervention Years*

	Student	<i>How do you spell poison?</i>
Third Year	Teacher	<i>Just sound it out because we never really worry about the spelling until we publish.</i>
	Teacher	<i>Wait! Does she have paragraphs [referring to a student's writing]?</i>
Second Year	All Students	<i>Yes!</i>

---

	Teacher	<i>And how can you tell?</i>
	Student (1)	<i>Indents</i>

---

	Teacher	<i>Don't worry about spelling right now. You are working on your ideas. We fix spelling when we edit, but we aren't going to edit these, this is just about the ideas.</i>
First Year	Teacher	<i>Oh, very great [referring to the content of the student's writing]. So I like it, but I don't like the spelling, so go back and look that over.</i>
	Teacher	<i>Is everyone starting with an indent?</i>

---

Instruction reviewing spelling, punctuation, and grammar likely occurred, but perhaps took place outside of the designated time for writing and therefore was not documented. This identified lack of emphasis on content associated with expressive may be due to the teachers' professional development not focusing on this content.

### **Teaching Strategies of the Writing Instruction**

Analyses of the fourth and fifth grade teachers' writing instruction were also conducted to answer the second research question: *Do teachers' writing instructional strategies change regarding the stages of the pedagogical cycle during the three years of the writing intervention, if so, how?* As discussed in Chapter Two, the pedagogical cycle is composed of four stages: *negotiating field, deconstruction, joint construction, and independent construction* (Rothery, 1996). The cycle provides a way for teachers to better support students' learning about the genres.

Analyses of the fourth and fifth grade teachers' writing instruction during the three years of the intervention indicated teaching strategies changed. Specifically, these adjustments happened in two of the four stages of the pedagogical cycle: negotiating field and deconstruction of text. The stages of joint construction and independent construction remained mostly unchanged. Teacher professional development provided by the school-university partnership did not begin to emphasize the stages of the pedagogical cycle until the second year of the intervention. Despite the professional development not having this focus in the first year, teachers' instruction interestingly started to employ aspects of some of these stages. The forthcoming section reviews the findings from the analyses.

### **Negotiating Field**

Particularly in the third year of the intervention, instruction evolved regarding the use of negotiating field. Changes to this teaching strategy involved devoting more time to immersing students in their writing topics. In addition, a few teachers began to use the expertise of the science teacher in order to better educate students about science-based topics, which they were writing about. Also, some teachers started to take strategic actions in order to more effectively support students' learning about writing topics. These actions included the whole class studying a specific topic as well as small groups of students learning about a topic. Across this year of the intervention, this teaching strategy occurred primarily when teaching the genres of report, persuasive, and biography.

Instruction focused on negotiating field in the third year allocated more time than in previous years to teaching students about their writing topics. Most often this took the form of students reading about their topics in books and online. At times, a few teachers used videos with students. In addition, students were expected to record their findings using graphic organizers and in their writing notebooks. In previous years, teachers similarly employed this teaching strategy. For example, a SEI teacher in the first year had students write persuasive texts about protecting the rainforest. The teacher commented to students:

*[Student teacher's name] worked really hard to find some readings from the Internet to give us more evidence to support our ideas. This is hard readings [repeats in Spanish, lectura dura], especially for some of us, but just look for the main idea and use your bilingual dictionary.*

Moreover, the teacher had students highlight information in the texts pertinent to their topics. Students were then required to record the highlighted content in their writing notebooks.

Cutting across the years of the intervention, teachers frequently acquired sources, such as books and online text, for students to learn about their topics. Rarely were students required to locate these sources. For instance, in the second year, a teacher stated to students, *“Right, so we need to do some research. We need to know the habitat, the food, so I will give you everything you need.”*

In addition, selected topics for writing commonly came from the school curriculum. For example, in the third year, a teacher commented to students, *“So I am*

*going to have you choose any topic we have studied in social studies so far. Up to and including what we have studied so far.”* Most chosen topics came from the social studies and science curriculum. Some of these topics included: *the patriots, the loyalists, the neutralists, Galileo, Pocahontas, and sedimentary rocks*. The topics were written in report, persuasive, and biography genres.

Despite this similar approach to negotiating field across the years of the intervention, in the third year, a few teachers, as mentioned, began to utilize the expertise of the science teacher to more effectively educate students about their topics (see Table 4.14).

Table 4.14 *Conversation Involving Teacher, Science Teacher, and Students*

---

Teacher	<i>I am going to do a report on rocks. What do I need?</i>
Student (1)	<i>Research.</i>
Student (2)	<i>Reasons to back up.</i>
Teacher	<i>Back up what?</i>
Student (2)	<i>Your thesis statement.</i>
Teacher	<i>So I have a thesis statement and now I need to do research. Why do I need to do research?</i>
Student (3)	<i>To find the words.</i>
Teacher	<i>Why do I need to find words?</i>
Student (3)	<i>To get more information.</i>
Teacher	<i>If my thesis statement is about how sedimentary rocks are formed, what kinda research?</i>

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Student (3)	<i>About sedimentary rocks.</i>
Teacher	<i>I am going to need to know a lot about sedimentary rocks before I can write my report. So [science teacher's name] is giving up her lunch to work with us.</i>
Science Teacher	<i>You have already started the research by answering the big questions—how are sedimentary rocks formed in your notebooks? That is part of the research.</i>
Student (4)	<i>And we watched movies.</i>

---

During this instruction, the science teacher displayed a chart containing vocabulary about sedimentary rocks to the class. The science teacher commented to students about the vocabulary chart:

*Anything in orange is everyday language and everything in purple is scientific language. I only want you to use words that you know. If you want to use the everyday language because that makes sense to you now, that is ok.*

By including the science teacher in the negotiating field process, students may have developed a better understanding of their writing topics.

In the third year, a few teachers also began having students in their classes write about the same topic, such as *snakes*. These shared topics were decided on by the teachers and students. In one class, the teacher shared a text about snakes with the students and they liked the topic so much, all of the students decided to write a report about snakes. Furthermore, some teachers had students work in small groups comprised

of three to five students. Each group had a specific topic, such as *great white sharks*. Regardless of a group's topic, all of the groups had to address similar aspects of their topics, such as *where they live* and *what they eat*. In previous years, teachers had students select their own topics and students worked independently when negotiating the field.

Having the same writing topic for classes and strategically grouping students by writing focus may have led students to better understand their writing topics. This increased knowledge likely stemmed from the teacher being able to more efficiently scaffold the learning about the topics, as well as students better assisting one another.

### **Deconstruction of Text**

In the third year of the intervention, teachers' instruction changed regarding use of deconstruction of text. These changes included all teachers beginning to employ this instructional strategy, its implementation across multiple taught genres, and more mediums being used such as books, posters, online videos of political campaigns, product advertisements, and newspaper advertisements. Cutting across all of these superficial changes was a transformation in instruction that accompanied the deconstruction of text. The quality of this instruction varied across teacher and taught genre. Regardless, these changes included robust instruction focused on the purposes of the genres and their text structure features and some teaching of tenor and features associated with various mediums.

During deconstructing, the depth of taught content varied and was contingent on the teacher and the taught genre. However, most deconstruction of text occurred during

the persuasive genre. For example, when studying the persuasive genre, a fifth grade teacher commented to students, “*Okay, so now you are going to look at the newspaper [advertisements] with your partner and you are going to look at what you are being persuaded to do.*” This activity involved students deconstructing advertisements in order to better understand their features, such as imagery, and how they functioned to persuade readers to buy products.

In the third year, teachers’ instruction began using deconstructing to teach the purposes of the genres and their text structure features and was only rarely employed to teach language. For instance, when studying the persuasive genre, a fourth grade teacher required students for homework to deconstruct a text using a graphic organizer that included a place for a thesis statement and for reasons and supporting evidence. Dr. Brisk used this graphic organizer with teachers during the professional development.

The content recorded by the students for homework in the graphic organizers was then used to facilitate the teacher’s writing instruction in class focused on the text structure features: *thesis statement, reasons, and evidence* (see Table 4.15).

Table 4.15 *Conversation Between Teacher and Students Focusing on Text Structure*

*Features*

---

Teacher	<i>Last night for homework we had a story entitled, ‘A Hot Problem.’ What was the genre of writing?</i>
Student (1)	<i>Persuasive.</i>
Teacher	<i>Who can recall what the thesis statement was?</i>
Student (2)	<i>We [referring to students] should have hot water in the bathrooms.</i>

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Teacher	<i>What were the reasons?</i>
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Students shared their findings from their graphic organizers with the teacher. Then, the teacher compiled the content in one graphic organizer displayed on the board at the front of the room (see Table 4.16).

Table 4.16 *Teacher's Graphic Organizer*


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Persuasive Piece	
Thesis	<i>We should have hot water</i>
Statement:	
Reason 1:	<i>Water is too cold.</i>
Support:	<i>A. Hands are numb and froze.</i> <i>B. Some of the kids don't want to wash their hands because it's too cold.</i> <i>C. The water hurts.</i>
Reason 2:	<i>Having no hot water makes us feel unimportant.</i>
Support:	<i>A. School is too cheap to spend the money on us.</i> <i>B. Feel foolish when you turn on the hot water facet and nothing comes out.</i> <i>C. Without the students there would be no school.</i>
Reason 3:	<i>Cold water does not kill the germs on our hands.</i>
Support:	<i>A. Even with soap, cold water will not kill germs.</i> <i>B. Germs live in cold water.</i> <i>C. Does the school want us to be sick?</i>

---

Following the completion of the graphic organizer, the teacher and students discussed how the content unfolded in the text through the text structure features. The teacher emphasized how the author had a plan, which was evident given how the content was presented (see Table 4.17).

Table 4.17 *Conversation Between Teacher and Student About a Text*

Teacher	<i>So the reason I had you take the writing sample to fill in the graphic organizer is because when we start to write out own persuasive piece, we need to start like this before we put it into paragraph form. What did you notice in the first paragraph compared to the other ones? Did the author have a plan?</i>
Student	<i>It was clear the author had a plan because all of the reasons were in the first paragraph in order.</i>
Teacher	<i>So in the first paragraph all of the reasons for the argument were there. So I hope you noticed after the first paragraph each paragraph, like the second one here [points to the paragraph in the text], contained a reason with evidence to support the reason.</i>

In addition, teachers use of deconstructing further evolved in the third year and began, though rare, to focus on tenor—specifically audience. For example, a fifth grade teacher had students deconstruct an online Nike video advertisement. The instruction focused on the advertisement’s purpose and audience (see Table 4.18).

Table 4.18 *Deconstructing Text Focused on Audience*

Teacher	<i>What is this ad trying to accomplish? What is its purpose?</i>
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- Student (1) *To persuade us to play outside.*
- Student (2) *I think it might be saying to push ourselves to do something that we didn't think we could do.*
- Student (3) *I think it is trying to get us to buy Nike shoes.*
- Teacher *Does anyone dispute? [Pause] I concur. Why?*
- Student (3) *They have lots of pictures of shoes and the Nike website at the end.*
- Teacher *What do they care about?*
- Student (4) *Money.*
- Student (5) *[For us to] buy their product.*
- Teacher *What does that make you want to do when you see that ad?*
- Student (5) *Not buy the product.*
- Teacher *Why?*
- Student (5) *They don't show me the product, just people riding bikes and playing basketball. Why do you put that in the commercial? Say that it was my grandmother and she saw the commercial, she wouldn't want to buy this product, she would just change the channel.*
- Teacher *Okay, good point. Who do you think Nike's audience is?*
- Student (5) *All of us.*
- Student (6) *Us.*
- Student (5) *The class.*
- Teacher *The class, me included?*
- Student (7) *I dispute.*
-

---

Student (8)	<i>People who like to play sports.</i>
Teacher	<i>What else did the people have in common?</i>
Student (8)	<i>Like what does swimming have to do with Nike?</i>
Teacher	<i>Is there any kind of sports equipment that Nike doesn't sell? Who is the audience, active people, people who play sports?</i>
Student (9)	<i>I thought it was like the whole world.</i>
Teacher	<i>What else did all these people have in common? Watch it again. Who is Nike's audience? Who is Nike trying to persuade to buy its product? Think about it.</i>

---

Moreover, teachers began using deconstructing to examine features associated with specific mediums, such as posters. This primarily occurred regarding report posters. In one example, a fifth grade teacher deconstructed report posters with students. While implementing this teaching strategy, the teacher posed questions to the students regarding commonalities among the different posters (see Table 4.19).

Table 4.19 *Deconstructing Text to Understand Medium*

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Teacher	<i>What do they all have in common?</i>
Student (1)	<i>They all give information on one topic.</i>
Teacher	<i>Yes. What else do they have in common?</i>
Student (2)	<i>Pictures</i>
Student (3)	<i>Bold print</i>
Teacher	<i>How do you know what they are about?</i>
Student (4)	<i>They have titles.</i>

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Teacher	<i>They tell you what it is about.</i>
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Instruction focused on the different features within a medium seldom occurred and was not evident across all teachers.

Prior to the third year, teachers' instruction used deconstructing less and when it was employed the focus was primarily on the content of the text and less on its discourse features. For example, in the first year, when teaching students about the persuasive genre, a teacher had students deconstruct a fictional narrative, which was a different genre than the one being studied. The content of the story was about a girl persuading her parents to get earrings. The instruction centered on the content of the girl's argument for earrings, rather than the features of the text (see Table 4.20).

Table 4.20 *Deconstructing Text Focused on Text Content*

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Teacher	<i>What makes this story persuasive?</i>
Student (1)	<i>She's persuading her parents to get earrings. She wants them so bad. She tells them she will do things for a year.</i>
Teacher	<i>Yes, she says she will make sacrifices.</i>
Student (2)	<i>She says she's mature enough.</i>
Student (3)	<i>She cries.</i>
Student (4)	<i>She'll walk.</i>
Teacher	<i>She'll walk the dog. She says she's old enough, just like [student's name] said. Does she use good enough persuasive tactics to persuade us that she is mature enough?</i>

---

During the first year, despite this emphasis on the content, a few instances occurred where instruction emphasized discourse features of a text. For example, while studying the persuasive genre, a teacher had students deconstruct newspaper advertisements. The teacher read the advertisements to students and then discussed them with the students (see Table 4.21).

Table 4.21 *Deconstructing of Text Emphasizing Discourse Features*

Teacher	<i>So what is the author's claim here? Let's give [student's name] a chance because this is hers [student had brought the text from home].</i>
Student	<i>The author is trying to convince us to exercise.</i>
Teacher	<i>Yes, so how is the author making this claim? How is the author trying to persuade us to exercise?</i>

In a different situation, another teacher required students to deconstruct each other's texts. The teacher told the students to "*focus in on going through your partner's piece to look for adjectives.*" Overall, despite a few instances, teachers' instruction accompanying the deconstructing lacked depth of content in comparison to instruction that happened in the third year.

A significant shift occurred in the second year regarding how teachers and students examined texts. They began to look at text not through the lens of a reader, but rather through the lens of a writer. This transformation brought about writing instruction focused on how texts express meaning. For instance, in the second year, teachers began deconstructing below grade-level reading books with students. They used these books to

illustrate discourse features. Table 4.22 displays a teacher discussing with students the use of these texts for writing.

Table 4.22 *Deconstructing Text Through the Lens of a Writer*

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Teacher	<i>As [student's name] said, this looks like a kid's book but we are looking at this for different reasons. Why are we looking at this?</i>
Student (1)	<i>It's our genres.</i>
Student (2)	<i>Cause we are writing one like it.</i>
Teacher	<i>Yes. We are authors, so we are looking at this as authors. We want to find out how this is put together...</i>

---

This change in how texts were viewed enacted more instruction that focused on the purposes of the genres and their text structure features. Despite this change from focusing on the content of a text to its discourse features, teachers' instruction in the second year remained vague in comparison to what occurred in the third year. For instance, a teacher assigned students homework that required them to deconstruct a persuasive text. The teacher commented to the students, "*Now tonight for homework, you are going to pick one commercial or one advertisement from the newspaper and write down one strategy that the ad used.*" The teacher provided no discussion about the different strategies that may be used to persuade an audience.

### **Joint and Independent Construction of Text**

In the third year of the intervention, instruction mostly remained unchanged regarding joint and independent construction of text. The reason for this likely stems

from the teachers' professional development not reviewing these teaching strategies until midway through the third year. Regardless, instruction in the final year began to include more collaborative writing between students.

During the intervention, instruction rarely included joint construction of text that involved teachers writing with students. When this did happen, it primarily occurred in the SEI classes. Instead, instruction more frequently involved students working collectively to construct texts. This happened most often in the third year compared with the other years and included students jointly developing animal report posters and persuasive essays.

The teaching strategy most commonly employed across all years of the intervention was independent construction of text. This involved students working individually to construct texts in different genres and in various mediums. A few teachers expected students to only minimally speak during writing time and thus some students wrote in isolation from their peers. For instance, in the first year of the intervention, a teacher commented to students, "*There is too much talking! You know this is not how Writer's Workshop works. This is independent writing time.*" This expectation did appear to dissipate somewhat in the third year of the intervention.

A likely reason for teachers requiring students to work independently may come from their requirement of having to assess students' writing abilities. This task becomes more difficult when students work together. Teacher must determine an individual's ability from the collectively constructed text. For instance, in the first year, a teacher expressed to students why they were to work independently. The teacher commented:



*I would like you to do this independently because you are going to publish each story. It is sometimes easy to work with a partner and then ideas seep into your head, and they may not have meant to copy, but then we [referring to teachers] find two stories with different animals but the same story. So I would like everyone to hand in an original story.*

Regardless of the specific reason, overall, instruction regarding joint and independent construction of text remained mostly unchanged during the intervention.

## CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS FOR THE THIRD AND FOURTH RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### Students' Writing Performance

Analyses of students' writing scores on items from the rubric between Time 1 and Time 2 were conducted to answer the third research question: *Does fourth and fifth grade students' writing performance change after exposure to an academic year of the writing intervention, if so, how?* Also, analyses were performed to answer these research questions: *If change occurred, do differences exist between fourth and fifth grade students? If change occurred, do differences exist between monolingual and bilingual students?*

The demographics of the final study sample ( $N=68$ ) are displayed in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 *Demographics of the Sample (N=68)*

Variable	Level	N	%
Grade	Fourth	41	60.3
	Fifth	27	39.7
Teacher	Mason	20	29.4
	Gates	21	30.9
	Sudbury	13	19.1
	Prince	14	20.6
Gender	Male	37	54.4
	Female	31	45.6
Race	Black/African_American	22	32.4

	Hispanic/Latino	35	51.5
	Asian	6	8.8
	White	2	2.9
	Multi-Race, Non- Hispanic/Latino	2	2.9
Free_Lunch	Yes	59	86.8
	No	8	11.8
High_Needs	Yes	63	92.6
	No	4	5.9
LEP	Yes	24	35.3
	No	43	63.2
LANGUAGE	Bilingual	41	60.3
	Monolingual	26	39.7
SPED	Yes	9	13.2
	No	58	85.3

Examination of the descriptive statistics for all 28 items for the original sample ( $N=71$ ) showed problems with three participants regarding their scores on all 28 items for Time 2. These participants' writing pieces were reexamined and deemed to be invalid and likely stemmed from the participants' behavioral issues, which potentially affected their performance. These three participants were removed from the study analyses.

### Analyses of All Participants on All Items from Time 1 to Time 2

The descriptive statistics for all items are displayed in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 *Descriptive Statistics for All Items*

<b>Descriptive Statistics</b>					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Pre_Title	68	1	3	1.25	0.53
Post_Title	68	1	4	1.24	0.55
Pre_Discourse1	68	1	3	1.59	0.63
Post_Discourse1	68	1	3	1.75	0.61
Pre_Discourse2	68	1	3	1.62	0.69
Post_Discourse2	68	1	3	1.89	0.73
Pre_Discourse3	68	1	3	1.44	0.63
Post_Discourse3	68	1	3	1.63	0.67
Pre_Text_Connectives	68	1	3	1.35	0.54
Post_Text_Connectives	68	1	3	1.49	0.56
Pre_Theme	68	1	3	1.49	0.59
Post_Theme	68	1	4	1.59	0.65
Pre_Reference_Ties1	68	0	3	2.53	0.70
Post_Reference_Ties1	68	1	4	2.65	0.69
Pre_Reference_Ties2	68	0	3	2.31	0.67
Post_Reference_Ties2	68	0	3	2.24	0.67
Pre_Reference_Ties3	68	0	4	3.38	1.07

Post_Reference_Ties3	68	0	4	3.4	0.88
Pre_Paragraph_S1	68	1	3	1.81	0.60
Post_Paragraph_S1	68	1	3	2.01	0.59
Pre_Paragraph_S2	68	1	3	1.74	0.48
Post_Paragraph_S2	68	1	3	1.93	0.43
Pre_Paragraph_S3	68	0	3	0.76	1.26
Post_Paragraph_S3	68	0	3	0.96	1.29
Pre_Noun_Groups1	68	1	3	1.93	0.63
Post_Noun_Groups1	68	1	3	2.09	0.66
Pre_Noun_Groups2	68	1	3	1.84	0.61
Post_Noun_Groups2	68	1	3	1.94	0.62
Pre_Noun_Groups3	68	1	3	1.34	0.51
Post_Noun_Groups3	68	1	3	1.49	0.53
Pre_Verb_Groups1	68	1	3	1.62	0.55
Post_Verb_Groups1	68	1	3	1.88	0.56
Pre_Verb_Groups2	68	2	3	2.68	0.47
Post_Verb_Groups2	68	1	3	2.53	0.53
Pre_Adverbials	68	1	3	1.79	0.61
Post_Adverbials	68	1	3	2.03	0.55
Pre_Grammatical_M	68	1	4	2.85	0.92
Post_Grammatical_M	68	1	4	2.78	0.77
Pre_Knowledge	68	1	3	1.85	0.55

Post_Knowledge	68	1	3	2.03	0.55
Pre_Vocabulary	68	1	3	1.97	0.42
Post_Vocabulary	68	1	3	2.1	0.52
Pre_Audience1	68	1	3	2.26	0.68
Post_Audience1	68	1	3	2.31	0.60
Pre_Audience2	68	1	3	1.61	0.55
Post_Audience2	68	1	3	1.84	0.59
Pre_Voice1	68	2	3	2.62	0.49
Post_Voice1	68	2	3	2.54	0.50
Pre_Voice2	68	2	3	2.82	0.38
Post_Voice2	68	1	3	2.82	0.42
Pre_Punctuation	68	1	4	2.50	0.66
Post_Punctuation	68	1	4	2.49	0.70
Pre_Spelling	68	1	4	2.50	0.61
Post_Spelling	68	1	4	2.62	0.65
Pre_Word_Count	68	38	308	125.19	62.69
Post_Word_Count	68	19	372	174.01	74.06
Word_Count_Change	68	-182	266	48.82	87.42

---

Increases in sample score means on 22 items from Time 1 to Time 2 were

identified and decreases in sample score means on 6 items were found. Paired-Samples *t* tests were carried out on all 28 items to determine if significant differences existed between Time 1 and Time 2. Eight of the items had significant increases in performance

between Time 1 to Time 2 (see Table 5.3), while one item had a significant decrease in performance (see Table 5.4). No significant differences were found on the remaining 19 items.

Table 5.3 *Paired-Samples t Tests with Significant Increases from Time 1 to Time 2*

	Time 1		Time 2		df	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Discourse2	1.62	0.68	1.87	0.73	67	-2.1	.040
Discourse3	1.44	0.63	1.63	0.67	67	-2.08	.040
Paragraph	1.81	0.6	2.01	0.59	67	-2.42	.020
Structure1							
Paragraph	1.74	0.48	1.93	0.43	67	-2.85	0.010
Structure2							
Verb	1.62	0.55	1.88	0.56	67	-3.01	0
Group1							
Knowledge	1.85	0.55	2.03	0.55	67	-2.44	0.020
Audience2	1.62	0.55	1.84	0.59	67	-2.65	0.010
Word	125.19	62.69	174.01	74.06	67	-4.61	0
Count							

Table 5.4 *Paired-Samples t Tests with Significant Decreases from Time 1 to Time 2*

	Time 1		Time 2		df	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Verb	2.68	0.47	2.53	0.53	67	2	.049
Groups2							

### **Principal Components Analysis**

Principal components analysis was used in search of the simplest structure to assess writing performance. This analysis was appropriate for the study because the procedure provides the means to derive a simple representation from among a series of intercorrelated variables (Afifi, Clark & May, 2004). This process extracts a series of factors that combine relevant aspects of writing performance that result in related areas captured in the SFL-informed rubric used to score students' writing. Scores from variables on Time 2 were used to carry out this analysis. Time 2 scores were used rather than Time 1 scores because they theoretically better represented desired writing performance.

Principal components analysis was conducted with promax rotation. Promax rotation was used on the belief that the extracted variables could be theoretically correlated. This oblique rotation allows for extracted variables to intercorrelate, while other rotation procedures, such as varimax rotation, preclude intercorrelation (Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum & Strahan, 1999).



The principal components procedure initially extracted 8 factors. An iterative process further reduced these factors. First, the total variance explained was examined to determine if extracted factors were significant (i.e., eigenvalues greater than one). Factors not significant were removed. Then, the communalities table output was examined to determine if extracted factor solutions contained variables that each accounted for at least half or .5 of the variance in the original variable. Identified variables with an extraction below .5 were removed and the analysis was rerun. This process was carried out until all variables contained extractions greater than .5.

Next, the rotated component matrix table output was examined for complex structures. A complex structure occurs when a variable strongly loads (i.e., greater than .4) on multiple factors. Examination of the matrix showed that multiple complex structures existed and therefore those variables were extracted. The remaining variables all had a simple structure, which involved strongly loading on only one factor. Then, factors that had only a single variable loading on them were extracted. Through this iterative process involving running dimension reduction in SPSS, removing variables that loaded on multiple factors, extracting variables that were not strongly loaded, removing factors with eigenvalues below one, and continually rerunning dimension reduction each time a variable was removed, one latent variable was ultimately constructed.

This extracted factor had an eigenvalue of over 4, explained 67.47 percent of the variation, and was composed of 6 rubric items (see Table 5.5). These items measured performance in genre, text structure, language, and tenor and collectively were deemed to measure writing performance.

Table 5.5 Results From Principal Components Analysis for Writing Performance

Variable	Eigenvalue	Explained variation (%)	Loading
Writing Performance	4.05	67.47	
Discourse1			.86
Discourse2			.86
Discourse3			.75
Paragraph Structure1			.84
Adverbials			.85
Vocabulary			.77

Time 1 and Time 2 scores on these six items were summed to create the *Writing Performance* variables for both periods. These items had a score range of 13 points with a minimum score of 6 and a maximum score of 19. Measures of the *Writing Performance* variables are displayed in Table 5.6.

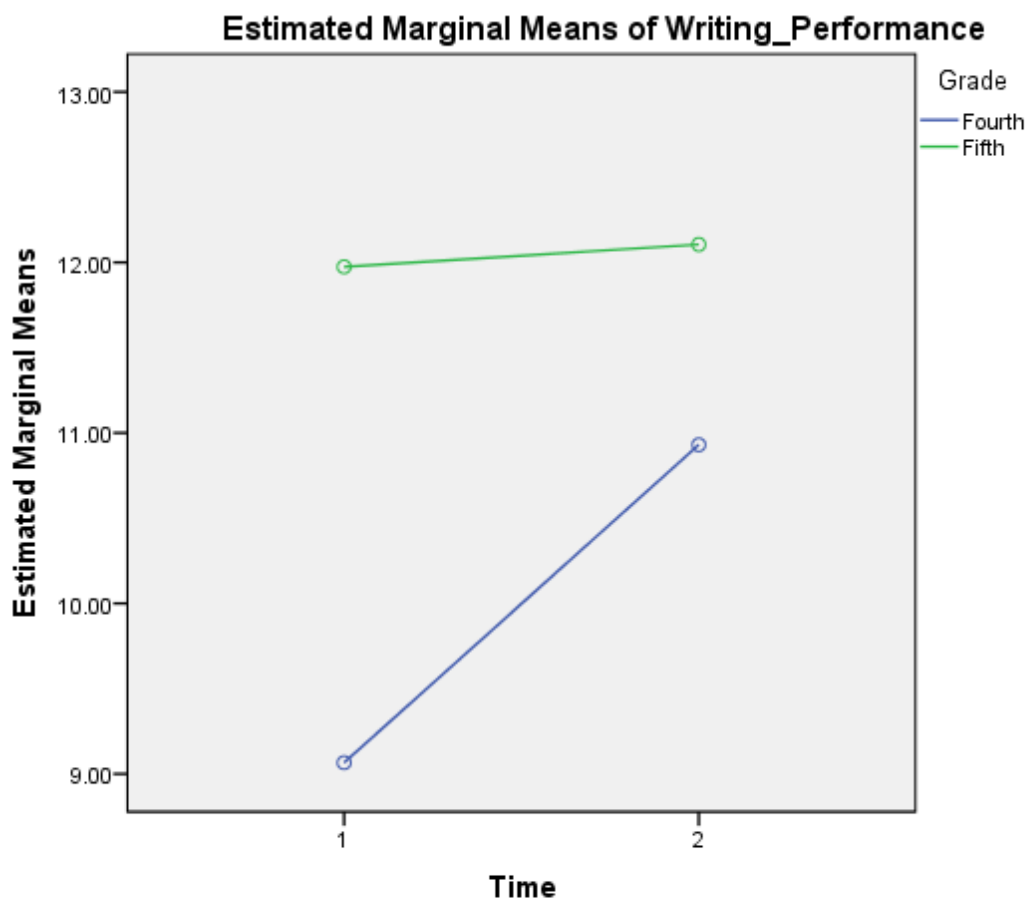
Table 5.6 Writing Performance for Fourth and Fifth Grades

	Fourth (N = 41)		Fifth (N = 27)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Time 1 Writing Performance	9.02	2.2	12.03	2.44
Time 2 Writing Performance	11.02	3.24	11.96	2.56

### **Analyses of Time and Grade on Writing Performance**

The forthcoming analyses report partial eta-squared as an effect size indicator whereby estimates between .01 and .05 are considered small, .06 to .14 are considered medium, and estimates greater than .14 are considered large. A repeated-measures ANCOVA was performed to test the effects of time and grade on *Writing Performance*, covarying out the effect of change to word count from Time 1 to Time 2. The variance attributed to change to word count was parceled out given the study focused on quality and not quantity of writing.

Results showed no significant main effect for time ( $F(1, 65) = .89, p = .35$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .01$ ) and a significant main effect for grade ( $F(1, 65) = 14.2, p = .00$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .18$ ). In addition, a significant time X grade interaction was present ( $F(1, 65) = 5.36, p = .02$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .08$ ). Examination of the data showed that fourth graders made the most improvement in writing performance over time (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 *Fourth and Fifth Grade Writing Performance Over Time*

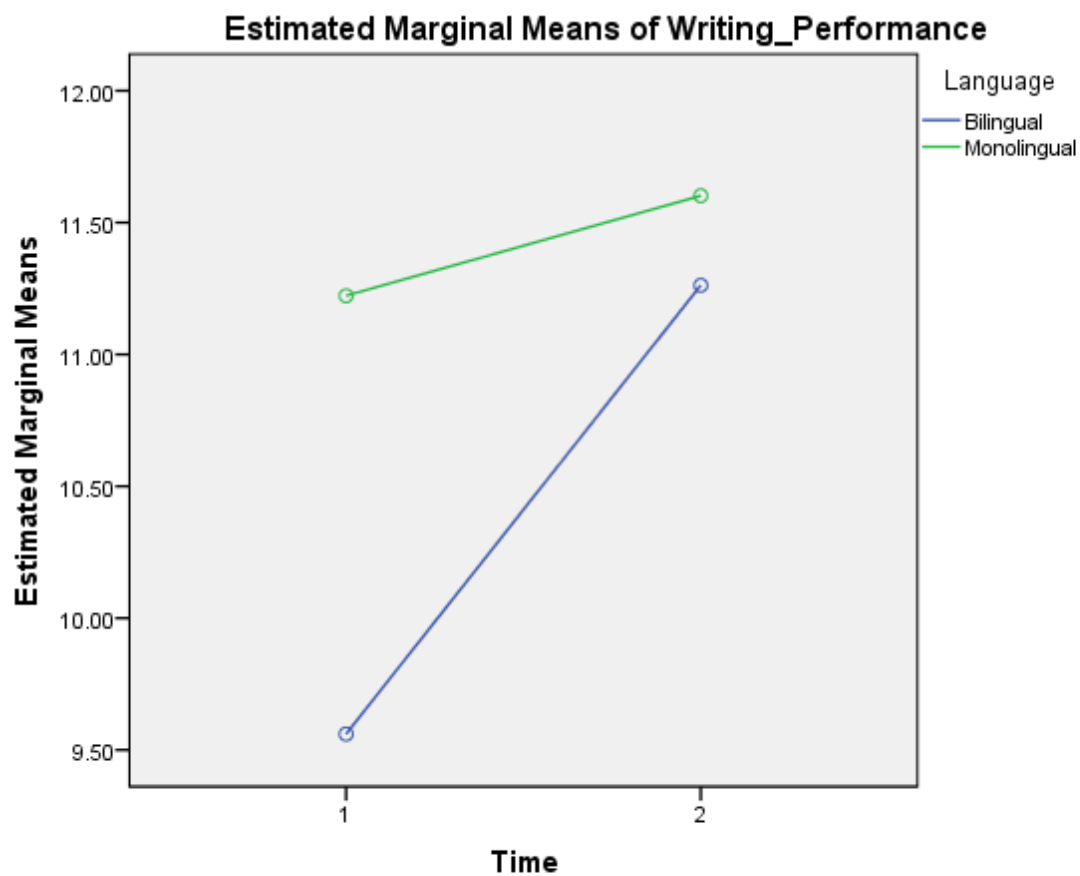
Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Word\_Count\_Change = 48.8235

### **Analyses of Time and Language on Writing Performance**

Another repeated-measures ANCOVA was carried out to test the effects of time and language on *Writing Performance*, covarying out the effect of grade and change to word count. Results showed a significant main effect for time ( $F(1, 64) = 4.09$ ,  $p = .047$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .06$ ) and no significant main effect for language ( $F(1, 64) = 3.11$ ,  $p = .08$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .05$ ). Also, no significant time X language interaction existed ( $F(1, 64) = 2.83$ ,

$p = .1$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .04$ ). Examination of the data indicated both bilingual and monolingual participants had an increase in writing performance over time (see Figure 5.2). Despite the results showing no significant interaction between language and time, this interaction likely existed, but went undetected. The difference in compared sample sizes (41 to 27) in the repeated-measures ANCOVA likely concealed this interaction. An ANOVA was conducted that compared the means of change in writing performance from Time 1 to Time 2 between bilingual and monolingual students. A significant difference was found ( $F(1,66) = 8.52, p = .005$ ). This indicates that bilingual students improved more over time in writing performance compared with monolingual students.

Figure 5.2 *Bilingual and Monolingual Students' Writing Performance Over Time*



Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Word\_Count\_Change = 48.8235,  
Grade = 4.3971

In conclusion, fourth and fifth grade students' writing performance improved after exposure to an academic year of the intervention. This development in writing was greater for fourth grade students than for fifth grade students. Across all grades, bilingual students improved more than monolingual students during this academic period.

### **Relationship Between Writing Performance and MCAS**

Analyses of students' writing performance scores for Time 2 and students' scaled scores on the MCAS test in English language arts from Year 3 were conducted to answer the fourth research question: *Is there a relationship between students' writing performance and the MCAS test in English language arts?* In addition, analyses were performed to answer the research question: *If so, does this relationship vary as a function of language status?* Participants were 65 fourth and fifth grade students, of whom 40 were bilingual and 15 were monolingual.

The forthcoming analyses report the Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) whereby estimates less than 0.3 are considered weak, 0.3 and 0.7 are considered moderate, and estimates greater than 0.7 strong. The students' writing performance scores had a mean of 11.43 ( $SD = 3.05$ ) and were normally distributed (see Figure 5.3), while students' scaled scores on the MCAS had a mean of 236.09 ( $SD = 14.78$ ) and were also normally distributed (see Figure 5.4).

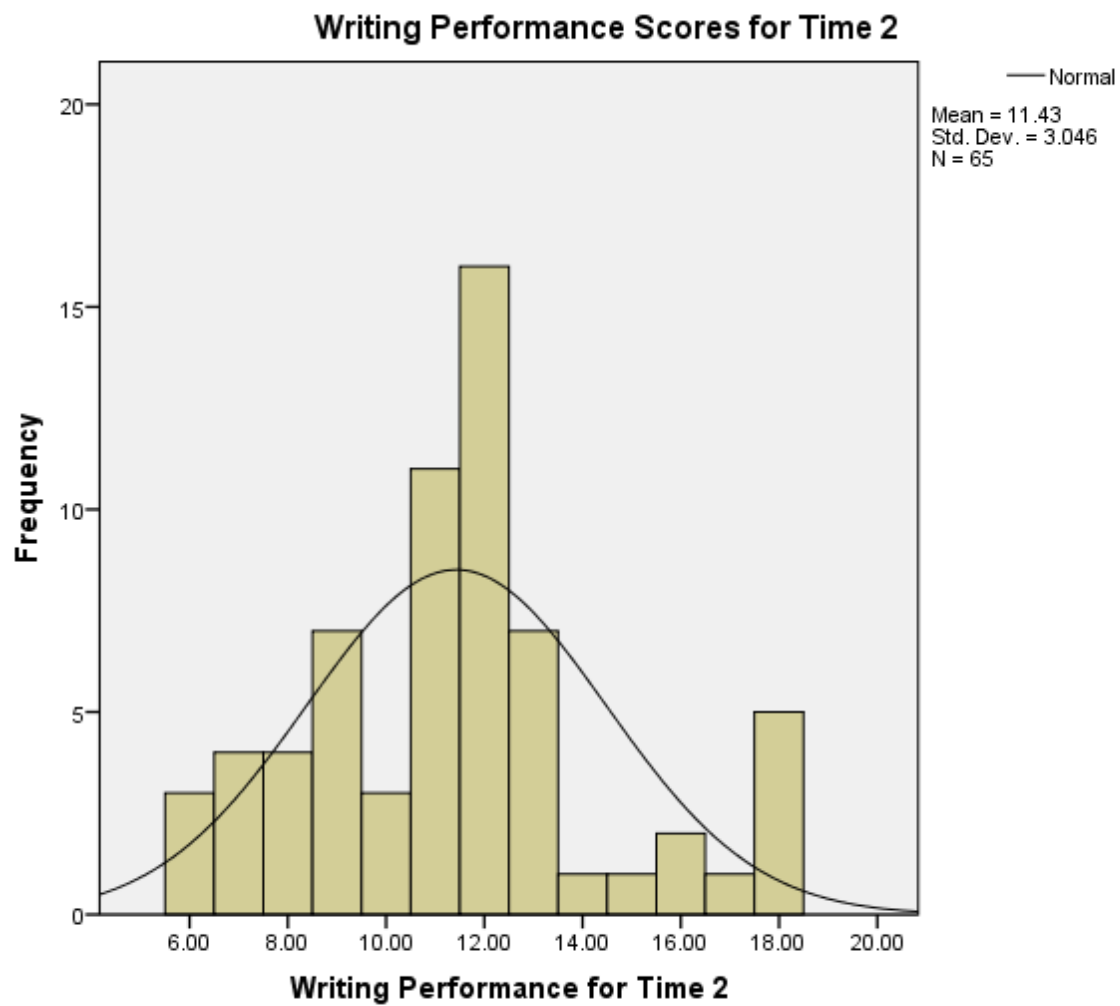
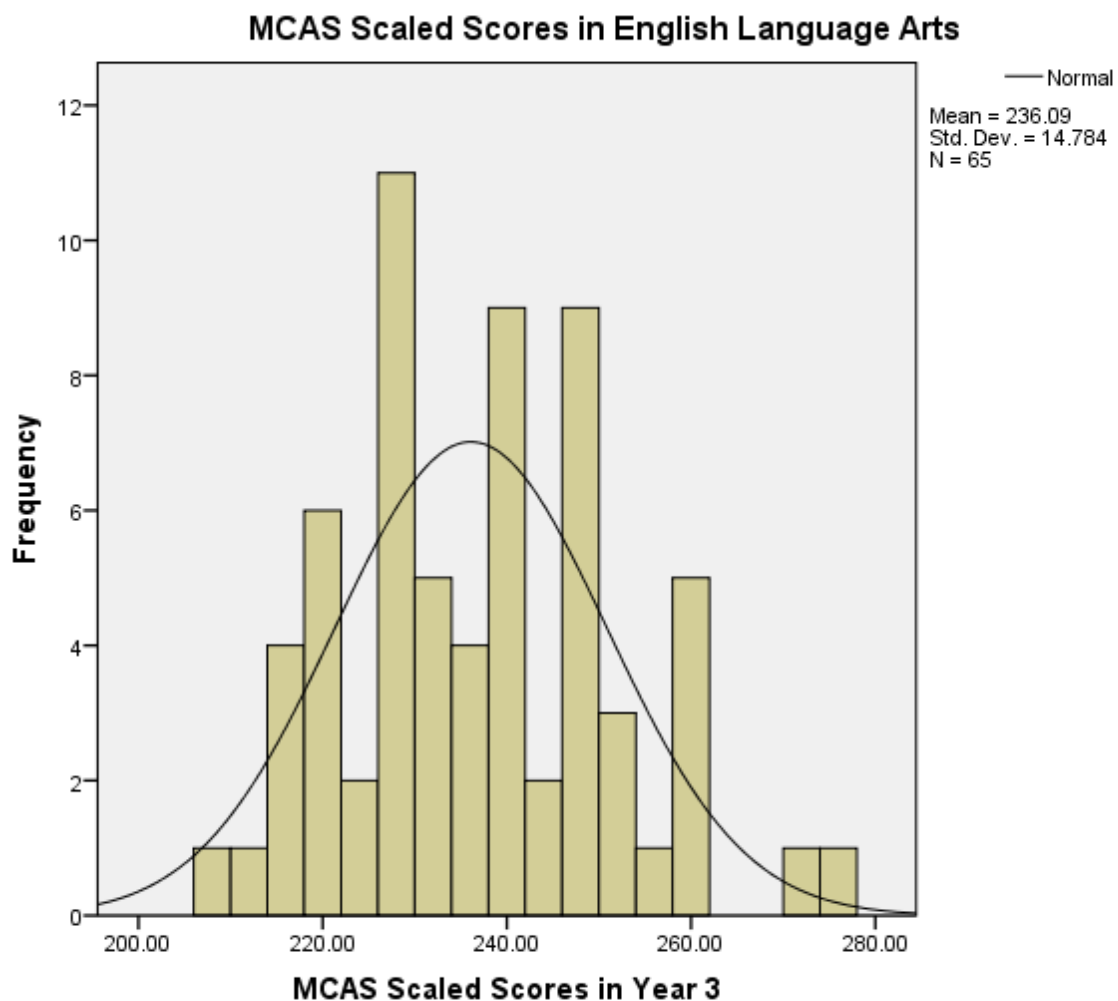
Figure 5.3 *Distribution of Students' Writing Performance*



Figure 5.4 *Distribution of Students' MCAS Scaled Scores*

A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between students' writing performance on Time 2 and MCAS performance. Results found a moderate positive correlation ( $r(63) = .581, p = .000$ ), indicating a significant linear relationship between the two variables. This relationship indicates that a student's writing performance tended to reflect his/her MCAS performance and vice versa. In addition, a significant strong positive relationship existed for monolingual students ( $r(23) = .695, p$

= .000) and a significant moderate positive correlation for bilingual students ( $r(38) = .489, p = .001$ ).

In summary, a positive relationship existed between students' writing performance and MCAS performance in English language arts. Moreover, this relationship varied as a function of language status: monolingual and bilingual. Monolingual students had a strong positive relationship between performances on the measures, while in comparison bilingual students only had a moderate positive relationship.

## CHAPTER SIX: RESULTS FOR THE FIFTH RESEARCH QUESTION

### Teachers' Experiences with the Partnership

Analyses of teachers' interviews were conducted to answer the fifth research question: *How do teachers articulate their experiences with the school-university partnership?*

Teachers expressed their experiences with the school-university partnership as overwhelmingly positive. They felt ownership and pride in the intervention. In addition, the teachers believed that the partnership stakeholders were supportive and validated their knowledge about student learning and instructional practices. They also felt that the partnership stakeholders treated them as professionals. Overall, these views contributed to the teachers having a favorable experience with the school-university partnership.

Teachers' positive views of the partnership were expressed across intervention years and were not contingent on teachers' taught grades or subjects (see Table 6.1). These views suggest teachers authentically valued the partnership.

Table 6.1 *Teachers' Comments about the Partnership by Year and Taught Area*

	Year	Taught Area
<i>It has just been a very delightful experience.</i>	2	Fourth
<i>I think for the kids and my team we've had a great experience with that [referring to working with the partnership], we've had to get our hands dirty, we've learned as we've gone.</i>	2	Fifth

<i>so this really helps me to be able to build some ideas on how to go about teaching writing, if I was given no curriculum.</i>	2	Science
<i>I really loved it, I thought it was great.</i>	3	Third
<i>I was going to say life altering, and then I had to think life altering and I'd say yeah that's accurate...it has completely, it has impacted all areas of my teaching but also my own personal writing so it has had a huge impact.</i>	3	Fifth
<i>I just think it has been great.</i>	3	Fourth
<i>It's been great, personally, I've learned a lot.</i>	3	Kindergarten

### **Ownership and Pride**

During the partnership, teachers participated in developing the writing approach. They were not given a curriculum or writing program. Instead, the writing approach was collaboratively developed by partnership stakeholders: Dr. Brisk, doctoral students, teachers, and a district literacy specialist. The university stakeholders provided the knowledge about SFL theory and the teachers and literacy specialist brought the expertise about pedagogy and knowledge about the Morrison students. Partnership stakeholders used this collective understanding to develop a writing approach.

Given that the teachers were actively involved in the development of the writing approach fostered a sense of ownership. For example, when discussing why she thought highly of the partnership and the writing intervention, a kindergarten teacher remarked:

*Maybe it was just our role in it [referring to writing approach] and we really cared about it and we also got to design it. It wasn't like given to us,*

*and it wasn't scripted, and it wasn't like this is what you have to do... [the approach was] I would say like more trial and error. We [referring to teachers] got some tools, we got the knowledge from Dr. Brisk of what these genres are, you know, so she kind of trained us ..., and then she was like pick one and kind of try it out. So we did, and kind of trial and error like making different lesson plans together and seeing what would work and what didn't work, and how to progress their [referring to students] learning forward. So we developed not like a script, but the ideas of like our content objectives, our language objectives, and how we would move the children through completing a unit of study in a genre. And we didn't have those before and it's still not scripted, it's decided, but it was our decision...so it was kind of a partnership of trial and error really.*

Having an active role in developing the writing approach enabled teachers to feel like empowered members of the partnership.

Teachers also expressed pride in their roles. This sense came about from the prestige associated with working with the university. Teachers visited the university campus in order to participate in professional development and to attend university functions, such as athletic events. These visits contributed to teachers feeling proud to work with the university and becoming active members of the university community at large. For instance, after attending a PD on campus, a teacher commented, *“And you know, I said on my way home, ‘Wow, I just wish I could go back to school there because*

*it just makes you feel good. You know, you're on a real campus, you know with real educators...*" This teacher further remarked:

*You know we [referring to teachers] got football tickets, and the boys [referring to his sons] went over [to the campus] and my daughter walked around the campus, and I'm like that's the Lynch School of Education and that's where we do our stuff [referring to PD], it just makes you proud to be part of it all.*

The status of the university contributed to teachers feeling a sense of pride with participating in the partnership.

### **Support and Validation**

Teachers also experienced this partnership positively because of the ongoing support and validation given for the work they do by university stakeholders. The support came primarily from working with Dr. Brisk, conversations with doctoral students working in teachers' classrooms, and resources. For example, a teacher commented:

*It's been very supportive. The first year I had someone observe in my classroom and that was nice. Just like feedback and seeing the child's growth over time. And Dr. Brisk has been helpful and we've gotten a lot of excellent resources from you guys: books, Elmos [referring to a piece of technology] .... So it's been great.*

Another teacher remarked, *"Well it has been great. It is nice to have another person in the room to talk about students, about writing, and of course all meetings with Dr. Brisk*

*and our professional development that has been very informative.*” The collaborative nature of the work led to better experiences.

The ongoing support appeared to mediate the difficulty of learning about SFL and brought about a positive experience for teachers working in the partnership. For instance, a teacher stated:

*The first meeting, I was a little overwhelmed because I didn't fully understand what SFL was, and I think the way to truly understand SFL is just to do it. It's hard to read about and grasp what it is. But truly the support from Dr. Brisk [and her doctoral] students have been fabulous whether it has been just a conversation after our lesson whether it was with [two doctoral students are named] ...so it has been great.*

By the partnership providing various forms of support for teachers, it enabled them to foster their understanding and to positively experience the intervention.

In addition, support came in the form of resources for teachers to reinforce their practice including books, class supplies, technology and funding for field trips. This contributed to bringing about a positive experience for teachers in the partnership. Teachers in urban schools often face situations where resources are extremely limited. However, at the Morrison, this situation was offset by the funding provided by the partnership. The teachers spoke very highly of the partnership's ability to obtain these resources. For instance, one teacher commented:

*I mean if there is anything we need, you guys [referring university stakeholders] are always around. All I have to do is email Dr. Brisk and it*

*shows up at my house and for a Boston Public School teacher, 'are you kidding me?' We asked her for twenty-five copies of Charlotte's Web and she gave us twenty-five copies, got us a bus and paid for the kids to see [the play] 'Charlotte's Web.'*

The resources not only supported teachers' learning and instruction with students, but also contributed to their perception of the partnership.

Positive experiences further emerged from validation regarding professional work. This most often came from Dr. Brisk confirming teachers' findings about their students' developmental abilities and their instructional practices. Some teachers noticed and expressed concern that their students were not developmentally ready to express meaning in certain ways in prose, for example, removing themselves (first person) from procedure text. Dr. Brisk acknowledged these findings. For instance, when discussing the partnership's work, a teacher stated that

*one of the of the big things that we [referring to partnership stakeholder] do, and that we've talked with Dr. Brisk about, and she is great with, you don't always hear maybe that kids aren't ready. We don't get that as teachers. They're supposed to be ready and they're supposed to do this, but if the kids are not ready, they can't do it, you know...*

Dr. Brisk validating these findings empowered the teachers.

At times, Dr. Brisk also recognized teachers' instructional practices in the classroom. For example, a Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) teacher spoke about how many educators visit her classroom and are "*appalled that my kids are writing in*



*Spanish.*” This teacher believes that allowing the students to write in their native language scaffolds writing development in English. The work with Dr. Brisk and the partnership supported this belief and instructional practice, which the teacher captures in her comment, “*You [referring to the partnership] give me validation.*” Another teacher captured this sentiment regarding validation of instruction practices by stating, “*It’s validated to me what I do.*” Within the partnership teachers were allowed to be leaders in their own classrooms.

### **Professionalism**

Teachers further had a positive experience with the partnership because they felt treated like professionals. Teachers’ feelings of being perceived as professionals came from how university stakeholders treated them and from the autonomy granted to them to make pedagogical decisions when teaching writing in the intervention.

Teachers felt that the university stakeholders valued their expertise and knowledge about education. In addition, teachers believed they were respected. For instance, a teacher commented:

*I love working with you guys and Dr. Brisk. A lot of times working in the city, a nice way of putting it, without being jaded and sour, you don’t get treated like a professional and you are expected to come somewhere afterschool and they stick you in a basement and they give you sour milk and you are supposed to be happy about it and stay till eight and do all this extra stuff. I tell everyone, I love coming to BC, you roll out the red*

*carpet for us, it's the little things, you are treated like a professional therefore when you are asked to do something you don't even hesitate, 'sure I would do that for you.'*

Teachers' feelings of being viewed as professionals contributed to them having a positive experience with the partnership as well as their willingness to carry out partnership tasks.

Teachers also felt they were treated like professionals due to the autonomy they had to make pedagogical decisions. The partnership developed an approach to teaching writing. It did not implement a prescribed curriculum or writing program. Therefore, the writing approach required and encouraged teachers to make professional decisions regarding the scope and sequence of their writing instruction.

Teachers constructed writing plans in collaboration with other teachers in grade-level teams. These teams developed genre calendars that outlined the genres they planned to teach during the academic school year. In addition, teachers acquired knowledge of the genres through the professional development. Ultimately, teachers had the professional autonomy to make decisions regarding what to teach and how to teach it. The partnership provided guidance and support about genre content and teaching strategies, but teachers working in teams made the final decisions regarding pedagogy. Teachers very much appreciated this approach. For instance, a teacher commented, *"I really like the flexibility of the program and that the teachers have a lot of freedom to take the foundation but really run with it."* The teacher further remarked:

*Like I mentioned before, definitely the freedom, like I said, I can go and make a thematic [unit]. I can pull in my social studies, my reading*

*program. I think a lot of times the programs are so rigid now you're flipping to the day of the guide. I think with this it's great. We can get the genre but at the same time we can do it so it's somewhat motivational for the kids...I just think it gives a lot more to the entire curriculum...*

Another teacher stated:

*I do like to see that we have the freedom to choose different genres, you know, like when we had the curriculum before we had to go with a specific genre for each unit and then we had to follow that, like in a pattern. So now...we have the freedom to choose how we want to address a curriculum.*

This teacher continued discussing why she felt it had been successful, “*because of the reason that we can focus more on the needs of the students.*”

The autonomy teachers had to make pedagogical decisions improved the curriculum because the teachers focused on students' needs. For example, a teacher commented:

*I've really enjoyed it [referring to the writing approach] ...As I've said the whole way through the freedom of it. It's awesome to have a topic you have some freedom around. You have guidelines, you have criteria, but at the same time you can put creativity into it [because] you know what works for the kids and I think that's huge.*

Also, teachers spoke positively of how the partnership strived to embed writing into the mandated curriculum rather than making it an additive curriculum. A teacher remarked

that the partnership worked to “*fit SFL into the [mandated] curriculum*” and focused on ways to “*sort of marry the two.*”

Overall, teachers articulated having a positive experience with the school-university partnership. Reasons for this came from their sense of ownership in the writing approach, which was fostered through participation in its construction, and pride in working with the university. Another reason stemmed from the support and validation teachers received from university stakeholders, even despite the difficulties in learning SFL. Furthermore, they believed the university stakeholders validated their instructional practices and knowledge about student learning, which led to feeling like true professionals. These reasons promoted teachers’ engagement in the partnership’s work and resulted in them having a positive experience.

### **Collaboration**

Analyses of teachers’ interviews were also conducted to answer the research question: *Does professional collaboration happen during the partnership, and if so, how do teachers experience it?*

Professional collaboration happened during the school-university partnership. The collaboration occurred in different capacities throughout the partnership. Overall, four prominent forms of collaboration existed: *grade-level teams, teachers working with doctoral students, teachers working with Dr. Brisk, and summer institutes*. These collaborations involved work between various stakeholders: Dr. Brisk, doctoral students, teachers, the school principal, and a district literacy specialist. This group work most

often occurred at the Morrison School during the academic year. Overall, pervading these collaborations was a held perception by the teachers that the group work was beneficial. A few teachers also advocated for further opportunities to collaborate.

### **Grade-level Teams**

The first form of collaboration involved teachers working with other teachers at their grade-level. Teachers referred to these configurations as *grade-level teams*. These teams met once a week. The meetings encouraged the sharing of ideas, instructional plans, and sparked discussions about curriculum and instruction amongst the teachers. In addition, the meetings provided an opportunity to speak with peers and get emotional support.

The grade-level team meetings existed prior to the partnership. However, they further evolved during the partnership. A teacher discussed the changes that occurred to these meetings:

*It's been there to some extent, but I would say the partnership sort of helped to develop it and to make it stronger and to sort of give it, give it more shape or give it [pause]. What's the word I'm thinking of? Like it helps us to get to the finished product and sort of to map backwards. Like, it gives us more of a procedure for our collaboration and not just a bunch of ideas...a scaffold or a structure I guess.*

These meetings became more focused during the partnership and allowed teachers more opportunities to effectively share ideas and resources.

The teachers valued these collaborations. A teacher in the third year commented:

*Well I think it's huge to collaborate with colleagues. We bounce ideas off one another. I'm always asking [names a teacher] what she's doing in her classroom and [names another teacher] and trying to figure out if I can fit into my teaching.*

Another teacher in the second year remarked about his grade-level team:

*We do everything together. And that's probably why it [referring to their writing instruction] works so well. You know, and it's in other grades, I think we have the same educational philosophy and are friends. We've been together a long time so that helps. But yeah, the more people that we can do things [with], the better off. You know, you shut yourself in your room and you are alone and it's a long day.*

Overall, teachers perceived these meetings as providing them with professional knowledge, pedagogical guidance, and emotional support from their peers.

These meetings functioned as a support system for all teachers: veteran and novice. A veteran teacher commented:

*Our grade-level was always big at collaborating. This year is a different group for me, but I still see the collaboration and I think it's too solitary to not do it that way...it is great for validating or catching yourself...*

In addition to providing support for experienced teachers, some of these grade-level teams functioned as a support system for novice teachers. When discussing how her grade-level team worked, a second grade teacher stated, “*We get together a lot because*

*two of them [referring to other grade-level teachers] are new so they always come with [names a veteran second grade teacher], and so we plan a lot of things together. It's been helpful.*" However, this support for new teachers in the grade-level teams did not occur at all grade-levels. For instance, when discussing her experience with collaboration at the Morrison, a new teacher commented:

*It has not been the best. I want to be very honest because I would like to see things change. The way I have always worked as a teacher is through collaboration and I am not seeing that happening here. I came into this just this year and I wasn't sure quite what to do. I have had conversations with [a doctoral student was named] and I have had conversations with [another doctoral student was named] and through those conversations, I have been able to get clarity... but in terms of teachers talking and having those conversations, 'What do you see? What do you think we should do? What is the next move?' That is not happening here...we need a lot more collaboration.*

This new teacher's grade-level team did have meetings, but she felt excluded or deemed them non-collaborative. In a different situation, a new teacher in another grade stated:

*I actually haven't done much collaborating with the writing to be honest. That's one thing I wanted to work on for the next year because I noticed [another teacher at the same grade level is named] and I have gotten really away from each other. We've done some different things in the class and we've started different genres at different times...*

The reason for this lack of collaboration at this grade-level was not evident, but shows the variation in the level of collaboration at grade-levels across the Morrison. It also illustrates that teachers sought teamwork.

### **Teachers Working with Doctoral Students**

The second form of collaboration that existed involved *teachers working with doctoral students*. Doctoral students worked weekly in some teachers' classrooms. The focus of these collaborations varied, but was usually specific to the class setting. They most often included instructional concerns or practical matters related to the curriculum and instruction. In addition, at times, the collaboration involved examining students' writing. For instance, when discussing the benefits of using SFL and working together, a teacher stated, "*I think just the collaboration between having you [referring to a doctoral student] and the teacher and then we can really look at the student writing and see if our [teaching] points have been hit.*" Teachers valued these collaborations because they focused on practical issues or specific problems related to the individual classroom or regarding specific students. Therefore, the collaboration between the teacher and the doctoral students most often functioned as a problem solving endeavor.

### **Teachers Working with Dr. Brisk**

The third form of collaboration that occurred during the partnership was *teachers working with Dr. Brisk*. This teamwork happened in grade-level teacher meetings once a month. These meetings were facilitated by Dr. Brisk. They commonly involved Dr. Brisk



providing professional development, the examination of students' writing, teachers raising issues they were encountering, and the sharing of pedagogical practices. In addition, the group frequently brainstormed ways to teach the genres.

Teachers described these meetings as valuable. When discussing them, one teacher commented, "*It is always helpful to have Dr. Brisk come in and impart her wisdom, that is always helpful and it always makes a difference, it is a great opportunity.*" Another teacher discussed how these meetings functioned as a time where teachers can "*get feedback... [and] also receive some direction in terms of the teaching of the genres.*" The benefit of working directly with a university faculty member was evident to the teachers.

### **Summer Institutes**

The fourth form of collaboration involved all partnership stakeholders attending *summer institutes* at the university. During the institutes, Dr. Brisk and the doctoral students focused on developing the teachers' and the principal's knowledge of SFL theory and genres. The collaboration existed regarding the sharing of instructional practices across grades. In addition, stakeholders developed resources together that included SFL-informed writing rubrics and outlined genre-based instructional writing schedules for the forthcoming academic year. Teachers articulated that this form of collaboration was extremely beneficial. For example, a teacher stated, "*I think our professional development at BC kind of gives us that opportunity [referring to learning*

*about what other grades are doing] sometimes and that's something we may not always have time for [in school].* Another teacher commented:

*We [referring to teachers] met as teams once a week in school, but we never met like over the summer. We never spent long periods of time working together, like never a period of time like two days working on a piece back and forth as a group...*

These collaborations allowed for partnership stakeholders to increase their understanding of SFL theory and provided an extensive amount of time for planning of curriculum and instruction.

The four different forms of collaboration in some capacity involved the coming together of teachers, the principal, doctoral students, and Dr. Brisk. The partnership enacted most of these collaborations. One teacher remarked, *"It's been great because we've been given the opportunity and there's not always time to meet and get together, so this grant [referring to the partnership] has provided us time and resources."*

Overwhelmingly, teachers articulated that they liked the collaboration with other educators and found them beneficial in supporting their work in the classroom teaching writing.

Even with the increase in collaboration since the beginning of the partnership at the Morrison, some teachers advocated for more time to work with other educators. For example, one teacher commented, *"It's been really nice to collaborate. I wish we could even do it more actually, but it's been really helpful to just get ideas."* Another teacher remarked, *"I wished that we had more time to collaborate across grade levels..."* These

requests came also from specialist teachers. For instance, a science teacher in the second year commented that she wanted to “*collaborate more next year*” with the general education teachers. In addition, a teacher advocated for networked collaboration with other teachers at different schools in order to learn more about writing instruction and specifically the use of SFL theory in other educational settings. The teacher remarked, “*And I just think you know, it would be nice to collaborate not necessarily with just [Morrison] teachers, but other teachers whether they are in the district, you know, wherever... [I] would like to have conversations with those people.*”

In conclusion, the partnership provided various forms of collaboration for the teachers and all were deemed valuable. The group work appeared to enact a shift in the culture of teaching at the Morrison. This change was manifested in teachers working more often with educators rather than individually. For example, a teacher commented, “*I think we work with more people now, we bring three, four and five [people] together...I think the collaboration part is great.*” The teaching of writing was perceived as a group task rather than an individual one. This transformation in the culture of teaching began in the second year of the intervention. For instance, a teacher in this year stated:

*When I show things at [academic] conferences and stuff, I say this is [from] a team. I feel like I’m showing team work. Obviously it’s my students’ [work] but at the same time all this planning, all took part, part of a team...*

This view of teamwork led to more calls for collaboration and a new found value for working with colleagues. When discussing the grade-level collaborations, a teacher captured the staff's belief about working together, "*You know the biggest gripe and complaint in teaching is there's never enough time. We find time...*"

### **Professional Development**

Analyses of teachers' interviews were further conducted to answer the research question: *How do teachers experience the professional development?*

Teachers mentioned that they liked the professional development (PD) provided by the partnership. Teachers specifically spoke about the monthly grade-level meetings with Dr. Brisk, discussions with doctoral students, and the summer institutes. Regardless of the specific format, teachers spoke highly of the PD. Reasons for this came from recognizing the taught content as valuable and identifying the activities as pragmatic and transferrable to their instruction. Moreover, the teachers discussed how the partnership in the PD was different from traditional PD they have received, which they deemed to be inadequate. Despite teachers' overwhelmingly positive experience with the PD, one teacher articulated an issue that she perceived as a lack of teachers' voices during the PD.

### **Content**

Teachers liked the PD because they valued the taught content. This content focused extensively on using SFL theory as a theoretical lens to understand how language is used in texts to make meaning. The PD operationalized this process for teachers by

educating them about the different genres—specifically their purposes, text structures, and language features.

Prior to the PD, many teachers had an undeveloped understanding of the different genres of writing. For example, a teacher remarked, *“To be honest with you, I didn’t really know a lot about genres before...”* She further stated that by using SFL theory, *“I’m learning a lot about the genres myself...”* Some teachers may have articulated this lack of understanding of the genres by stating they felt unprepared to teach writing. For instance, a veteran teacher commented:

*I would say teaching writing has never been a strength of mine. And I feel more comfortable with teaching writing now [after receiving the PD]. And I’m actually looking forward to teaching writing next year in fifth grade and I feel like I’m more prepared for it, whereas before we started this program, I felt like I wasn’t prepared at all to teach writing.*

Teachers valued the content because they recognized it as meaningful in fostering their knowledge about writing. A teacher commented:

*I think a lot of the development that we [referring to teachers] went through at BC and from working with Dr. Brisk, we learned a lot about the different genres. You know, you have to have a solid knowledge about it before you start teaching it. You can’t just sort of fly blind...*

Teachers recognized the importance in order to effectively teach writing. The relevance of the content contributed to teachers liking the PD.

In addition, teachers spoke of how they noticed their SFL-informed instruction supported student learning in the classroom. For instance, a SEI teacher remarked:

*So with SFL, I'm seeing the progression from the beginning to the end. And I'm seeing that using mentor texts and modeling for them [referring to students] and co-constructing is [sic] so healthy, because it gives them the big picture for the first time.*

She then compared her past writing instruction with the SFL-informed instruction:

*In the past they [referring to students] have been given bits and pieces, they [referring to the content] were completely decontextualized, and so that it is just information that's going to completely disappear from their heads, they're not going to make those connections. But SFL is so clearly constructed in a way that helps those connections come together...*

Teachers also mentioned that they found the PD to be more in-depth compared to other development they had received in the past. For instance, a teacher remarked, “*It was definitely more comprehensive, more hours I would say, but I think it was definitely more helpful than many of them...*” Moreover, a few teachers simply found the content intellectually stimulating. This excitement contributed to them having a positive experience with the PD. For instance, when discussing the PD and how teachers were asked to read professional literature about SFL in the first year, a teacher remarked, “*I know it sounds tedious as I'm talking, but it wasn't, it was so new, it was exciting because it was so new.*”

### **Pragmatic Activities**

The second reason teachers liked the PD was because they identified PD activities as pragmatic and useful to their classroom instruction. When comparing the partnership PD with other PD received in the past, a teacher commented:

*I think this has been the most useful because like I said, we'll be set up with like professional development on something and it won't get back in the classroom. This is, we go and we're actually doing it the next day. We saw great lesson ideas in August at BC from the presenters. We went back and we said, 'ok', and I knew I was going to do that in my classroom the next week when school started and I did. So it was useful and relevant because we're gonna actually do it.*

Teachers valued the practical application of the PD activities, which contributed to their positive experience.

Teachers particularly liked examining students' writing. When discussing the PD, a science teacher commented that the most valuable activity was *"being able to look at students' work with Dr. Brisk and others, actually looking at the work and actually getting suggestions for it, you know graphic organizers to use and directions to take the different genres."* Teachers found this activity fostered their knowledge of the genres and provided them insight into what to teach their students about the specific genres.

In addition, teachers also valued the planning of genre units in grade-level teams. When speaking about the PD, a teacher remarked:

*When we go to BC and meet with Dr. Brisk, oh that was very helpful. Because you know, it really, when we were able to work with the team [referring to grade-level] with the whole team and actually plan out the whole unit. That was most beneficial. And we were able to do that. A lot times at professional development you don't get really a chance to sit and just pick through it with the team and we were able to do that.*

Teachers found the opportunity to collaboratively plan genre units particularly useful.

Also, teachers identified the PD as beneficial because it provided a space to speak about teaching writing with colleagues. For instance, a teacher mentioned that the PD offered a

*time to talk to other teachers at the same level to see what has worked for them, to give you the time to talk about the writing - to give you the time to do it. Even though sometimes you just get to start the conversation you can continue it later.*

Teachers valued this time to discuss writing instruction with other educators.

Despite most teachers mentioning how they liked the PD content and activities, one teacher expressed a concern with what she perceived to be a lack of teacher involvement during the PD. This teacher commented:

*I like the meetings throughout the year, I often feel like teachers don't talk though. I feel like Dr. Brisk teaches us things or talks with her agenda. I don't feel like I get as much from them. I feel like we should go and be talking about what we are doing, and maybe that is the intention, but it doesn't feel like that. I don't hear the other teachers talk, we don't talk*



*enough. I am not saying I need to talk, you know someone else can talk. I am struggling with this, what would you do next? I feel like there is not enough of that.*

This tension was only expressed by this one teacher, but indicates that not all felt the time to collaborate with each other was sufficient.

Overall, teachers articulated that they positively experienced the PD. The reasons for this stem from them valuing the taught content and identifying the PD activities as relevant to their professional work. Furthermore, they noticed that their SFL-informed writing instruction better supported students' learning compared with their previous instruction. In addition, teachers felt that the content was extremely comprehensive and some found it to be intellectually stimulating. Teachers also voiced how they liked that the PD activities were pragmatic and directly informed their work in the classroom with students. They particularly valued examining students' writing and planning of genre units. Finding importance in the taught content and recognizing the activities as practical and beneficial to their work enabled teachers to have a positive experience with the PD.

### **Tensions**

Analyses of teachers' interviews were also conducted to answer the research question: *Do tensions exist in the partnership, and if so, what are they?*

Tensions existed in the partnership and primarily stemmed from issues with curriculum, work in and support from the partnership, the school principal, and teachers' uncertainty regarding the sustainability of the writing approach. Teachers did not

explicitly identify these as tensions in the partnership, but these concerns were voiced by multiple teachers.

## **Curriculum**

Tensions regarding the curriculum focused on aligning the SFL-informed writing approach with the mandated district literacy curriculum. Despite some teachers giving accolades to the writing approach because it granted them pedagogical autonomy, some teachers voiced concern that it was too ambiguous. These teachers wanted more structure. For example, a teacher stated:

*I think it [referring to the writing approach] needs to be in the form of really providing us with some type of a, a curriculum. I really think we [referring to teachers] need to have some type of a [curriculum], put together a binder of information, of lessons and graphic organizers, and mini lessons, and say 'okay this is one genre, this is how it's taught in second grade. These are some lessons you can choose from'.*

The teacher further elaborated that he did not want a prescriptive curriculum, but merely wanted more structure than what was currently available. Challenges emerged in providing teachers with an approach to teaching writing that required use of their professional expertise and judgment to make pedagogical decisions, while also giving them materials and resources that structure writing instruction.

Another tension came from teachers using this writing approach in conjunction with the district mandated reading curriculum. Some of the teachers expressed concern

that they were struggling to align the genres in the partnership with the reading curriculum, *Reading Street*. For instance, a teacher commented, “*We’re still working out a lot of kinks. I feel like Reading Street moves in cycles through genres too quickly, so we [referring to teachers] can’t align it with reading yet...*” The task of aligning the mandated curriculum with the writing approach created tension for some teachers.

### **Work and Support from the Partnership**

A few teachers expressed dismay with work and support from the partnership. Specifically, this stemmed from work teachers did on rubrics that were never implemented in their initial form, new teachers not feeling supported, and some teachers experiencing reduced support when the partnership took the intervention school-wide in the second year. Rubrics were developed by teachers and university stakeholders, but they were not implemented in their entirety. Ultimately, the university stakeholders in consultation with some teachers believed that the rubrics were too extensive and not practical for classroom teachers to use with entire classes. The rubrics were revised and shortened to make them more practical for teachers to use with their classes. Regardless of this intent, some teachers felt that their work on the rubric was not used or valued. For instance, a teacher commented:

*I was a little disappointed to be honest about the summer institute, there were people that went for the rubric development and we worked really hard in developing that and changing language and making [it] user friendly...and I just feel like that was never, never went anywhere, I don’t*

*feel it was really used...so that was a little disappointing cause a lot of us spent a lot of time doing that.*

The feeling that some teachers' work was performed but was not used caused some tension in the partnership. Tension also stemmed from new teachers not feeling supported by the partnership. They felt that the partnership failed to provide them the necessary content in order to effectively understand the writing approach. A new teacher discussed this lack of support:

*Well, only that in the beginning I felt very lost and very frustrated...That you [referring to partnership stakeholders] were like assuming that I knew all of the background information on how this was put together and assuming that I would know, you know, how to present it to the kids...I just didn't feel that I was prepared enough to just launch into this so it was a little very frustrating in the beginning...I felt like there wasn't enough for first timers...I felt I was just thrown to the wolves and sink or swim.*

This lack of support for the new teachers appeared to cause anxiety and frustration.

Similarly, some partnership veteran teachers expressed issues with the reduction in support that occurred from Year 1 to Year 2. This reduction occurred because the intervention was implemented school-wide and therefore university stakeholders were responsible for collaborating with more teachers. Consequently, teachers involved with the partnership since Year 1 received less support from university stakeholders. Some of these teachers commented about this reduction in support; one teacher commented:

*I have complaints about being the first year where I had [doctoral student named] all the time, it kind of watered down, but I don't want to make it look like the support was watered down, but there was no other way to do it...*

Another teacher stated, *"I think we met with Dr. Brisk a lot more last year, than we are doing this year. And that is just because I mean the program is starting to expand, so maybe she doesn't have as much [time] ..."* Overall, these teachers appeared to understand the reason for the lessening of the support, but this may have still caused some tensions.

### **School Principal**

In the partnership, tension also came from the actions taken by the school principal to reassign some teachers to new grade levels. In the third year of the partnership, the principal carried out this reassignment. This action disrupted well established grade-level teams.

Breaking these groups of teachers apart fostered tension amongst the school staff. For example, in the second year, one of the teachers discussed the reassignment:

*I'm already disappointed about next year because what [is] really awesome about this [grade-level] is I have a team that collaborates really well on this [referring to writing instruction] ... And my team is being broken up next year, so unfortunately I just feel like the collaborations won't be there. The project just won't be quite what I've experienced...*

The reassignment of the teachers to new grade-levels unfortunately ended effective collaborations.

### **Teachers' Uncertainty about the Future of the Writing Approach**

In addition, tension in the partnership emerged from uncertainty some teachers had regarding that sustainability of the SFL-informed writing approach after the school-university partnership ends. Teachers' worries dichotomized into continuing the partnership's work or complete abandonment of it. Tension regarding continuing the writing approach came about from teachers' uncertainty in what changes the district administrators could make to this approach, the lack of support and PD in taking the work forward, and leadership. Tensions also stemmed from teachers' unease about the school or district changing focus from this writing approach to a new writing curriculum or to a completely new focus other than writing. However, not all teachers expressed these worries.

Teachers expressed angst over how the district administrators in the future could modify the writing approach. For instance, a teacher commented:

*I see Boston getting excited about this whole SFL and Dr. Brisk [intervention]. This is when it gets worrying [sic] to me. On October 17th everyone does this genre in fifth grade, and this is the graphic organizer you use, and this is the self and peer-edit paper you should use...I am afraid for it to become where we're robots again...*

Teachers worried about losing their professional autonomy to make curriculum and instruction decisions within the writing approach.

Teachers' uncertainty with the sustainability of the writing approach came from their worries about the lack of professional support in the future. Teachers voiced concern that without the partnership's resources and expertise, the continuation of the partnership's work could be in jeopardy. For instance, a teacher commented, *"I'm sure it'll be a lot more difficult because there won't be that connection for like the soundboard, the sharing of ideas back and forth and Dr. Brisk coming and bringing her insights..."* Another teacher remarked, *"But, you know, meeting in the summer and stuff like that, no I don't see it happening. We don't have the same opportunities without the grant money and like the support and facilitation of Dr. Brisk and you guys."* Teachers' perception in the changes to the level of support fostered tension.

Teachers further voiced concern with leadership to guide the work of the partnership. Dr. Brisk led most of the work of the partnership and teachers worried that without her presence, this lack of guidance could affect the sustainability of the writing approach. For instance, a teacher commented, *"I think it will take some leadership from the principal to sort of, fill the shoes of Dr. Brisk and to provide some guidance ..."*

Another teacher stated:

*I don't want to say a problem because that sounds kind of sad. But yes, it'll be a gap because leadership is really important ... [and] having additional people with the knowledge of Dr. Brisk is a treasure that cannot be taken for granted.*

The loss of Dr. Brisk at the Morrison worried teachers about the direction and guidance in taking the writing approach forward.

In addition, teachers expressed anxiety about potentially losing this writing approach once the partnership ended. They worried about having to adopt a new way of teaching writing. This uncertainty came from past experiences some teachers had with other curriculum and interventions in the district. One teacher remarked:

*Well, I just feel like...every couple of years it seems like we do a new writing project like I've said this is my eighth year and this is my third project, so hopefully sticking with it and not like abandoning like this way of teaching...*

This angst came from teachers' perceived lack of power to make decisions about curriculum and instruction. For instance, another teacher said:

*I know that our principal is really committed to the program that we are using right now. But again you know, whenever they [referring to administrators] feel like changing they do it...It's not in our hands...we do whatever they tell us to do...we don't have a lot of say in that.*

Another teacher commented:

*I feel like the focus will change to whoever comes in next. I mean whatever grant we get and whatever Boston springs on us being what's the next thing that's going to work, I feel like that is going to be our next focus. As a school, I feel like it changes.*



Teachers' worries about the longevity of the writing approach stemmed from their perceived lack of power to make professional decisions and created tension in the partnership.

In conclusion, tensions existed in the partnership and stemmed from teachers' issues with curriculum, conducted work in the partnership, support, and the school principal. In addition, tensions came from teachers' uncertainty about the sustainability of the writing approach. Teachers had issues with the ambiguity of the writing approach and its alignment with the mandated district literacy curriculum. Furthermore, they expressed concern regarding work they had done on rubrics that were not implemented in their original form. Teachers also raised issues regarding the lack of support new teachers received from the partnership as well as wavered support some teachers experienced in Year 2 when whole-school implementation occurred. Moreover, teachers had issues with the principal's actions to reassign teachers to new grade-levels in the third year of the partnership. Teachers had uncertainty about the sustainability of the writing approach, which stemmed from worries about changes district administrators could make to this approach, taking the work forward without the support from the university, and a shift in instructional focus at the Morrison that could result in complete abandonment of SFL-informed writing instruction. These issues and worries teachers had fostered tensions within the partnership.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION

This dissertation examined a school-university partnership enacting an SFL-informed writing intervention to understand changes to teachers' writing instruction, student performance, and teachers' perceptions of this change process. The chapter is framed using five central research questions and discusses the major findings as well as limitations of the study. Subsequently, the related implications inferred from the results are reviewed regarding teacher educators, classroom teachers, administrators, scholars, and policymakers. Recommendations for future research are then discussed.

### First Research Question

*Does the content of the writing instruction in the fourth and fifth grades change in the areas of genre, language, tenor, and expressive during the three years of the writing intervention, if so, how?*

The content of teachers' writing instruction changed involving the use of metalanguage and the teaching of genre, language, and tenor. The content associated with expressive, however, remained unchanged. Teachers' instruction began to use metalanguage rather than vague language to teach text structure features, but this precise language was not employed when discussing language features. Regarding the teaching of genre, instruction started to explicitly name genres, emphasize their purposes, and focus on structure and function in fostering text cohesion. Furthermore, teachers utilized different mediums to clearly illustrate genres. Teachers' began employing language-based activities, had more of an emphasis on reinforcing previously taught aspects of

language, and discussed language features and their functions connecting to the taught genres. Despite these changes, instruction about language remained mostly limited. Lastly, teachers' instruction started requiring students to write for an array of authentic audiences and emphasized how audience affects text construction.

The study findings confirm previous findings that teachers' use of SFL theory brings about writing instruction that makes the complex demands of meaning-making in prose more explicit for students (see Brisk & Zisselsberger, 2011; Gebhard et al., 2011). The teachers in this study were able to effectively express the various meanings in a coherent way for their students. These findings further show that the process of operationalizing SFL theory in practice takes a tremendous amount of time and even with three years of exposure, some aspects are still not adopted. In fact, teachers only began making significant changes to the content of writing instruction after receiving ongoing SFL professional development for two years.

One reason that may explain why teachers took so long to enact significant changes to their instruction is because they were in what Fullan (2001) defined as the *implementation dip*. The implementation dip is when performance and confidence decrease during a period attempting something new. Fullan explained that people in the implementation dip are “experiencing two kinds of problems when they are in the dip—the social-psychological fear of change, and the lack of technical know-how or skills to make the change work” (p. 41).

In the first year of exposure to SFL, teachers may have experienced anxiety and unease about using a linguistic theory to inform practice. The difficulty of

operationalizing theory in practice and making changes to writing instruction may have caused concern. Furthermore, the teachers had very limited knowledge about SFL and genre in comparison with their understanding in the second year and beyond, which also likely contributed to the lack of change identified in the first year. The implementation dip cannot be overlooked in endeavors that use SFL theory with teachers in schools. This aspect of the change process takes time and ongoing assistance is needed for teachers in the form of content and emotional support in order to enact desired reform.

The study also showed that initial changes to the content of instruction stemmed from the use of metalanguage and the teaching of genre and tenor. Pervasive to the use of precise language and the teaching of genre was a focus on the purposes of text and text structure features. Moreover, instruction about tenor focused mostly on students' writing for an authentic audience. Initial changes to instruction in the second year came from the teaching of purposes and text structures of the taught genres and also from tenor, because the PD focused extensively on these aspects in the first two years. Specifically, the PD emphasized the purposes and text structures of the taught genres. Also, tenor was reviewed in relationship to writing for various audiences, which teachers transferred into their instruction with students. The PD focused on these topics because they aligned with what teachers, in some capacity, were already doing at the Morrison during Writer's Workshop. Many teachers used or were using aspects of the *Units of Study for Teaching Writing*, by Lucy Calkins, and therefore had some developed understanding of genres. The PD further expanded this knowledge, which transferred into the teachers' writing instruction.

Changes to the content of instruction involving the teaching of language began to occur in the third year of the intervention, but mostly remained limited. One reason for this may be that the PD mostly emphasized genre and focused less on language. The PD began to have more of an emphasis on language in the third year of the intervention. Literature indicates that teachers are unprepared to make the language demands of school explicit to students (Schleppegrell, 2004). Another reason that explicit teaching of language was limited may be that instruction concerning language took longer to enact than other content because the PD did not sufficiently develop teachers' knowledge about language. The teachers may have needed almost three years of PD in order to develop a competent level of understanding regarding how language functions in text, which they then began to operationalize in their instruction with students in the third year of the intervention.

The benefit of an SFL approach to writing is that explicit teaching of language occurs in order to support all students and especially those in most need of language instruction—ELLs and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Christie, 1999). Research indicates that SFL can support teachers' understanding of the structural, lexical, and grammatical features of text (Gebhard et al., 2011), which they must have in order to effectively educate students about language. This study's findings show that teachers operationalize SFL theory in practice. The process of using SFL is contingent on the professional development teachers receive and an extended length of training. This dependence on professional development is evident for at least the first three years of teachers' implementation of SFL.

### **Second Research Question**

*Do teachers' writing instructional strategies change regarding the stages of the pedagogical cycle during the three years of the writing intervention, if so, how?*

Findings suggest that teachers' instructional writing strategies changed during the intervention regarding negotiating field and deconstruction of text. However, their instructional strategies remained mostly unchanged regarding joint and independent construction of text. The identified changes supported students' writing development.

One reason that may explain why teachers' writing instructional strategies began focusing on negotiating field and deconstruction of text is because teachers' learning of SFL brought about an understanding of register, which is comprised of field, tenor, and mode. The register is composed of aspects of any situation that affect linguistics. Teachers' awareness of field may have prompted them to spend a greater amount of time teaching students about their topics. Understanding of what one is writing about is critical in creating a text that uses appropriate vocabulary and accurately expresses the content.

Teachers' awareness of register may have also influenced the deconstructing of text. This teaching strategy demonstrated to students how the genres are expressed in different modes (oral, written) and achieved in various mediums. Moreover, deconstructing was employed to illustrate tenor. This relationship between the writer/speaker and audience mostly was taught to students through examination of a text's content and less on its use of language.

Another cause for this change in using this instructional strategy may have stemmed from how teachers' acquired knowledge of the genres during the PD. Dr. Brisk

used deconstructing of text to develop the teachers' understanding of the taught genres. This strategy has been utilized in other situations to support teachers' comprehension of genre (see Schleppegrell & Oliveira, 2006). Since teachers learned about genre from using deconstructing of text, they may have been more likely to enact this strategy in their own instruction with students.

In addition, the study found teachers' instructional strategies of joint and independent construction of text remained mostly unchanged. Joint construction of text may have remained unchanged because the teachers' professional development did not explicitly emphasize it until the middle of the third year. Thus, its influence on instruction was not captured in this study time frame. In addition, teachers were already extensively doing independent construction of text, so they may have believed further changes in this area were not necessary.

### **Third Research Question**

*Does fourth and fifth grade students' writing performance change after exposure to an academic year of the writing intervention, if so, how?*

- a) If change occurred, do differences exist between fourth and fifth grade students?*
- b) If change occurred, do differences exist between monolingual and bilingual students?*

Students' writing performance improved in some areas after exposure to an academic year of the writing intervention. Analyses of the differences in writing performance over time were controlled for change in word count in order to focus on the

quality of students' writing and not on quantity. When looking at both fourth and fifth grade students' writing over time all grade levels improved. The identified improvement in performance may confirm research findings that explicit instruction about text structures enhances students' understanding of and abilities in taught genres (Donovan & Smolkin, 2006). Furthermore, these findings indicate that SFL-informed writing instruction supports students' writing development.

An examination of the change in writing performance over time showed a statistically significant difference between fourth (N = 41) and fifth (N = 27) grade students in the rate of change improvement. This difference indicated the fourth grade students improved more over time than fifth grade students during the year of SFL informed instruction. However, upon closer examination of this finding, the disparity was attributable to a student's language status and not actual grade-level. A statistically significant difference in change existed between monolingual (N = 27) and bilingual (N = 41) students. Bilingual students improved more over time than their counterparts. Given that the sample was made up of 29 bilingual and 12 monolingual fourth grade students and 12 bilingual and 15 monolingual fifth grade students, the differences in performance between these two grade-levels is best explained by student language status. This was evident when analyses were run that parceled out the variance attributable to grade-level. The findings were conclusive that bilingual students made more improvement in writing performance than monolingual students over the academic year.

One reason for this difference between bilingual and monolingual students' writing performance may be associated with findings from the first research question that



teachers' instruction focused extensively on the text structures of the genres. This instruction may have better supported bilingual students' writing development compared with monolingual students' growth. Bilingual students, and especially the LEP students, potentially benefited from this instruction about text structures because it granted them understanding of how texts are constructed to make meaning in a culture different than their own. Monolingual students already had, to some extent, an understanding of how meaning is expressed across different genres. This supports Purcell-Gates' (1996) finding that "by living and participating in an environment in which others use print for various purposes, children infer semiotic and functional nature of written language" (p. 426).

Another reason that may explain this difference in performance was that monolingual students required more explicit teaching of language in order to make greater improvements in their writing. More language instruction would have better developed students' understanding of how meaning in prose is developed at the sentence and clause levels of text. For example, how information around noun groups is fostered using adjectives, how verb groups are made using adverbials, and how text cohesion is developed through theme and rheme and text connectives. This instruction may have enhanced monolingual students' writing development and also benefited bilingual students. Most of the students in this study came from low socioeconomic backgrounds where academic language was not necessarily used in the home. Therefore, teachers' instruction was needed to develop students' knowledge and skills that are required to negotiate the linguistic demands of schooling (Schleppegrell, 2004). The limited

instruction about language may have restricted both monolingual and bilingual students' growth in writing.

#### **Fourth Research Question**

*Is there a relationship between students' writing performance and the MCAS test in English language arts?*

*a) If so, does this relationship vary as a function of language status?*

Study findings showed a moderate positive relationship ( $r = .581$ ) existed between students' writing performance and MCAS English language arts performance. This relationship indicates that students' writing performance tended to reflect their MCAS performance and vice versa. Results further showed that this relationship varied as a function of language status. Monolingual students had a strong ( $r = .695$ ) positive relationship and bilingual students ( $r = .489$ ) had a moderate positive relationship.

Research indicates that an association exists between writing and reading development (Abbott, Berninger & Fayol, 2010) and studies using neuroimaging support this finding (Pugh et al., 2006). One study by Carbonaro and Gamoran (2002) found that in high school English classes emphasis on analytical writing had a strong positive effect on students' growth in reading achievement. These findings in the literature potentially contribute to explaining this study's identified relationship between writing performance and MCAS performance.

The role of genre may further add to the reason for this relationship. Research confirms that fourth grade students' knowledge of genre influences their reading

comprehension (McNamara, Ozuru & Floyd, 2011). One reason that may explain the identified relationship is students' knowledge of genre from SFL instruction in writing transfers to their reading comprehension on MCAS. Students' understanding of a text's purpose, structure, and language facilitates students' reading comprehension as they are able to recognize how meaning unfolds in text.

The difference in the strength of the relationship between writing performance and MCAS performance for monolingual and bilingual students may be explained by other factors associated with reading comprehension such as decoding, background knowledge, and ability to make inferences (McNamara, Ozuru & Floyd, 2011). These factors could have contributed to weakening the relationship between writing performance and MCAS English language arts performance for bilingual students.

### **Fifth Research Question**

*How do teachers articulate their experiences with the school-university partnership?*

- a) Does professional collaboration happen during the partnership, and if so, how do teachers experience it?*
- b) How do teachers experience the professional development?*
- c) Do tensions exist in the partnership, and if so, what are they?*

Teachers had a positive experience with the school-university partnership. They felt a sense of ownership in the SFL writing approach, pride in working with the university, and support and validation from university stakeholders. These findings

confirm conclusions in the literature that school-university partnerships can empower teachers and enact a heightened level of professionalism (Abdal-Haqq, 1998).

One reason that may explain why teachers experienced this partnership as positive is that the reform process embraced aspects of the *Fourth Way*: an inspiring purpose, achievement through investment, and professionalism (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009b). Teachers felt intrinsically invested in the purpose of the partnership, which was to improve the writing instruction at the Morrison to better support student learning. In addition, the partnership supported this endeavor financially and spent approximately fifty-thousand dollars per year for three years on classroom, school, and PD resources and stakeholder stipends.

Pervasive to the partnership's work was a level of respect for teachers and value in their teaching expertise. Respect in the change process is vital in order to motivate people to act (Fullan, 2007). This approach to change may have negated or minimized the negative consequences on teachers of some strategies of change (see Day & Smethen, 2009; Hargreaves, 2003; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009a; Little & Bartlett, 2002).

The study findings also showed professional collaboration occurred during the partnership in four different forms: grade-level teams, teachers working with doctoral students, teachers working with Dr. Brisk, and summer institutes. Teachers articulated that they valued these collaborations and some advocated for more opportunities to work with colleagues. This finding contrasts with Lortie's (1975) findings that teachers' work produces a heightened level of individualism, which manifests in a desire to work in isolation. One reason that may explain this difference is that the partnership's change

approach recultured the teaching culture of the Morrison. The teaching culture of the school became less individual and more collaborative. This reculturing most likely began with restructuring efforts, such as developing monthly meeting times for teachers to work with Dr. Brisk. Findings in the literature show that restructuring endeavors on their own are not sufficient in enacting changes to teachers' instructional practices (Peterson, McCarthy & Elmore, 1996).

The structural changes at the school brought about opportunities for teachers to collaborate and work with university stakeholders. These collaborations fostered a lively learning community within the Morrison that supported teachers' learning about SFL and also challenged teachers' held beliefs and perceptions about teaching, learning, and education. This process perhaps changed some of the teachers held beliefs, which is fundamental to the reculturing process (Schein, 2004). These changes resulted in a collaborative environment.

In addition, study findings showed teachers positively experienced the PD due to its content. Teachers voiced how the content was comprehensive and intellectually stimulating, which was in contrast to their usual PD. The difference in quality of PD offered by school-university partnerships and school-based PD has been found elsewhere (see Abdal-Haqq, 1998). This study finding may explain why teachers enacted changes to their writing instruction. Being intrinsically invested in the PD may have led them to more easily transfer the PD content into their classroom writing instruction.

Moreover, the teachers particularly valued how practical the activities were in informing and improving their classroom work with students. This discovery confirms

findings in the literature that partnerships often provide valuable professional development to teachers that directly benefits their teaching practices (Brink, Granby, Grisham & Laguardia, 2001; Davies, Brady, Rodger, & Wall, 1999; Snow-Gerono, 2005; Utley, Basile, & Rhodes, 2003). Teachers articulated that they particularly appreciated examining students' writing as a group and planning genre units with other grade-level teachers, as well as working with teachers from different grades. This group work in the PD may have been a catalyst to reculturing the teaching culture at the school. These facilitated collaborations likely sparked more group work beyond the confines of the PD.

The study results also identified tensions in the partnership that came from issues teachers had with curriculum, work and support in the partnership, the school principal, and uncertainties about the future of the SFL writing approach. Most of these findings fit Rice's (2002) framework of common issues that arise in school-university partnerships. The relational, process, and structural dimensions of the framework may explain the reasons for these tensions.

The relational dimension describes the issues some teachers had with the writing approach as curriculum. University stakeholders had a goal of developing a writing approach and not a curriculum, but some teachers desired a writing curriculum that provided guidelines and lesson plans. These conflicting outcomes between organization stakeholders often created tension.

Also, the process dimension describes the contrast between new teachers feeling not supported and university stakeholders believing teachers were well assisted. This

miscommunication between the organizations was minor, but it nonetheless was a source of tension.

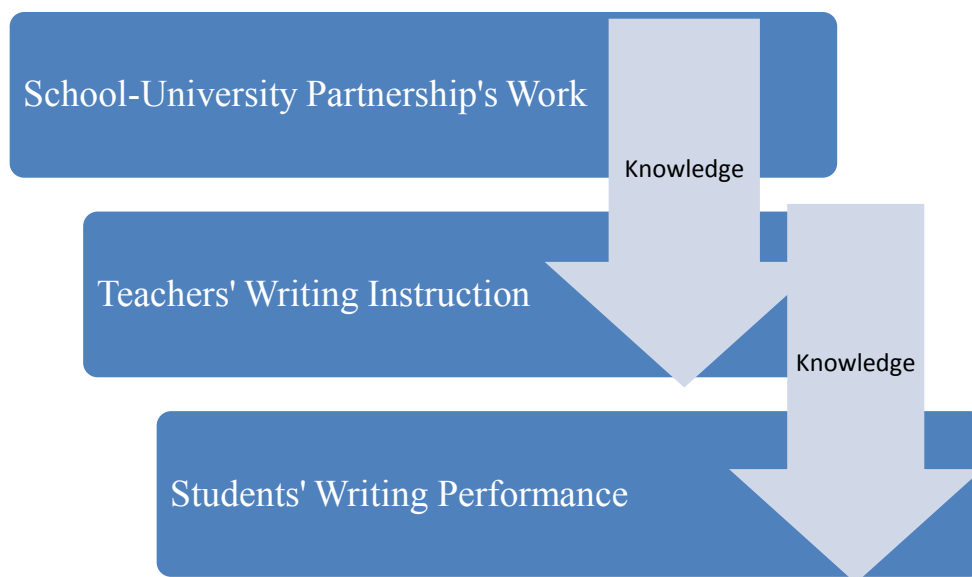
In addition, the structural dimension explains the issues associated with work in the partnership. A few teachers voiced problems with the university stakeholders' actions to not implement developed rubrics in their original form. The tension also may have stemmed from issues of control between organization stakeholders. Furthermore, the structural dimension can explain the tension associated with the principal's action to reassign teachers to new grade-levels. The principal supported the partnership's work, but this shift disrupted the collaborative work.

Study findings also indicated that tension came from teachers' uncertainty about the sustainability of the writing approach. This originated from worries involving changes the district administrators could make, advancing the work without the support of the university, and a shift in instructional focus at the Morrison. One reason that may explain these uncertainties regarding sustainability is that the change process was still in its implementation phase and had not achieved institutionalization. The implementation phase usually takes at least two or three years before the change becomes institutionalized (Fullan, 2007). The study findings suggest that this phase may take considerably longer in urban schools, when change is focused on teacher pedagogy. The reason for this may come from urban schools having higher teacher turnover and frequent changing curriculum and policy mandates that disrupt the system of teaching. In order to enact sustainable change, school-university partnerships must continue until institutionalization has occurred.

## Conclusion

The school-university partnership enacted a writing intervention to bring about changes to teachers' writing instruction at the school. These changes supported students' writing development and particularly benefited bilingual students. This reform process embraced learning as a catalyst for change and was conceptualized into three components: the school-university partnership's work, teachers' writing instruction, and students' writing performance (see Figure 7.1). Figure 7.1 provides a snapshot of the reform process.

*Figure 7.1 The Reform Process: Learning as a Catalyst for Change*



The first component of the reform process involved the school-university partnership's work. This work focused on constructing an SFL-informed approach to teaching writing and brought together university and school stakeholders with various kinds of expertise and knowledge. This knowledge spanned the continuum from theoretical to practical. University stakeholders had an understanding of SFL theory and



school stakeholders had knowledge about classroom curriculum and instruction. The endeavor to develop a coherent approach to teaching writing functioned as a learning process for all of the partnership stakeholders. This learning was labor intensive, took multiple years, and involved ongoing high-quality professional development. Most but not all of the knowledge teachers acquired during this learning process subsequently was transferred to their writing instruction.

The second component of the reform process involved teachers' writing instruction. Teachers had to transfer their knowledge from the partnership's work to their students in a meaningful and developmentally appropriate way. This process in part involved operationalizing SFL theory in practice. Teachers arguably were the stakeholders with the most influence on this change process, as their actions could inhibit or promote change. Study findings indicated that many of the teachers took actions to promote change because they felt intrinsically invested in the partnership's work, felt respected, and believed they were treated professionally.

The third component of the reform process involved students' writing performance. Students learned from their teachers' writing instruction and then used the acquired knowledge to inform their writing. They were the least involved in this change process, although they acquired the benefits of the change.

Overall, the reform used learning about SFL and its ramifications for teaching and learning to enact change at the Morrison Elementary School. This learning occurred across all components of the reform process and involved a range of stakeholders: a university professor, doctoral students, classroom teachers, school principal, and students.

Findings from this study provide insight into ways to improve teachers' writing instruction in urban elementary schools that benefit student learning. The results suggest that reforms in urban schools work when they value and respect teachers' professional expertise, provide rich theories related to writing instruction and linguistics, offer systemic support over time, and bring about change through professional learning focused on informing instructional practices that foster student learning.

### **Limitations**

Six limitations to this study come from choices made regarding the research design, data collection methods, reliability of interviews, and a used research instrument. The first limitation to this study comes from the research design and is the unit of analysis being grade-level instruction compared with individual teacher's instruction in order to understand changes over time. The unit grade-level was selected rather than individual teachers given teachers in the fourth and fifth grades collaborated in some capacity on implemented writing units and lesson plans. Therefore, it was deemed to be a collective endeavor and the teachers were studied as a group. This decision to focus on grade-level limits understanding of how an individual teacher's instruction evolved over the three years. These findings would provide understanding of how an individual teacher uses SFL theory in practice and similarly how his/her students benefit directly from this adaptation.

The second limitation is the total number of observations completed over the three years. A total of 97 observations were conducted. More observation data would have

provided additional understanding of the instruction. The third limitation comes from the variation in the number of observations across the three years. The total observations per year ranged from 17 to 54 so it is difficult to interpret changes from certain years. Moreover, the observations per year at one time had a ratio of 1 to 3 of fourth to fifth grade so more conclusions arise from the fifth grade. These variations in observations from year to year may have affected findings.

The fourth limitation from the employed data collection methods is the student sample size. A larger sample size would have allowed for analyses to more closely examine different levels of the data, such as special education, race, and limited English proficiency. For instance, a larger sample size would have enabled analyses to be conducted in order to determine the change in writing performance by grade on limited English proficient students (LEP) compared with formerly limited English proficient (FLEP) students. This examination could not be performed on the study sample because it was too small and had insufficient statistical power to appropriately interpret analyses. Along similar lines, the sample size needed to have a better distribution of monolingual and bilingual students. This uneven dispersal resulted in issues with detecting statistical interactions, which would not have occurred with a better distribution of monolingual and bilingual students.

The fifth limitation stems from the reliability of the interviews and observations. During the interviews, the teachers were encouraged to be honest and reminded that answers would remain confidential; however, some teachers may have not accurately expressed their perceptions of the partnership to interviewers who were university

stakeholders. Also, the classroom observations may have captured teachers' best instruction and may not reflect instruction on days observers were not present.

The sixth limitation of this study comes from the employed research instrument: the SFL writing rubric. Prior to this study, this rubric had not been used for research purposes. The decision to use this particular rubric was made because no other SFL rubric existed that could capture different elements of discourse, but was still broad enough to use across varying genres of writing. The limitation comes regarding the validity and reliability of the instrument to accurately capture performance on the rubric items.

## **Implications**

### **Implications for Teacher Education**

Many issues have been raised about the quality of writing instruction in American schools (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Gilbert & Graham, 2010; National Commission on Writing, 2003, 2004, 2006) and national assessment data indicates that most students are not proficient writers (Salahu-Din, Persky & Miller, 2008). In addition, research shows many teachers are unprepared to teach writing (Gilbert & Graham, 2010). This study examined an effective approach to enacting changes to writing instruction in schools that teacher educators can learn from. Findings indicated that SFL theory can foster educators' understanding of genre—specifically how language is used to make meaning. Teachers' knowledge transfers to writing instruction in the classroom. This SFL-

informed instruction fostered students' writing development and especially that of bilingual students.

Given these findings, teacher educators should study SFL theory and consider its contribution to improving instruction. SFL provides a theoretical lens for teachers to understand language use and genre. Since it is not a writing curriculum, but rather a writing approach, teachers' knowledge of genre drives pedagogical decisions in the classroom. Thus, teacher educators can give teachers ongoing high-quality PD that supports learning of genre.

In addition, teacher educators ought to begin using SFL theory to prepare preservice teachers for the demands of teaching writing. Although our research base still is limited as of this writing approach, this theory has been shown to support preservice teachers' development of genre (Daniello, Turgut & Brisk, in press). Regardless of working with inservice or preservice teachers, teacher educators must be aware that this process of learning about genre and language takes an extensive amount of time. However, the benefits to the quality of writing instruction may exceed those of quicker approaches to change, such as implementation of published writing programs.

### **Implications for Administrators and Policymakers**

The BPS, like many urban school districts, has the challenge of educating a wide variety of students from different socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. This study showed the benefits of using SFL theory on teachers' writing instruction with students from diverse backgrounds. These findings can inform the actions taken by

administrators and policymakers. In addition, they can learn from how these benefits to instruction and learning were enacted.

Changes in teachers' instruction were achieved over time and took multiple years. During this period, teachers were granted ongoing PD in a variety of different forms. The content of this PD focused on developing teachers' knowledge about genre and directly connected to instructional content and teaching strategies. Teachers' developed knowledge functioned as a catalyst for change rather than policy. Implications from the study for administrators and policymakers are that teachers can improve practice when given the autonomy to make professional decisions. This follows the belief that urban teacher professionalism, which includes the expert decisions teachers make in the classrooms, has the greatest influence on student learning and not policy or curriculum (Friedman & Daniello, 2010).

### **Implications for School-University Partnerships**

School-university partnerships are a viable approach to addressing school-based needs (Klinger, Ahwee, Garderen & Hernandez, 2004; Knight, Wisemen & Cooner, 2000; Linek, Fleener, Fazio, Raine & Klakamp, 2003; Pine, 2003). Most often these partnerships provide valuable PD for teachers, which benefit their teaching practices (Brink, Granby, Grisham & Laguardia, 2001; Davies, Brady, Rodger, & Wall, 1999; Snow-Gerono, 2005; Utley, Basile, & Rhodes, 2003). Findings from this study confirm these results. In addition, results indicated that the success from the partnership came

from the teachers being invested in the change process. This finding can inform future school-university partnerships.

Teachers were invested in the partnership because they felt ownership in the endeavor, respected, validated in their work, and a heightened level of professionalism. Future partnerships seeking reform should make sure actions taken empower teachers as teacher investment in the partnership is vital to success. This may be more effectively achieved by partnerships embracing Fourth Way principles that center on a professional path to change (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009b).

Another implication for future partnerships is that these collaborations need to continue until the enacted change has become institutionalized. Sustainable change is unlikely if support is diminished during the implementation phase. Change scholars have discussed that in order for reform to become institutionalized it involves a critical mass of supporters, a well-developed plan for continuation, and infusion into the organizational structure, such as through policy (Huberman & Miles, 1984). With time, professional support, and emotional encouragement school-university partnerships can enact successful reform.

### **Future Research**

This study is one step along the path showing the benefits of SFL theory in education and genre based linguistic studies on writing. The excitement portends the benefits that future studies may validate. Given the findings from this study and the existing literature, there are many different courses for future research.

Studies examining more long term, multiyear effects on student writing with SFL-informed instruction are needed. Scholars have advocated for longitudinal studies of writing development that assess performance in multiple skills (Abbott, Berninger & Fayol, 2010). The research will provide some understanding of the cumulative effects SFL instruction has on students' writing development. Moreover, findings would give further comprehension of students' writing development through the lens of SFL theory.

In addition to research using longitudinal designs, studies need to be conducted that use quasi-experimental or experimental designs. These designs allow for causal inferences to be deduced from findings. Therefore, research using this type of design could determine if SFL-informed instruction supports students' writing development comparable or better than non SFL-informed instruction. According to Donovan and Smolkin (2006), "there are to date relatively few published quasi-experimental or experimental studies (including control groups and pretest—posttest measures) on the impact of genre instruction on elementary school children's writing in a range of genres" (p. 138-139). Findings from these studies are required to determine the actual effects of teachers' use of SFL theory on students' writing performance.

Studies are also needed to further examine the identified relationship in this study between writing performance and MCAS English language arts performance. One study conducted by Snow, Lawrence, and White (2009) examined sixth to eighth grade students' performance on the MCAS English language arts after exposure to an intervention that fostered academic language using reading comprehension skills, vocabulary, and persuasive essay writing. Findings showed that involvement in the



intervention contributed to students' performance on MCAS. Findings further indicated that bilingual students had greater growth than monolingual students. Similar studies are warranted at the elementary grades to further support these findings.

Research needs to also investigate what happens to SFL-informed instruction at schools once support for teachers is reduced such as in this case study when the partnership concluded. Following teachers after the PD and university support is gone would yield beneficial information about the sustainability of SFL-based writing interventions. These findings will better inform school-university partnerships especially in regards to the way a partnership ends. Moreover, research similar to this study should continue that focuses on SFL theory and its application for informing teachers' writing instruction as well as teachers' pedagogy. These recommended topics of study could provide the profession with a better understanding of the vitality of SFL theory and its power to improve teachers' instructional writing practices in American schools.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A: Interview Protocol from Year 2**

Thank you for meeting with me. In order to better understand the impact this project had on teachers and to improve future professional development and the resources provided to teachers, I would like to ask you a few questions regarding your experience in the writing project. Before we begin, I want you to know that I am recording this conversation so that the research team can more accurately capture your feedback.

#### **Impact on Teachers' Instruction**

1. Tell me about the impact systemic functional linguistics, SFL, has had on your writing instruction.

- Probe: Can you explain more about how SFL has affected your knowledge of language and writing?

2. What impact has SFL had on your writing instruction with English language learners?

3. What are some of the benefits of using SFL to examine students' writing?

- Probe: How has using SFL to examine students' writing affected your instruction?

4. Describe how SFL is different than other writing approaches you have used in the past.

- Probe: Based on the different writing approaches you have used which one would you prefer to use and why?

#### **Impact on Students' Writing**

5. How has this approach to writing affected the text structure and language of the students' writing?

- Probe: What impact have you seen on English language learners' writing?
6. What difference, if at all, have you seen between the effects of SFL on students' writing based on students' initial writing level?
- Probe: Tell me how SFL has impacted your advanced writers.
  - Probe: Tell me how SFL has impacted your average writers.
  - Probe: Tell me how SFL has impacted your struggling writers.

### **Teachers' Professional Development**

7. While participating in the writing project you had numerous professional developments, such as the summer institute, cluster level meetings, and classroom guidance from university team members. In reflecting on all of the professional development you have received, what has been the most beneficial from the university team or others?

- Probe: Can you explain more about how it assisted you in teaching writing?
  - Probe: Specifically, what topics were covered?
8. What professional development would you have liked to have received, but did not, that may have better supported you with teaching writing?
- Probe: Specifically, what do you think teachers need more support with when teaching writing?
9. Tell me about how you have used the Teachers' Manual.

**The Writing Project Experience**

10. Overall, can you please discuss what this experience has been like for you?

- Probe: Would you recommend to other teachers that they participate in this project?

11. Tell me how this experience has impacted your beliefs about writing.

12. Is there anything that we did not discuss that you would like to share?

## **Appendix B: Interview Protocol from Year 3**

### **Background**

- Tell me about yourself as a teacher.

Probe: How long have you been teaching?

### **Reform Process**

- What has the experience been like for you working with us?

Probe: Tell me about how you have experienced this reform.

### **Writing Instruction**

- Tell me about what writing instruction looks like in your classroom.

Probe: Is this different than how you used to teach writing?

Probe: What brought about this change?

- Tell me about how you are using SFL and genre to teach writing.

Probe: How has your knowledge of language developed?

- Tell me about how you teach language to your students.

Probe: What do you teach?

- How has our work together affected your writing instruction?

- What aspects of language do you still struggle to teach?

**Reform Process (continued)**

- What has the experience been like for you collaborating with colleagues?

Probe: Tell me about what it has been like to plan with other teachers in grade-level meetings.

- In looking forward, tell me about how you see our work continuing once we are no longer at the Morrison.

Probe: Do you see teachers continuing to use SFL to inform writing instruction?

Probe: What role do you see teachers, the principal, and district personnel having in taking our work forward?

### Appendix C: Analytic Scoring Rubric

<b>Genre (nominal scale)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Personal Recount</li> <li>2. Report</li> <li>3. Persuasive</li> <li>4. Overwhelmingly Mixed Genres</li> </ol>			
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Title</b> (if required by the medium)	Completely off topic or no titles	Refers to topic but purpose unclear	Reflects the topic and the purpose but does not engage the reader	Reflects the topic and the purpose, engages reader
<b>Discourse 1</b> Introduction	Fails to meet the expectations of the genre	Partially meets the expectations of the genre	Meets the expectations of the genre	
<b>Discourse 2</b> Body	Fails to meet the expectations of the genre	Partially meets the expectations of the genre	Meets the expectations of the genre	

<b>Discourse 3</b> Conclusion	Fails to meet the expectations of the genre	Partially meets the expectations of the genre	Meets the expectations of the genre	
<b>Text</b> <b>Connectives</b> (Transition words) Derewianka Grammar pp 110-111	Text connectives are under- or over-used; do not organize text sequentially and/or chronologically	Some text connectives support sequentially/chronologically organized text; some are overused/repetitive	Text connectives organize text sequentially and/or chronologically ; text is fluent and easy to read	
<b>Theme</b> (Beginning of clause, everything until verb) Derwianka, Grammar book, pp.104-106. [for example, <b>I think</b> plants	The beginning of the clauses does not represent the topic of the text. The text lacks coherence. It is unpredictable to the reader.	Some clauses include the theme related to the topic of the text. Frequent repetition of theme.	The majority of the clauses include the theme related to the topic of the text. The text for the most part is coherent. Some repetition	The beginnings of the clauses focus the reader's attention on topic development . It helps make the

<p>need water, soil... Vs. <b>Plants</b> need water, soil...]</p>			of theme.	text coherent and enables the reader to predict how the text is unfolding.
<p><b>Reference Ties</b> <b>1</b> Derewianka Grammar pp107-108 [I was in my house and <b>she</b> was helping...” Who is she? Should have named before] [“told me to read <b>the</b> question” question should have been mentioned</p>	Referents lack connection to participants	Referents often lack connection to participants	Referents usually connect to participants	Referents are explicitly connected to participants



before, otherwise one needs to use a]				
<b>Reference Ties</b>  <b>2</b>	Overuse of referent nouns	Some overuse of referent nouns	Referent nouns vary	Referents nouns are consistent and used skillfully by the writer to support reader's understandin g of which participants the writer is referring to
<b>Reference Ties</b>  <b>3</b>	Lack appropriate use of "the", "a", and "an"	Lacks appropriate use of "the", "a", and "an"	Usually appropriately use "the", "a", and "an"	Appropriatel y uses "the", "a", and "an"
<b>Paragraph Structure 1</b>	No paragraphs and	Some paragraphs and/or	Text contains paragraphs	

(regardless of conventions, ie. indenting)	content/ideas lack cohesion	content/ideas have cohesion	and/or all content/ideas are cohesive	
<p><b>Paragraph Structure 2</b></p> <p>Derewianka Grammar pp. 82-102</p> <p>Don't consider punctuation when scoring. Those errors should be counted with punctuation.</p> <p>For example:</p> <p><i>We went to the marvelous pool the pool was wonderful...thes</i></p> <p>e are two correctly formed</p>	<p>Sentence structure is limited relies too heavily on simple sentences that are loosely strung together and/or run-on sentences;</p>	<p>Sentence structure is primarily simple and relies on compound sentences that are loosely strung together and/or run-on sentences;</p>	<p>Sentences are appropriately varied to make reading fluid and sustain both meaning and reader interest</p>	

sentences missing a period.				
<b>Paragraph Structure 3</b> (regardless of punctuation)	Many instances of incorrect use of direct/indirect speech	Some problems with direct/indirect speech	No problems with direct/indirect speech	
<b>Noun Groups 1</b> Derewianka Grammar pp 17-53. Noun describers are an important feature of recounts	Participants are not clearly introduced	Some participants are clearly introduced	All participants are clearly introduced	
<b>Noun Groups 2</b>	Participants are not tracked through the text	Some participants are tracked through the text	All participants are tracked through the text	
<b>Noun Groups 3</b>	Participants are underdeveloped due to lack of	Participants are partially developed	Central participants are fully developed	Participants are appropriately

	noun describers	through the use of noun describers	through the use of noun describers	developed given their status
<b>Verb Groups 1</b> Verb types: doing, saying, feeling, sensing, thinking, being/having Derewianka Grammar pp 54-72	No different verb types used	Some variety of verb types used	Verbs types are used effectively to sustain reader interest and provide complete information on events and participants	
<b>Verb Groups 2</b>	Inappropriate tense	Some appropriate tense use	Tenses are used appropriately	
<b>Adverbials</b> Circumstances include time, place, manner, cause, etc. Derewianka	Limited description of circumstances	Some description of circumstances.	Relatively complete description of circumstances	Complete description of circumstances that gives the reader a

Grammar pp 73-81				clear sense of time, place, manner, cause, and so on.
<b>Grammatical Morphemes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- irregular past</li> <li>- 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular</li> <li>- plurals</li> <li>- use of determiners</li> <li>- prepositions</li> <li>- Check Manual for additional ones.</li> </ul>	Many incorrect uses	Some incorrect uses	Limited incorrect uses	No incorrect uses that detract from readers' meaning in revised drafts
<b>Knowledge</b> Accuracy and	Limited knowledge	Basic knowledge displayed	Knowledge of topic is usually	Knowledge of topic is

amount of information provided with respect to the topic (participants, processes, and circumstances Connected with audience and language)	displayed is through participants, processes, and circumstances, inaccurate or irrelevant information given, lack of specific information; leaves the reader to interpret and make connections	through participants, processes, and circumstances,, some inaccurate or irrelevant information given, some specific information provided	clear and presented through participants, processes, and circumstances, most information is accurate; minor inaccuracies or discrepancies, enough specific information provided to be informative of topic	clear and presented through participants, processes, and circumstance s, information is accurate, rich detail and/or specific information provided enhances readers understanding of the topic, the setting, participants,
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				actions, circumstances and events.
<b>Vocabulary</b> Connected to the language aspects and content knowledge taught.	Vocabulary is limited, not reflective of the topic, repetitive (how many different words are used) <i>For example, uses terms like “thing” “get” “it”.</i>	Vocabulary is somewhat reflective of the topic (domain specific), some repetition, and some attempts to use new words.	Vocabulary is reflective of the topic and appropriate for the audience; vocabulary is strategically varied to support readers’ interest and foster understanding of topic	
<b>Audience 1</b> (Teacher for prompt) Relative status dictates the level	Limited awareness of relative status between writer and audience	Some awareness of relative status between writer and audience	Awareness of relative status between writer and audience	

of formality of language.				
<b>Audience 2</b> (Teacher for prompt) Information provided should be sufficient given the audience's background knowledge.	Limited awareness of audience reflected in the lack of adequate descriptions to support background knowledge of audience	Some awareness of audience reflected in the partial descriptions to support background knowledge of audience	Awareness of audience reflected in the adequate descriptions to support background knowledge of audience	
<b>Voice 1</b> (1 <sup>st</sup> person – narrator or central participant 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural—narrator and others 3 <sup>rd</sup> person—	Voice is not consistently in 1 <sup>st</sup> or 3 <sup>rd</sup> person	Voice is sometimes in 1 <sup>st</sup> or 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular/plural; writer uses familiar (I, we) and subjective (own opinions) language	Voice is in 1 <sup>st</sup> or 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular/plural	



introduces participants)				
<b>Voice 2</b> (modality/identity)	Writing is mechanical/copied	Writing varies between mechanical/copied and original/authentic.	Writing is consistently original/authentic	
<b>Punctuation</b>	Widespread errors in punctuation detract from meaning of text; No punctuation with direct speech	Some errors in punctuation that detract from meaning of text	Few errors in punctuation	No errors in punctuation
<b>Spelling</b>	Widespread errors detract from readability; spelling errors are inconsistent, do not reflect	Some errors; text is somewhat readable; some errors with key topic vocabulary, significant	Few spelling errors that do not detract from the meaning of the text (also may	No spelling errors

	grade-level expectations; errors with main topic vocabulary	amount of errors show below-grade level expectations; errors show some spelling patterns	contain higher level vocabulary)	
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