"We Are Authors": A Qualitative Analysis of Deaf Students' Writing During One Year of Strategic and Interactive Writing Instruction (SIWI)

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Abstract: This article expands on prior Strategic and Interactive Writing Instruction (SIWI) research by examining students' development as writers. Findings from a qualitative analysis of the writing development of 20 middle-school deaf and hard of hearing students over one year of instruction is reported. Implications and future directions are discussed.

Key Words: writing, deaf/hard of hearing, engagement

Introduction

Even though efforts to establish the notion of Deaf Culture and a socially empowered Deaf Community have been well documented (Moore & Levitan, 2003; Padden & Humphries, 1990, 2005), research and policy related to education for the deaf and hard of hearing (d/hh) have historically focused on deficits and difficulties. For decades, federal policies related to education for the deaf made no mention of the unique language and cultural needs of d/hh students. Thus, policies meant to increase inclusion actually limited language and identity resources for d/hh students by privileging English-only, hearing-centered approaches for interaction and development (Rosen, 2006).

Similar to the ways in which federal education policy does not assume valuable deaf ways of being and learning, research narrowly characterizes the literacy experience of the deaf with terms like "plateau", "struggle", and "persistent low achievement" (Antia, Reed, & Kreimeyer, 2005; McAnally, Rose, & Quigley, 1994; Moores & Miller, 2001; Yoshinaga-Itano, Snyder & Mayberry, 1996). These terms are most often associated with standardized assessments, which compare d/hh students to their hearing counterparts, the normative population. One of most pressing topics of concern within the field of deaf education is the pattern of little progress in reading achievement for d/hh students in middle and high school (Gallaudet Research Institute, 2003; Yoshinaga-Itano & Downey, 1996). Due to their unique developmental histories, which often include language delays in the primary expressive/receptive language, d/hh students exhibit challenges in learning to write effectively and fluently (Author, 2010). While we know d/hh individuals have academic struggles, there is a dearth of information about successes and strengths in the research literature.

One promising writing intervention designed for the unique needs of d/hh students is Strategic and Interactive Writing Instruction (SIWI). SIWI, the instructional approach used in this study, has significantly impacted students' writing skills at the word-, sentence-, and

discourse-level (Dostal & Wolbers, 2014; Dostal, Wolbers, & Bowers, 2012; Wolbers, 2008, 2010). The success demonstrated by the students that participated in SIWI run counter to the dominant narratives of literacy failure that are told and retold in the existing literature on literacy and deafness. In this article, we present a set of findings from a larger mixed-methods case study designed to deepen our understanding of students' development as writers working between two or more languages. The research question that guided the inquiry described in this article was: How do students who are d/hh develop as writers over a year of SIWI?

Background

Though the literature on literacy instruction for d/hh students provides few examples of successful writing interventions, there is a growing research base that supports the use of SIWI (Dostal & Wolbers, 2014; Dostal, Wolbers, & Bowers, 2012; Wolbers, 2008, 2010). In an effort to deepen our understanding of these trends, we collected both quantitative and qualitative data across the school year in the first author's middle school classroom, drawing upon evidence from student writing samples, classroom artifacts and observations, as well as teacher reflections and student interviews to deepen our understanding of d/hh middle school student's development as writers.

Quantitative analyses of the intervention in this study on word- and sentence-level writing skills have been reported in (Wolbers, Dostal, & Bowers, 2012. The quantitative component of this mixed methods study demonstrated that students of all levels of language proficiency, and a range of linguistic backgrounds, made significant progress on written expression during the year of instruction. In other words, SIWI was effective regardless of participants' language histories and methods of communication. Moreover, by always beginning with each writer's preferred method of communication, regardless of proficiency, SIWI values students' choices, needs, and differences. Similarly, Dostal's 2014 study compared student progress across 5-weeks of regular writing instruction with progress after a 5-week SIWI intervention, and found that the trend of little progress was evident among middle grades students receiving regular instruction, but students demonstrated significant gains in communicative proficiency after only five weeks of exposure to SIWI. In a study of 3 classes in the middle grades (Wolbers, 2008), this pattern of success was also demonstrated in the development of word-, sentence, and discourse-level writing skills.

Table 1
Driving Principles of SIWI with Definitions

Principle	Definition
Strategic	The instruction is strategic in the sense that students are explicitly taught to follow the processes of expert writers through the use of word or symbol procedural facilitators.
Interactive	SIWI is interactive in the sense that students and the teacher share ideas, build on each other's contributions, and cooperatively determine writing actions. Through this process, the student externalizes his/her thoughts in a way that is accessible to his/her peers.

Linguistic and Metalinguistic	Persons have two separate routes to develop ability in a second language—acquiring implicitly and learning explicitly. The implicit and explicit approaches of SIWI aid in developing linguistic competence and metalinguistic knowledge among d/hh students (Wolbers, Dostal, & Bowers, 2012).
Balanced	While writing as a group, the teacher identifies balanced literacy objectives for his/her students that are slightly beyond what students can do independently. The teacher is cognizant to target a mixture of word-, sentence-, and discourse-level writing skills that will be emphasized during group guided writing.
Guided to Independent	When the teacher has the ability to step back and transfer control over the discourse-level objectives (e.g., text structure demands) to the students during guided writing, s/he will then move students into paired writing. The teacher will circulate the room to observe what students can do in a less-supported environment. If students exhibit good control over the objectives, the teacher then moves students into independent writing.
Visual Scaffolds	Showing promise in supporting the learning of d/hh students (Fung, Chow, & McBride-Chang, 2005), visual scaffolds offer another mode of accessing the knowledge of more-knowledgeable-others. In SIWI, students use visual scaffolds to recognize and apply new writing strategies or skills they are in the process of learning.
Authentic	During SIWI, the students and the teacher generate, revise, and publish pieces of text for a predetermined and authentic audience. Writing instruction and practice is always embedded within purposeful and meaningful writing activity.

Strategic and Interactive Writing Instruction (SIWI)

SIWI is comprised of seven driving principles (see Table 1), with three overarching, theoretical-based principles. Strategy instruction (1) is rooted in cognitive theories of composing (Applebee, 2000; Flower & Hayes, 1980; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1986), interactive instruction (2) in sociocultural theories of teaching and learning (Bruner, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978, 1994; Wertsch, 1991) and metalinguistic knowledge and linguistic competence (3) in L2 theories (Bialystok, 2001; Ellis & Laporte, 1997; Krashen, 1994).

SIWI involves explicitly teaching the processes of expert writers through strategy instruction (Graham, 2006; Applebee, 2000) as well as the use of procedural facilitators such as visual scaffolds and mnemonic devices for structures and conventions of composition. SIWI also positions students as learners within an apprenticeship model, with the teacher as an expert writer who gradually transfers responsibility for writing as students appropriate modeled skills and strategies (Englert & Dunsmore, 2002; Englert, Mariage & Dunsmore, 2006; Mariage, 2001). Finally, SIWI supports explicit language learning by drawing comparisons between

students' initial ideas (in whichever form or language they are first expressed) and the written English representation of those ideas. In this way, SIWI honors all variations of language histories and proficiencies that students bring to the lesson, and uses the translation of initial ideas into written English as an opportunity to develop metalinguistic awareness. The goal of developing metalinguistic awareness for all languages used in the classroom, rather than honoring one language above others, sets SIWI apart from other interventions or instructional approaches for the d/hh aimed at development of English only. This leads to active involvement for all participants, regardless of language background. SIWI also supports implicit language acquisition of English and linguistic competence through frequent rereading of English text (Wolbers, 2010; See Table 1 for more detail on SIWI).

Methodological Approach

The data presented in this study come from a larger mixed methods analysis that combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007), of a single case of intervention. Though we present only the qualitative findings in this paper, we do so in an effort to draw attention to "multiple ways of seeing and hearing, multiple ways of making sense of the social world" under investigation in our research (Greene, 2007, p. 20). As Flyvbjerg (2011) has noted, case studies can offer the depth of understanding of context and process, which complements the breadth of statistical methods. Given the overarching deficit-focused narrative constructed by existing research on deafness and literacy, we were committed to presenting a counter story that illustrates alternatives and inspires a new focus on possibilities for teachers and researchers - one that values linguistic diversity and leads to empowerment and development.

Participants and Setting

The case is bound by one classroom of 29 students led by one teacher, spread across five class sections and three grade levels (two sections of 6th grade, one section of 7th grade and two sections of 8th grade). The teacher explained to the students that both teacher and student would track their writing growth and perceptions of writing throughout the school year. Students had a mean age of 13.2 years, a mean SAT-HI reading comprehension score of 2.7, and ranged from having mild to profound hearing loss (mean loss of 88dB). Students varied in their expressive language communication (e.g., speech, American Sign Language (ASL), English-based sign, or delayed in both ASL and English) and varied in the amount of exposure to ASL they received at home, from deaf adults at school, during student conversations, and during residential hours.

The teacher was a full-time instructor in a residential school for the deaf. In addition to an MS in Education, she has a BS in Educational Interpreting and a rating of Advanced Plus to Superior Plus on the Sign Language Proficiency Interview. After teaching for four years and being trained to deliver SIWI the semester prior, she used SIWI in place of regular Language Arts instruction for 45 minutes per day with each of her five classes throughout the entire school year. The teacher was regularly observed in person and via video recordings in order to maintain an ongoing record of fidelity of implementation (average 3.7-4.0 on a 4.0 scale) and a written record of observations and feedback.

Data Collection

Teacher/Researcher's Field Notes and Reflections

The teacher kept a daily log of activities and observations as well as a journal for reflections throughout the year. The activity log and reflection journal included a daily account of how class time was used, which objectives were taught, and written observations, notes and reflections for each of the five daily class periods. Researcher field notes from monthly observations were compiled with the teacher's activity log.

Student Interviews

At the end of the year, each student participated in a brief (10-15 minutes), videotaped interview with the teacher. The interview protocol (see appendix A) involved showing the individual student examples of their writing from the beginning, middle and end of the year, then asking them to describe and reflect upon what they noticed.

Artifacts of Student Work

Copies of student writing were also used as data in this analysis. Both official pre-, mid- and post-intervention writing samples as well as copies of drafts, works in progress, and notes between students and the teacher were scanned/copied as artifacts of student work.

Videotapes of Classroom Instruction

Each of the five classes were videotaped approximately once every two weeks. These videotapes were analyzed and coded for examples of various aspects of SIWI and as triangulation for patterns noted in the researcher's daily log and reflection journal. The SIWI Observation and Fidelity Instrument (Appendix B) was used to code and tag videos as examples of various aspects of SIWI to be considered along with patterns in the researcher's daily log and reflection journal.

Analytic Approach

In order to answer the question, "How did students develop as writers during SIWI?" we conducted a thematic analysis (Saldana, 2012), beginning at the level of micro-patterns and codes across sets of data in terms of students' uses of writing within and outside of class, and moving to abstract patterns that related to development of writers. As we read and re-read field notes, reflections, student writing, and watched videos of classroom instruction, we pulled out examples and scenarios that addressed these three linked analytic questions: "How are students engaging in writing, or how are they using it?", "What are students writing about?", and "How are students talking about their writing?" These linked questions allowed us to focus our attention on students' development as writers by identifying elements of authors' craft such as topic, purpose, and audience.

Extraction and categorization of unexpected and notable themes was conducted independently by all authors. Seven themes were initially identified: awareness of writing ability, interaction with visuals, increase in desirable behaviors, communication skills, initiative to engage in writing awareness of self as author and coping with loss. A consensus among researchers was reached and these themes were consolidated into four patterns, which included development in: 1) initiative to engage in writing, 2) purpose for writing, 3) awareness of writing ability, and 4) independence as writers.

By looking for examples that addressed each of the analytic questions over time, we were able to identify several patterns in students' development as writers. We then looked across data sets for examples and non-examples of each pattern.

Findings

In the following section, we describe each of the four patterns produced from our analysis of data sources collected across the intervention. Each pattern is illustrated by representative excerpts from the teacher's reflective journal in order to provide examples. These excerpts may include direct quotations from students (all names are pseudonyms) and their compositions (represented in italics). Before including each excerpt, the teacher shared them with her students, sometimes co-constructing revisions of the excerpts with the students, in order to include students' perspectives within her reflections on their writing activity. The patterns include development in: 1) initiative to engage in writing, 2) purpose for writing, 3) awareness of writing ability, and 4) independence as writers.

Initiative to Engage in Writing

Across each of the data sets, we identified patterns in students' individual initiative to engage in the writing process. For example, by November (the fourth month of intervention), daily notes from the teacher's log showed that students across classes had begun to ask for more independent and guided writing time in class, though there are no instances of such requests before this time in the year. This stands in direct contrast to the teacher's experiences prior to SIWI as well as the existing literature on d/hh students' interest and desire for writing. For example, Albertini (1993) noted in his study of both American and German deaf students that, "The majority of statements in both samples indicated that the students did not like to write. The process was described as 'difficult' and the products as 'bad' or 'needing improvement'" (1993, p. 68). Yet, after only months of participating in SIWI, students independently initiated or requested opportunities to write.

In addition, classroom videos show several instances in which students spontaneously shared that they had begun a story or continued a class writing assignment outside the classroom, and were eager to share what they had written. This willingness to share does not necessarily demonstrate confidence in their writing, but indicates an understanding and desire to communicate with others through writing. Through SIWI, writing with real purpose and sharing with an authentic audience are always integral to the process.

In order to further illustrate the students' increased willingness to write and willingness to share, we present the following excerpt as one of many examples of this pattern. Statements in quotations are direct quotations from students (sometimes translated from ASL to English) from classroom videos, interviews or teacher field notes. In cases where they are not verbatim quotations, they represent the teacher's interpretation, and have been shared with, and at times edited by, the students themselves:

"Today, one of my students, Maya, came into class and said, 'This weekend I was interviewed by the local radio station because I wrote Regal cinemas and President Obama a persuasive letter like the writing we've been doing in class. Let me pull it up on the internet and show you.' She pulled up the interview with the radio talk show host and it showed a video of her explaining the reasons that movie theaters should caption new release movies for d/hh people (see Figure 1). Along with her video, there was a copy of the letter she wrote as well as one her mother sent to add her support. Ten or so readers had already posted online responses, both in support of Maya and in defense of the movie theater. She wrote back to each of them, explaining her reasons and refuting counterarguments.

Figure 1. *Picture of Maya at the radio station.*

Her original letter explained that when she goes to the movies with her family, they all laugh, but she has no idea why. She wanted captions to be able to laugh with her family.

> *Mr. President I am writing this letter because on the weekend and during the summer break I [like] being with my friends and family. And one of the things I really like to do is attend movies, but I do not go as much as I would like to go. The reason I do not go is because there are no Captions of the screens, so I do not enjoy the movie. I see other people laughing or crying [and] my mom has to tell*

me what is being said but by the time we both finishing discussing it, I have missed the next part.

Maya wrote for a real purpose, using all the elements of persuasive writing that were introduced in class through SIWI for something she cared about. For example, she acknowledged the cons of captioning - that it might not be cost effective or may be distracting to some viewers. Maya addressed each issue in her writing.

I told my mom that I wish there were a way to add captioning into the movies, at least in one room have them playing. I realize it could be very expensive to have captions in every room and people may not like words on the screen.

Before we began class Maya went on to describe her next project: '*Now I have to write a letter to the radio station*.' She pointed out that the radio station did not caption the video that was posted online, and therefore it was not accessible to deaf and hard of hearing individuals, the very persons with a vested interest in this issue. Maya made the connection that writing was a way to communicate to a real audience, and turned writing into a way to voice her thoughts. She represented herself through writing as an active, and contributing citizen in her community, with something to add to public discourse about disability and difference."

Though we do not have evidence that increased initiative to write is a direct result of any designed features of SIWI, we can hypothesize how SIWI may have contributed to this development. For example, SIWI is designed to leverage intrinsic motivation by valuing students' linguistic choices and differences, providing support in the form of guided instruction, requiring all writing assignments to have a stated purpose, and allowing students to choose the topic and audience for their composition. In other words, choice, authentic writing, and guided instruction are considered driving principles of the SIWI approach (see Table 1). We use the term authentic to describe any piece of writing that is written to a real (rather than contrived) audience and delivered to that audience. For example, a letter that is written to the principal and delivered to the principal for comment would be considered authentic. The opposite, a contrived writing assignment, would be a five-paragraph essay that does not have a specific intended audience, is read only by the teacher, and is composed solely as an educational exercise rather than as purposeful communication.

A range of theories of motivation (e.g., Expectancy Theory, Vroom, 1964; Self-Determination Theory, Deci & Ryan, 1985) could be used to support a hypothesized link between SIWI and intrinsic motivation because they highlight the importance of choice, purpose and support in the development of motivation for any task. Within literacy research, Guthrie and Humenick (2004) have also noted the importance of choice and authenticity in designing instruction that promotes student engagement. In this study, there is evidence that some combination of these principles was at work during the year-long intervention because students demonstrated increased initiative and willingness to write.

We also noted an increase in willingness to share writing with adults and with peers. For example, two 8th grade students reported sharing their writing with their parents. Two 7th grade

students began routinely asking to stay inside from recess in order to work on the mystery stories they were co-constructing. As noted above, Maya chose to deliver her letter to the cinema, its intended audience, as well as with her peers and teacher in class. A 6th grade student wrote a story related to science that she asked to share with visiting science fair judges during the school's science fair. These are only a few of many examples of willingness to share writing within and outside of class that are found throughout the data from students across sections and grades.

This increase in willingness to share and engage in writing was accompanied by a decrease in the number of off-task behaviors we associate with avoidance or frustration. This was not an aspect of instruction we formally coded or tracked within video observations; however, both the teacher and researchers separately noted a change in the volume of off-task behaviors across the year. For example, at the beginning of the year, researcher field notes pointed out that students would quickly withdraw from an interactive writing activity if they perceived their input as wrong. The teacher's reflection journal also noted that writing time in the classroom was, at first, a time filled with frustration and behaviors such as pencil throwing and shoving papers off desks, or disengaging from signed communication by looking away or closing eyes.

In contrast, students who had once routinely packed up early to go to more favored classes (e.g., gym, lunch, etc.) demonstrated reluctance to leave their writing class as illustrated in this excerpt from the teacher's reflective journal:

"Today, when I set the timer for 15 minutes of independent writing time so that the class wasn't late for Physical Education, Dane said, 'No! More! Last week we decided. More!' I suppose Kasie noticed my confused expression and elaborated, 'Last week when you were absent, we decided we need one hour to write. Dane said it would be really great if we had a few hours, but we need at least one.' My confused expression never faded because I was thinking: these students are tracked in the lowest performing, language-delayed group, why do they want to write?"

In order to investigate why students were more willing to write, we examined examples of students' purposes for writing. The pattern we observed in answering this question is presented as our second pattern.

Purpose for Writing: Sharing Writing to Clarify Communication and Understanding

In this section we describe a pattern in students' purposes for writing. Across data sets, we found evidence that students wrote and revised with the intention of both clarifying their own understandings of experiences and ideas, and in order to increase the clarity of communication with their readers. Specifically, students often became aware of missing information and conflicts in details as they shared their writing with their peers. Rather than accepting or giving up on these limited accounts of their experiences, students seemed to be motivated to create revised and expanded versions of stories. As we looked across examples of student writing from across the year, we noted that many students crafted multiple versions of the same story or paper even though they always had free choice of what to write about.

In some ways, the pattern of writing the same stories over and over again is similar to a phenomenon related to reading in which children often like to re-read texts they like or are comfortable with multiple times (Schleper, 1995). Indeed, familiarity with a topic may have contributed to students' desire to write about it more than once. Still, this pattern is somewhat different from rereading a familiar text because new versions of the same story changed and expanded over time, usually as a result of sharing them with a parent or peer. Feedback and questions from readers prompted students to clarify their ideas and ways of communicating them.

For example, after sharing a personal narrative about his early childhood with parents over the weekend, one 8th grade student decided to write a second version of the story that incorporated details that his parents had shared when they read his first version. A 6th grade student was able to discuss details he remembered from a trip with his peers in order to clarify event details. Video recordings of a class period show the student drawing and signing about having seen a large model boat. As his peers asked clarifying questions, they helped him identify the large boat as a Titanic replica just like the one used in the movie. So, discussing what he remembered seeing with peers during shared writing allowed him to clarify his understanding and negotiate how to represent the experience in ASL and in English.

The following excerpt from the teacher's reflective journal describes another set of examples of writing to understand: one is described by a student during an end-of-the-year interview, and others are taken from conversations with students and observations of independent writing in class:

> "I asked Sarah, 'How do you feel about writing?' She answered, 'It makes me feel like I understand fully what has happened in my life—what I should know, what I should remember.' Sarah's answer reminded me of the way Tristen learned more about the story of how he lost his hearing by writing what he knew and sharing it with his father. One Monday, Tristen showed me a short story that he wrote about losing his hearing, and then he handed me a piece that his father had written about the same topic. Tristen explained that he gave his story to his father and asked his dad if he would clarify some facts— and then he and his dad wrote a new story together.

> Today during class as I looked across the room, I noticed that Katie was writing a story about her volleyball victory for the third time. Sitting across the room, Andrew was rewriting his story about volunteering at the fire department with his grandfather. Another student, Erin, had laid out her two drafts about the story of her adoption and was comparing them. As I watched, she set both aside and started crafting her story again."

These observations demonstrate the students' desire to use writing to understand and communicate ideas and experiences more fully. Expanding on experiences through the revision of previously constructed text demonstrates an increase in the students' awareness of how experiences can be recounted through text as well as awareness of the purposes and possibilities of the writing process.

Though we cannot attribute this pattern of using writing to clarify understandings and communication to any specific aspect of SIWI, we hypothesize that the emphasis on writing for an audience, along with opportunities to co-construct texts within shared writing experiences, may have contributed. The emphasis on writing to a specific audience positions the act of writing as inherently communicative and it affords them tools to communicate with others outside of the deaf community. In contrast, when writing to no particular audience, the focus of writing may have more to do with conventions and fulfilling a specific structure than communication. Likewise, when students have the opportunity to co-construct texts (when transitioning from modeled to guided, shared, and finally independent writing), the opportunity to negotiate meaning becomes part of the writing process. As students discuss how to transfer their signed, spoken, gestured or drawn ideas into written English, they have to negotiate the conventions of English writing as well as the intention of their words.

These opportunities to build metalinguistic awareness by negotiating meanings and comparing different ways to express an idea also seemed to contribute to a general increase in communicative competence. As reported in Dostal & Wolbers 2014 and Wolbers, Dostal, & Bowers 2012, quantitative analyses demonstrated an increase in signed and written communication proficiency for all students regardless of beginning levels of proficiency. We hypothesize that opportunities to build awareness of both English and ASL by negotiating meaning collaboratively in the writing process supported the development of both languages. Even students who were not proficient in ASL at the beginning of the study, and those who wrote English compositions of no more than a few words in length, demonstrated increased proficiency in both languages.

Awareness of Writing Ability

At the beginning of the school year, negative feelings towards writing were evident in students' comments during class: "My writing stinks." "I hate writing." "I don't write." These expressions of negative feelings are echoed by a broader trend reported in research on d/hh students in which attitudes toward writing in general and evaluations of one's own writing were generally negative (e.g., Albertini, 1993).

Guided instruction—in which writing is modeled and then gradually released to the group for shared writing and to the individual for independent writing—is one of the driving principles of SIWI. This guided approach is designed to increase student's competence and confidence by allowing them to observe and discuss strategies for composing texts. After several months of SIWI, students' comments in class and within student interviews demonstrated that they were aware of strengths, weaknesses, and growth as writers. Furthermore, students began to identify as authors/writers in their conversations with the teacher and in end-of-the-year interviews.

In one end-of-the-year interview, a 6th grade student explained that her writing "stunk before sixth grade." She pushed the writing sample that she created at the beginning of the year to the edge of the table away from her saying, "It wasn't very well written." Another sixth grader explained: "It was tough when I entered middle school, we didn't know how to write, but now that we know what authors do. We are authors."

The following excerpt from the teacher's reflective journal provides another example, among many, of this pattern of increased awareness of ability and self-identification as writer/author:

> "Today, Jamal asked to attend his Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting. He told me that during this meeting his yearly progress would be reviewed and he wanted to be there to persuade the principals and his future teachers to allow him to take an advanced freshman English class. I agreed he should go. Before we left the classroom, he asked if he could have his writing portfolio to support his request and document his progress. At the meeting he showed the faculty his writing and explained, 'I know that my writing isn't perfect and I have a lot to learn, but look at the progress I've made in less than a year. Last month I started using articles more. In February I consistently had an introduction paragraph. Now I almost always use an outline to make sure my paper has structure.'"

More than an increase in confidence, the comments described above illustrate increasing awareness of self as a writer through a reconstruction of the student's self-identity and attitude. Jamal not only demonstrated pride in his work, but an explicit awareness of the strategies and habits he has formed to support successful writing. Moreover, rather than thinking of his writing as "bad" or "good" based on the grade it receives, Jamal described growth across the year in terms of his writing process (using introductory paragraphs and outlines) and knowing "what authors do."

We hypothesize that the emphasis on sharing writing with peers and with an intended audience has supported students' development of a sense of ownership over their writing and their process as writers. The emphasis on choice and authenticity ensures that students do not write in order to fill out a checklist of skills that are only relevant in class. Rather, they write to communicate their ideas to specific audiences and are aware of the successes and difficulties that arise within such communication. We also hypothesize that the supportive collaborative environment of SIWI that actively engages students in the process of rereading, questioning problem solving and revising helps them to develop evaluative skills of written text, and that all writers are continually growing in their abilities as they get more experience and practice.

Independence as Writers

This increase in awareness of "what authors do," and students' sense of themselves as authors were also evident in the ways students worked to maintain their independence as writers. Within SIWI, guided instruction is meant to lead to independent writing practice and independence as a writer. One way authors maintain their independence is by developing strategies that help them organize their writing and maintain structures associated with their chosen genres. Since the 29 students represented a range of proficiency in English, it was not always efficient or effective to provide written reminders of the rules or patterns associated with each type of writing. Instead, the teacher and students created "visual scaffolds" (Fung, Chow, & McBride-Chang, 2005; Author, 2008) which were supportive of deaf writers and served as reminders for students who were still learning about the structure and conventions of writing in English.

Though visual scaffolds in the form of posters or manipulatives had previously existed in the language arts classroom and across classrooms in the school, we noted video evidence that students were increasingly using and creating their own visual scaffolds to use during writing without any prompting from the teacher. We interpret this trend as evidence students were developing strategies to sustain their independence as writers. The following two extracts from the teacher's reflective journal illustrate this pattern:

"Today, I noticed Krista sitting and facing the bulletin board during independent writing time. After asking her if she needed help, she explained, 'I want to compare my writing with the hamburger.' In our class, we had constructed a hamburger visual that represented the parts of a paragraph several weeks before. Without a recent reminder, Katy was also using this visual as a reminder of the structure she wanted to create for this piece.

Today, Riko told me about a story he is planning that mirrors the surprise ending of Frank Stockton's short story *The Lady or the Tiger.* As he looked at his notes, he said, 'These [notes] are a mess, I don't even have a climax.' Seemingly lost in thought, Riko walked away. He came back to me right before the bell rang to show me the visual representation of plot he had created, and then asked if we could talk about the surprise ending now that had organized his thoughts."

Each of the two short excerpts above capture some of the many instances in which students used or created visual representations as scaffolds for organizing and composing texts in a given genre. The use of these scaffolds allowed students to maintain their independence at different stages of the writing process, and to analyze their own work and notice for themselves what might be missing from their compositions. This student action of using existing or created visual scaffolds for text structure became increasingly common across the year as students developed into independent, purposeful, and engaged writers.

Table 2
Patterns Identified through Thematic Analysis

Pattern	Observations and Illustrations	Possible Contributing Factors of SIWI
Initiative to Engage in Writing	• Students requested more opportunities to write • Students engaged in writing outside of the class • Students shared their writing • Decrease in student disengagement and off-task behaviors	• Leverages intrinsic motivation through authentic writing experiences that incorporate choice and purpose • Incorporates frequent opportunities to write in a guided environment
Purpose for Writing: Sharing	• Students noted missing	• Attends to an authentic audience

writing to clarify communication and understanding	information and conflicts in details as they shared their writing • Students choose to revise and expand their original drafts • Students responded to peer and adult feedback on their writing • Students provided peers with feedback focused on clarity of ideas	and the role of the writer in communicating with the intended audience • Supports the development of communicative competence by providing opportunities to collaboratively negotiate meaning with others during the co-construction of text
Awareness of Writing Ability	• Students noted their strengths, weaknesses, and growth as writers • Students identified as authors/writers during conversations with the teacher and during the end-of-the-year interviews	• Emphasis on sharing writing with peers and intended audiences to develop ownership over their process as writers • Supports effectively communicating ideas to a specific audience while considering the successes and difficulties that arise during communication
Independence as Writers	• Students created their own visual scaffolds to use as a support during the writing process • Students independently used teacher-introduced visual scaffolds while constructing text	• Focuses on developing students as independent writers • Incorporates visual scaffolds to support students as they construct text

Conclusion

In contrast to research that has focused on ways to "fix"—support and build writing skills—we have sought to document how d/hh students *are* writers, and the ways in which they continue to develop as such. In this article we have described four patterns in the development of d/hh students as writers. These patterns included changes in initiative to engage in writing, purpose for writing, awareness of writing ability, and independence as writers (see Table 2). Patterns were noted across data sets, including the videos of classroom instruction, student writing samples, student interviews, and the teacher's daily log and reflection journal. Taken together, we interpret these patterns as evidence that the students are developing independence, purpose and engagement as writers, which empowers them to be effective communicators within and outside of their communities. In addition, we take these patterns as strong evidence of the possibility for a pedagogy of hope and confidence (Jackson, 2011) to replace the deficit discourses that too often characterize research in deaf education and on the education of students with disabilities in general. In this way, by developing American Sign Language, a cornerstone

of Deaf Culture, SIWI is able to address a goal of Disability Studies: the reframing of the very notion of disability as static and internal. When instructional interactions changed to support language development in the service of literacy learning, deficits were minimized and replaced by evidence of potential.

We hope the illustrations of these patterns in varied formats support teachers and researchers in imagining alternatives, and thereby envisioning hopeful futures for students who have too often been presumed incompetent. Though we do not claim a causal link between SIWI and any of the four patterns, throughout the paper we have hypothesized how SIWI's driving principles may have contributed to these promising trends in students' development identified through quantitative analysis of growth in students' written expression.

Given the power of teachers' beliefs about student potential to influence instructional decisions and student outcomes (e.g., Scharlach, 2008), the included illustrations of each described pattern aim to provide strong evidence of a counter-narrative to the dominant stories of plateau and difficulty.

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Appendix A

List of student interview questions.

1. What do you notice about this sample?
    a. What do you think about your writing from the beginning of the year?

2. What helps you learn to write?

3. What does not help you learn to write?

4. Do you enjoy writing with your class?
    a. Why or why not?

5. Do you enjoy writing on your own?
    a. If yes, what?

6. What do good writers do before they begin to write?

7. What do good writers do while they are writing?

8. What do good writers do when they are done writing?

9. What is the difference between good writers and excellent writers?