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Elkjaer Garcia
California State University, Monterey Bay

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English Language Learners Writing: Influencing Use of Pronouns

Elkjaer Garcia

Action Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of

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English Language Learners Writing: Influencing Use of Pronouns

By: Elkjaer Garcia

APPROVED BY THE GRADUATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

_____

Jaye Luke, Ph.D., Advisor, Master of Arts in Education

_____

Kerrie Chitwood, Ph.D., Advisor and Coordinator, Master of Arts in Education

_____

Kris Roney, Ph.D. Associate Vice President

Academic Programs and Dean of Undergraduate & Graduate Studies

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of indirect written and verbal feedback on the written work of three 5th grade English Language Learners (ELLs). Providing such a narrowed scope of study would enable the exploration of a new strategy aimed at teaching ELLs to clarify their writing. Using a nonconcurrent multiple baseline design across three participants, the study measured the number of pronouns used by each participant that did not establish a common or proper noun in connection to pronouns used in each sentence during baseline and intervention. A one month intervention consisted of indirect written and verbal feedback from researcher to the students about their written pronoun use. Results indicated improvement in the clarity of all participants' writing as they changed their individual approach to defining what a clear subject was in their sentences. Thus, a functional relationship between the indirect feedback and pronoun use was noted.

Keywords: ELLs, writing, pronouns, feedback, elementary

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5th Grade English Language Learners Writing: Influencing Use of Pronouns

Literature Review

Research from both the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and

Student Testing (CRESST) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) have

shown that English language learners (ELLs) consistently perform far lower on state tests than

any other student population. These standardized measures require written responses in English

and thus, often times result in ELL's scoring 20 to 30 percentage points lower than their peers for

many years (Abedi & Dietel, 2004). That is, according to the standardized assessments, ELL's

are not closing the achievement gap with the current instructional practices.

State tests are administered annually by local educational agencies (LEAs) using

educational standards that reflect the learning goals for what students should know and be able to

do at each grade level. In 2010, the California State Board of Education adopted the Common

Core State Standards (CCSS), which would impact the educational curriculum and assessments

conducted in the K-12 setting (California Department of Education, 2016). The CCSS was

developed with the goal of preparing students for college and/or career in a uniform way across

the United States. Furthermore, the changes in curriculum provided a shift in philosophical and

pedagogical thinking. For example, students are now expected to learn concepts with more

depth and increased rigor. The Common Core State Standards Initiative (2016) states that

students are expected to acquire and accurately use a range of general academic and domain-

specific words in preparation for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at college and career

readiness levels. Simply put, students should prove to be clear, understandable, and consistent

when communicating in the English language.

Evidence of students being clear, understandable, and consistent when communicating in the English language can be proven through copies of written work. This is because the purpose of writing allows someone to communicate information with any reader. In other words, if a writer prints information on a piece of paper and hands that paper over to someone, ideally, that person should be able to read and understand exactly what was meant to be said without ever having to actually speak with the writer. This is what successful writing is supposed to accomplish. However, as Flower (1979) highlights, all writers constantly go through mental struggles trying to effectively transform their thoughts into certain complex, but describable ways to satisfy the needs of their readers. Failure to do so suggests that readers happen to make misinterpretations for what the writer meant to express or what the writer was not clear in how the information was conveyed (Flower, 1979).

Effective writing as an ELL can be a difficult skill to master at any level, let alone in elementary school when these skills are still being developed. Learning to write clearly is a complex process involving an initial understanding for the basic elements of writing. As Robb, Richek and Spandel (2002) explain, the basic elements of writing process in English include 1) working with words called the parts of speech (e.g., nouns pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, interjections) and 2) building effective sentences (i.e., complete sentence formed by a group of words that express a complete thought). As such, the basic elements of writing process also depend on a writer's ability to critically think, plan, compose, and revise his/her use of these elements. Furthermore, studies have shown that early ELL students struggle with writing because the academic language needed for proficient literacy at school requires five or more years to learn (Cummins, 1979; Collier, 1989). Similarly, while conducting research on ELL writers in elementary and middle schools for ten years, Fu (2009)

noted that even when ELLs are mainstreamed after two or three structured years in an ELL

program, they are still very much beginning level ELL students with unrealistic learning

expectations of developing the same grade level writing standards as their English-proficient

peers.

Regardless of their educational background, ELLs are placed in grades according to their

age only adding complex grade-level curriculum and high academic demands to the already

challenging task of developing academic language for writing, which has proven so taxing that

some students spend their entire school career as ELLs (Fu, 2009).   Similarly, De Glopper,

Snelling and Van Gelderen (2002) concluded that due to the linguistic demands, ELLs need

more time and instruction to develop the writing skills and abilities compared to their native

language peers.   However difficult learning a second language may be, when 5th grade ELL

students write, they are still expected to communicate and write a product that is interpreted as

proof of what the students know or understand. This process can be used to accurately monitor

or assess students' academic growth. Therefore, it is logical to consider designing a strategy or

learning experience that may possibly improve a 5th grade ELL's ability to effectively

communicate what he or she knows through writing. This means educators must thoughtfully

consider how to effectively begin structuring a learning experience that will ultimately measure

students' growth based upon a particular learning goal in mind.

Lemov (2010) recommends designing a learning experience with a measurable objective

and this criterion is what ultimately determines success of an activity. This process is known as

backwards design. Furthermore, McTighe and Wiggins (2005) reported that thousands of

teachers felt they had found success in their planning after utilizing the backwards design

framework. McTighe and Wiggins (2005) argued that the instructional process should serve the

goals of the students and that a predetermined process should not inform the goals of the students. For example, in a 5th grade language arts class, a teacher can review a selected writing standard for the day and determine what specific outcome his/her student should work to achieve. This form of thinking helps teachers narrow down the scope of the lesson and guide specific instruction on the measurable objective that students can recognize and focus on without having the teacher present unrelated material that will not be measured in students' writing for the day. Using a measurable objective to plan structured lessons create a form of leveled scaffolding needed to have 5th grade ELLs develop clear writing over time so that readers understand what they are trying to communicate.

From a reader's perspective, Robb, Richek and Spandel (2002) state that when a reader wants to know what is going on in a sentence or paragraph, they search for the subject within the text. If the reader can clearly identify the subject in a written piece of work, then the reader can find the main idea (Robb et al., 2002). Likewise, Kemper, Sebranek and Meyer (2006) confirm that in order for a complete sentence to express a complete thought, the sentence must have a clear subject. The subject is what clarifies whom or what is doing something in a sentence, providing a better understanding for a reader.

Clear subjects exist for a reader when common or proper nouns are present in sentences. Common nouns name people, places, and things. For example, "Prometheus brought fire to man." The common nouns in the sentence would be *fire* and *man*. Proper nouns will name specific items. Using the same example, "Prometheus brought fire to man." The proper noun in the sentence is *Prometheus*. As a result, common and proper nouns clarify the subject of a sentence to help provide the context for the reader and make for clear writing.

On the other hand, pronouns that are used to replace a proper noun may make the writing ambiguous and unclear. For instance, by changing the common and proper nouns in the example sentence about Prometheus, the sentence would read, "He brought it to them." The pronouns *He*, *it*, and *them* now provide no clear subject or context in the sentence. If someone simply read the sentence composed of pronouns in an isolated setting, with no given context, there would be no clear indication that the sentence is referring to Prometheus bringing fire to man. As a result, clear writing can be measured by observing sentences that use pronouns without establishing a connection to a common or proper noun in the same sentence.

Considering how to effectively approach teaching ELL students to use common or proper nouns requires exploring who is teaching students what they learn. In Vygotsky's (1978) Social Development Theory, Vygotsky highlights that social interaction acts as a fundamental role in the development of cognition for children. Better yet, Vygotsky (1978) believed that cognitive development in young children is strongly influenced through their social interaction with skillful tutors (i.e., the More Knowledgeable Others). Coincidently, one of Vygotsky (1978) key principles for support is the presence of the More Knowledgeable Other (M.K.O.).

The M.K.O. in Vygotsky's (1978) work is typically represented by a teacher or older adult assumed to have more knowledge or experience than the learner (children). However, the M.K.O. can essentially be anyone (i.e., peer, parent, electronic tutoring program, etc.) who has a greater understanding and/or skill level than the learner. The M.K.O. models and/or instructs the learner about important tasks, processes, or concepts needed to achieve a particular goal. For example, imagine a 5th grade ELL who has never been taught to include a clear subject in a written sentence is asked to independently write a proficient grade-level response about a selected reading. It is likely that the ELL student may render a below grade-level response

lacking the organized structure of including a clear subject and a predicate to express a complete

thought. But, if the same student undergoes intervention with a M.K.O. who provides feedback

on how to organize one's thoughts into a coherent sentence, then the student has a higher

likelihood of producing proficient grade-level writing.

   The use of the M.K.O. in the classroom setting is often the teacher. Consideration of how

the teacher implements feedback is a critical component to student success. Freeland,

Gilbertson, Noell, Ranier, and Witt (1997) conducted a study to examine the treatment fidelity of

general education teachers implementing a reinforcement based intervention designed to improve

the academic performance of three 3rd grade students. Results showed a noticeable improvement

of treatment fidelity when consultants provided daily performance feedback to students, and that

the use of timely intervention as the activities happened improved the academic performance for

two of the three students (Freeland et al., 1997). This information indicates that the quick

turnaround in intervention from the point a student performs their task to the point they receive

their feedback can influence their following performances. Therefore, any specific feedback

would most likely show their effects on a student's performance when provided in a timely

manner.

   When studying the effects of feedback on writing form, Fathman and Walley (1990)

found that students significantly improved their grammatical scores on rewrites when the

teacher's feedback simply indicated the place of the errors and not the type of errors. This was

then supported by Frodesen (2001), who further explained that indirect feedback is more

successful in the long run than direct correction. In other words, feedback on form works best

when students are shown places to correct rather than having them copy a teacher's changes onto

subsequent rewrites because copying the direct corrections from a teacher tends to be a passive action where students don't necessarily learn how to recognize or correct errors on their own.

Equally as important as feedback on writing form is the way feedback on content is given. Fregeau (1999) suggests that written feedback on content is also at its most effective when tied with student-teacher conferencing. Written feedback on content can be difficult for ELLs to understand, conferencing face-to-face with students allow teachers to ask clearly directed questions about the content of a student's work. This, in turn, allows students to then better explain their writing and ask questions themselves to the teacher regarding comments made about their work. As a result, Fregeau (1999) concludes that student-teacher conferencing enables students to express their ideas more clearly in writing afterwards. Thus, indicating that conferencing with students is a useful way to clarify specific challenges related to their writing.

Providing feedback to students is an essential part of the learning process that requires thoughtful consideration and approach as it may have an impact on the engagement of students feeling overwhelmed by their academic performance goals. Meece and Miller (2009) examined how 431 late elementary students' motivation changed for the content areas of reading and writing. The students were provided with various instructional modifications to their achievement goals, perceived competence, and strategy use in reading and writing. The study determined that when 8 teachers provided many opportunities for students between 3rd to 5th grade to complete challenging, collaborative, and multi-day assignments, the students became less focused on performance goals, and low-achieving students reported less work avoidance (Meece & Miller, 2009). Essentially, the intervention showed that most students stressed less on performance goals and instead chose to engage in instructionally modified activities for reading and writing.

In addition, an intervention study of third-grade ELLs conducted by Lee and colleagues (2009) examined ELLs' writing achievements in expository science writing over the course of 3 years. The main focus was on ELLs' writing form (e.g., conventions, organization, and style/voice) and writing content (e.g., specific knowledge and understanding of science). ELLs displayed significant increases each year with statistical gains being incrementally larger over the 3-year period comparable to non-ELLs. Concluding that consistent writing intervention over long periods of time does have a positive impact on ELLs (Lee et al., 2009).

Ongoing teacher intervention with ELLs is a wise strategy to incorporate in improvement of the writing process. However, the teacher's role during writing intervention needs to be examined further. Educators should include direct feedback and consider implementing a new strategy of indirect feedback to target teaching ELL students. This new focused strategy would ideally influence students not to use pronouns when writing, but rather clearly identify the subject of their content through use of common and or proper nouns especially since every pronoun refers to a specific noun.

Research Question

How does a teacher's written and vocal feedback influence pronoun use for three 5th grade English Language Learners when producing writing in a mainstream general education classroom?

Methods

Importance and Significance

This study presents a discussion on the development of clear writing for English Language Learners at the 5th grade elementary level as they proceed to improve on their English as a second language. This study focuses on providing a focused strategy for assisting teaching

ELLs to clarify their writing. As Harklau and Pinnow (2009) report, literacy instruction for ELLs in the United States lacks focus on writing as a tool for thinking and communicating at the beginning and intermediate levels. Therefore, with educational advancement in the United States being closely tied to English proficiency, writing strategies that help ELLs with higher-order thinking about their way of communicating is undoubtedly worth exploring.

Participants and Setting

Three 5th grade ELL students with a California English Language Development Test (CELDT) performance level of 3 (intermediate) or less in the domain of writing and in their overall score for the test were recruited. The overall CELDT score is determined by scores in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Tier 1 participant, referred to as Vicious V in this study, was a 12 year old male ELL with intermediate writing skills. Tier 2 participant, referred to as Young W, was also a12 year old male ELL identified with early intermediate writing skills. And finally, Tier 3 participant, referred to as Jazzy J, was a 10 year old female ELL with intermediate writing skills.

All three 5th grade ELL students participated in this study while attending their mainstream general education classroom. Furthermore, the participants were not recipients of any special resource services.

They attend the same elementary school in central California, which is one of sixteen elementary schools in its district. The elementary school had approximately 663 students enrolled and 24 teachers on staff. According to the National Center of Education Statistics (2016), 628 students were Hispanic (94%), 24 students were White (4%), 10 students were Asian/Pacific Islanders (1.9%), and 1 student was American Indian (0.1%). In addition, 344

students were male (51%) with the remaining 319 being female (49%). 86% were

socioeconomically disadvantaged with 7% of the student population identified with disabilities.

Given the focus of this study, it is important to note that 77% of the school's population

was identified as being ELL students with 69.5% of total students performing basic or below

grade level in English Language Arts. That means about 3 out of every 10 students performed

proficiently (at grade-level) in reading and writing.

Apparatus and Materials

This study utilized Hyde's (2008) book, *Favorite Greek Myths*, Russell's (1989) book,

Classic Myths to Read Aloud, as well as a separate electronic copy of a writing prompt that

states, "How did you like the main character of the story? Please provide 2-3 reasons why."

Dependent Variable

The number of pronouns used by participants in their electronically written responses

recorded. The pronouns were counted when a common or proper noun had not been established

in connection to the pronouns in each sentence of the electronically written responses. For

example, if a participant produced an electronically written response, "I liked her because she

was kind." then, both the *her* and *she* were counted as those two pronouns had not establish a

proper noun to provide context for the response. Furthermore, if a participant produced an

electronically written response of "I liked Pandora because she was kind." then, the *she* in the

sentence was not counted as this particular sentence establishes that *she* is referring to *Pandora*.

 However, in the event that a response read, "I liked Pandora because she was kind. She only

happened to open the box." Then the *she* in the second sentence was counted because that

particular sentence did not establish a proper noun to provide context for the use of the pronoun.

Again, each pronoun used in a sentence must establish a proper noun in connection to the

pronoun to provide context for the response.

Independent Variable

The participants received systematic written feedback on their use of pronouns.

Intervention sessions were reviewed for each participant's use of pronouns in their completed

writing sample with the participant present during individually spoken feedback. With the

writing sample, the researcher pointed to each word as it was read and stopped to circle the

pronouns that did not establish a common or proper noun in connection to the pronouns used in

each sentence. Any question asked by the participant was clarified by the researcher. Written

feedback included the following indirect feedback: 1) circling pronouns that have not

established a proper noun in each sentence, 2) "Who is _____?", and 3) "What is _____?" My

use of the "_____" during written feedback referred to the participant's written pronoun.

Research Design

This study used a nonconcurrent multiple-baseline across three participants research

design. The first participant (Vicious V) entered baseline and when he had at least 3 stable data

points, he began intervention. As Vicious V continued intervention procedures, Young W began

baseline procedures until his data was stale for 3 consecutive sessions. Once Young W entered

intervention procedures, Jazzy J then entered baseline procedures until her data was stable for 3

consecutive sessions. Jazzy J's stable baseline data then allowed her to enter intervention

procedures.

Beginning with baseline procedures, the participant was given a copy of a 5th grade level

short story from Hyde's (2008) *Favorite Greek Myths* or Russell's (1989) *Classic Myths to Read*

Aloud from which they read with the researcher and then the researcher provided an

electronically written response to the writing prompt, "How did you like the main character of

the story? Please provide 2-3 reasons why." Each session included a different short story. The

responses were collected, printed and checked for a pronoun count. Each pronoun used in a

sentence that did not establish a common or proper noun in connection to the pronoun in that

sentence was counted.

Procedural Fidelity

Procedural fidelity was measured by the secondary observer for 22% of all sessions to

verify consistent application of intervention procedures as intended by the primary researcher

(see Appendix A).

The secondary observer watched as the implementation of the independent variable

(teacher's written feedback) occurred during intervention sessions. Fidelity of implementation

was 100% for all participants.

Interobserver Agreement

An independent second observer read 48% of all sessions across baseline and

intervention for each participant. In each session, the primary researcher and the secondary

observer independently counted the number of pronouns used in each sentence of a response that

did not establish a common or proper noun. This then led to a sum total of targeted pronouns

counted for each written response.

The primary researcher and secondary observer found 86% agreement for all of Vicious

V's sessions ranging between 0-7 pronoun counts, 100% agreement for all of Young W's

sessions ranging between 0-7 pronoun counts, and 100% agreement for all of Jazzy J's sessions

ranging between 1-7 pronoun counts. The only disagreement between the primary researcher

and the secondary observer was a result of one session for Vicious V in which there was a

difference of 1 pronoun counted.

Social Validity

Survey composed of two binary (yes or no) questions was distributed to parents of

students in the mainstream general education classroom from which the three participants are

being studied: 1) Is clear writing an important skill for a student to have in order to achieve

success in the real world? 2) Should students practice using more common and proper nouns

instead of pronouns when writing? Survey data was analyzed to determine whether or not this

research study was deemed important (yes) or not (no) by parents.

As a result, 26 of 26 parents responded, yes, clear writing is an important skill for a

student to have in order to achieve success in the real world. In addition, 24 of 26 parents

responded, yes, students should practice using more common and proper nouns instead of

pronouns when writing while 2 of 26 parents responded with no.

Results

Figure 1 has two axes. The y-axis represents the number of pronouns used and the x-axis

indicates the number of sessions. Vicious V's written responses to the readings resulted in a

baseline mean of 6 pronouns ranging between 6-7 pronoun counts. Vicious V then entered

intervention and consistently had a pronoun count of 0.

Young W's written responses to the readings resulted in a baseline mean of 5 pronouns

ranging between 4-7 pronoun counts. Young W then entered intervention and had a pronoun

count range of 0-2 with an average of 1.

Jazzy J's written responses to the readings resulted in a baseline mean of 6 pronouns ranging between 5-7 pronoun counts. Jazzy J then entered intervention and had a pronoun count with a range of 0-2 and a mean of 1 pronoun.
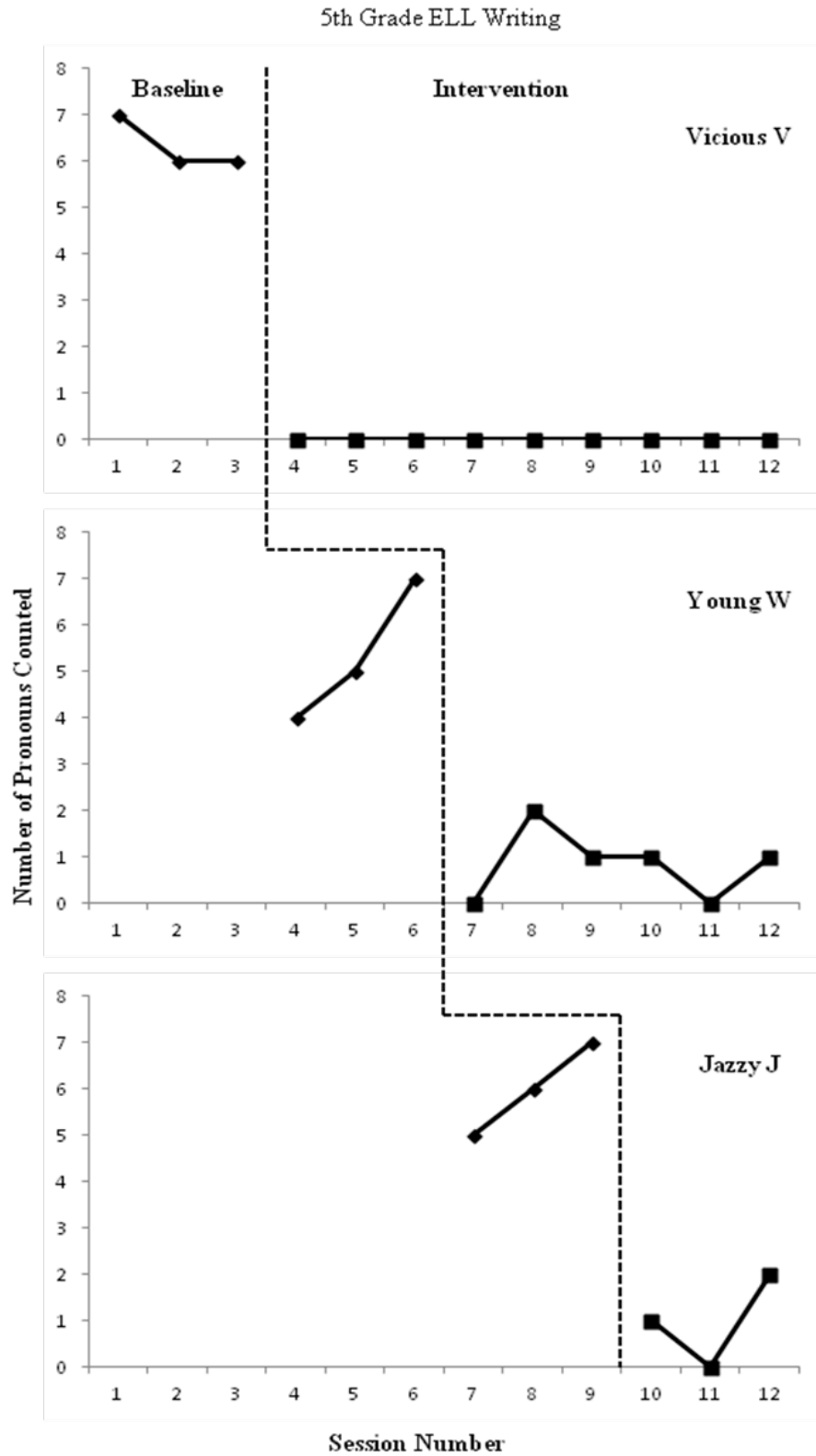
5th Grade ELL Writing

Figure 1. Number of pronouns counted that did not establish a common or proper noun in connection to pronouns used in each sentence during baseline and intervention (indirect written and verbal feedback from researcher) for all three participating ELLs during 12 sessions of observation.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore a focused strategy yet to be studied for the benefit of improving teaching ELLs to clarify their writing. Due to the state standards in the United States tying in English proficiency in all content area assessments of education, communication through writing is highly viewed as a determinant of a student's educational advancement. The results of this study correspond to a fundamental practice that may be adopted in teaching ELLs to successfully achieve clear writing.

When analyzing Vicious V's baseline responses, there was consistent use of "I like ___ because ___" sentence frames in his responses; this sentence frame was particularly used to begin each of his responses. Along with the simple sentence structure, Vicious V did include his subject in each sentence for clarity. However, when including the subject, Vicious V relied on the use of pronouns *he* and *she*. For example, Vicious V began a response with, "I like *him* because *he* was a genius." Vicious V's constant use of the simple sentence frame in combination with pronouns that did not establish a connection to a common or proper noun resulted in an average count of 2 pronouns per sentence. This baseline data suggested that Vicious V could potentially benefit from indirect feedback for clarity in his writing during intervention.

Intervention measurements for Vicious V showed dramatic changes in his approach to using pronouns. After the researcher implemented the independent variable just once during intervention, Vicious V showed instant recognition for the clarity of subjects in sentences that the researcher was targeting to influence. Vicious V performed all nine intervention session responses with a pronoun count of 0. This fascinating outcome resulted in a successful influence on Vicious V's subject clarity in English. When Vicious V did include a pronoun, he did in fact establish a connection to a common or proper noun first prior to using the pronoun in the given

sentence. For instance, Vicious V responded with sentences such as, "I like the main character which his name was King Midas because King midas was helpful" and "I like the main character which his name is King picus because he hunt wild boar," respectively. These results for Vicious V showed a heightened awareness in his ability to adjust quickly to the researcher's indirect written and verbal feedback as well as his ability to be cognizant of how he communicated in future responses.

Similarly to Vicious V, Young W exhibited a tendency to use simple sentences. However, Young W used simple sentences that would focus more on short statements retelling the events of the story read instead of focusing on explaining why he liked or disliked the main character of the story after his opening statement. For example, some of Young W's response to the writing prompt read, "I think he was nice. He didn't have as much money. His mom worked in the fields." Young W's responses indicated that he would include a subject, but refer to his subject with the use of pronouns before completing the sentences with a predicate. Therefore, Young W's baseline data demonstrated the need for intervention.

Intervention measurements for Young W resulted in a significant pronoun count drop after being provided indirect written and verbal feedback from the researcher. Young W dropped from a baseline mean of 5 pronouns counted to an intervention mean of 1 pronoun counted after entering intervention with the researcher. Thus, the data confirms successful influence on Young W's subject clarity in English writing. Young W exhibited awareness of the pronouns he was using by substituting them with proper nouns (e.g., character names). For instance, Young W included, "Procne was nice. Procne was nice because she was a bird." Instead of beginning sentences with *he* or *she*, Young W was making conscious decisions to refer back to the text that was read and find character names to be used in his writing. Although

Young W did have an average pronoun count of 1 during his intervention sessions, the overall subject clarity in his English writing was more comprehensible in each response even when minor grammar issues were present.

In Jazzy J's baseline responses, she typically began each response by clearly identifying her subjects with proper nouns, but it was her follow up sentences that proved to show her tendency for resorting to pronouns. Once Jazzy J identified her subjects within 2 initial sentences, multiple sentences were provided with a heavy use of pronouns. This type of writing proved to be alarming because later on Jazzy J's third baseline measurement, she failed to establish a clear subject. Jazzy J had written, "I liked him, because he was the strongest baby. I also liked Hercules because Hercules killed two big snakes. What I also liked about him is that he protect his brother. That shows that he cares for him." The entire response is focusing on *Hercules*, but when reading the response as is, it isn't until the second sentence that the subject being focused on then suggests to be *Hercules*.

Intervention measurements for Jazzy J concluded that with intervention, her pronoun count dropped to 1 after being exposed to indirect written and verbal feedback from the researcher. With only three available intervention sessions, the independent variable of this study proved to cause a significant change in Jazzy J's subject clarity in English writing. In fact, Jazzy J was the only participant who, after receiving indirect feedback the first time, asked the researcher if it was okay to include *he*/*she* in a sentence after identifying the subject in the same sentence. This was an astonishing interaction as Jazzy J was able to quickly discuss what the researcher was inferring through the use of indirect feedback. Needless to say, Jazzy J's writing resulted in better subject clarity for the few intervention session recorded in comparison to her baseline mean.

Consider all data results as a whole, baseline measurements across all three participants indicated that all three participants relied on using pronouns quite often within each sentence they wrote. All participants had at least one response, if not more, which started their opening statement with a pronoun of *he* or *she* without clearly stating whom the subject was for their response. Due to observation of these responses, it was clear that all three participants demonstrated they could maintain the topic when writing, but did not necessarily consider stating the subject with a proper noun for clarity. This instant lack of clarity for the reader supports the line of thinking from Robb et al. (2002) and Kemper et al. (2006) in that any written work needs to contain a clear subject in order to begin providing a complete thought for a reader to understand what message is trying to be shared otherwise there will be confusion. Although Vicious V and Young W demonstrated the lack of a clear subject right away in their responses more often than Jazzy J, Jazzy J still showed she was capable of making the same mistake causing confusion when reading her written response in baseline session 9.

This immediacy in change of data between baseline and intervention indicate instant connection to an awareness of vague wording and changed all the participants' approach to writing when identifying their subjects. Therefore, the data suggest the consistent indirect feedback in this particular study successfully helped the participants achieve clear subjects in their English writing. These results are in align with the findings of Freeland et al. (1997) that found daily performance feedback to students resulted in improved academic performance for the majority of their participants.

This study is in alignment with the results of Fathman and Walley's study (1990) in that feedback on writing improved the grammar of the studied participants. Technically, because all three participants made conscious efforts to clarify their subjects in their writing, the grammar in

their sentences did show improvement when compared to their previous writing entries that had

pronouns referencing no clear subject causing a lack of clarity in most of their sentences.

Consequently, the participants showed improvements with their grammar only after being given

indirect feedback from the researcher.

One possible reason for such a strong response from all three participants to actively

avoid the use of pronouns came from the initial shock they were given during their first

intervention sessions. In order for intervention to fully begin, the researcher showed all three

participants their body of work from their baseline sessions with indirect feedback given on each

response. This meant each participant saw three different responses that they had written with a

similar theme written and read to them, "Who is _____?" The initial bombardment of the same

reoccurring errors could have left a lasting impression on all participants that would have them

come to terms with immediately correcting the issue.

This constant use of pronouns were highlighted, thus possibly making them easy for the

participants to identify as pronouns where heard quite often during this study. This may have

made targeting pronouns easy for the participants to locate and adjust as they wrote. It was

noticed that Young W was eager to occasionally ask the researcher, "Who is he?" or "Who is

she?" as the short stories were read with him. That simple action from Young W displayed how

quickly he was able to pick up on when pronouns where used in writing other than that of his

own writing. Young W would then sometimes initially use pronouns in his response and quickly

change them before continuing. In an interesting turn of events, Vicious V became outspoken in

his mainstream class asking classmates to clarify what they were talking about whenever he

heard a pronoun said aloud. Vicious V would ask loudly, "Who is he?" or "What is it?" to his

classmates. This was unexpected, but very fascinating. Vicious V had now not only adjusted his

own writing, but was actively trying to help others adjust the way they spoke. That means, similarly to Young W, Vicious V was now using his own feedback on all other forms of information he himself was receiving. These examples indicate that pronouns could potentially be easy targets for 5th grade ELL students to recognize.

Limitations and Future Research

Although all three participants made gains during this study, the results should be interpreted with caution as there are limitations to consider. For instance, the sample size of this particular study included only three participants with a CELDT performance level of 3 (intermediate) or less in the domain of writing and in their overall score for the test. Future research could explore and compare data from larger sized samplings of participants with similar and or different CELDT scores. Additionally, this particular study has a focus on influencing the use of pronouns in writing through indirect feedback and has only been conducted once. This means there is currently a lack of replication for this study. In order to further explore and understand the potential influences this study may have on other ELL students, it is important to compare data from replicated studies using the same methodology. Now, considering the participant involved, this study was limited to using participants in the 5th grade only. Future results of this study may vary across multiple grade levels.

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Appendix A

Directions: Use the following checklist to verify consistent application of independent variable during intervention procedures. Participant is to be present and in clear view of their written response at all times.

- ✓ The researcher read aloud the participant's written response copy to them with a finger under each word.

- ✓ The researcher stopped at every pronoun that did not establish a common or proper noun in connection to the pronouns used in each sentence.

- ✓ The researcher circled targeted pronouns.

- ✓ For each targeted pronoun circled, the researcher wrote "Who is _____?" or "What is _____?" with the "_____" referring to the targeted pronoun.

- ✓ The researcher read aloud the written feedback to the participant.

- ✓ If the participant asked for clarification, the researcher responded upon request before continuing to read.

- ✓ At the end of reading, the researcher recorded the sum of all targeted pronouns at the top of the participant's written response copy.