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Scaffolding the Writing Process

by

Hulda Yau
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Scaffolding the Writing Process

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Chapter I

Introduction

The process of writing is highly complex and poses many challenges for Limited English Proficient (LEP) students. The transformation of thought into written communication is a difficult activity that involves many levels of complementary skills (Scott and Vitale, 2003). Writing is a multiple step process that requires the integration of pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing that later culminates in a writing piece. Writing, for the LEP student, can be a demanding task.

The National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA) states that English language learners (ELL), are faced with two daunting tasks. First, regardless of whether they are literate in their native language, they must learn to read and write in English. ELL who already read and write in their native language must learn how to apply those skills to the English language, while ELL who do not yet know how to read and write must be taught English language literacy skills. Second, in addition to developing literacy skills, ELL students must acquire content knowledge and content area literacy. The task is complicated by the fact that each content area has its own set of terminology/vocabulary, writing conventions, and critical thinking skills that must be learned if the student is to become fully proficient.

As reflected in the NCELA in 2005, the number of LEP students continues to rise exponentially every year. LEP students have increased by 104% during the past 10 years, making them the fastest growing group in the United States today. In 2004, the Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE) stated that many LEP students do not get the same educational opportunity as the English

speaking students sitting next to them because such students usually find themselves in classrooms where instructors have no training in bilingual education or English as a second language (ESL).

Unfortunately, children with limited English proficiency are known to be at higher risk of school failure (Tashakkori & Lopez, 2004). Studies made by Tashakkory and Lopez show that most schools are not meeting the challenge of educating linguistically and culturally diverse students. The Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE 2006) states this is quite problematic because federal and state governments are calling for all students to meet high standards and are adjusting national and state assessments as well as state graduation requirements to reflect these new levels of achievement. In order for students whose first language is not English to succeed in school and become productive citizens in our society, they need to receive better educational opportunities in U.S. schools.

As stated by CREDE in 2005, all English language learners in U.S. schools today are not alike. They enter schools with a wide range of language proficiencies (in English and in their native languages) and of subject matter knowledge. At one end of the spectrum among immigrant students, are ELL who had strong academic backgrounds before they came to the U.S. and entered our schools. Some of them are above equivalent grade levels in the school's curricula, in math and science for example. They are literate in their native language and may have already begun study of a second language. For these students, much of what they need is English language development so that as they become more proficient in English they are

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able to transfer the knowledge they learned in their native country's schools to the classes they are taking in the U.S.

At the other end, some immigrant students arrive at our schools with very limited formal schooling—perhaps due to war in their native countries. In the Rochester City School District there is a high rate of refugee students that fall under this category. As discussed at the ELL Consortium at Nazareth College in July, 2006, these students are not literate in their native language (i.e., they cannot read or write), and they have not had schooling experiences such as sitting at desks all day, changing teachers per subject, or taking state exams. They have significant gaps in their educational backgrounds, lack knowledge in specific subject areas, and often need time to become accustomed to school routines and expectations.

Within the district there are students who have grown up in the United States but speak a language other than English at home. Given the variability in these students' backgrounds, they often need different pathways for academic success. To meet this challenge, fundamental shifts need to occur in teacher development, program design, curricula and materials, and instructional and assessment practices (Echevarria & Short 2002).

Problem Statement

With the rise of English as a global language the ability to write well in English across diverse settings and for different audiences has become essential. The official web site of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) places considerable emphasis on improving children's reading and mathematics performance; unfortunately, writing is not as emphasized. Writing is the primary means by which

students demonstrate their knowledge in school. Writing provides a flexible tool for gathering, remembering, and sharing subject-matter knowledge as well as an instrument for helping children explore, organize and refine their ideas about a specific subject (Graham & Harris, 2005).

Producing an effective and interesting written expression is an overwhelming task for my LEP students. The teaching of second language writing is often hindered by the great amount of time needed to evaluate repeated drafts of student writing. Specific strategies are needed to help them become successful in the various stages of the writing process. Through my study I would like to investigate methods and strategies that would lead my students to achieve the goal of second language acquisition.

Significance of the Problem

Educators struggle to face the growing challenges generated by students with limited English proficiency, also known as English language learners (ELL). While LEP students can learn to converse fluently within two years of their arrival in the United States, it typically takes ELL students from five to seven years to acquire the cognitive, academic language skill they need to be successful in school (Menken & Look, 2000). I believe LEP students can eventually overcome the English deficit if a sheltered academic approach is used throughout the stages of pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing. A sheltered academic approach is similar to scaffolding in which students receive various types of assistance to make it possible for them to function at a higher level. With this approach, not only will struggling writers improve their

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writing performance but their more skilled classmates will improve as well (McArthur, Harris & Graham, 2006).

<u>Rationale</u>

Knowing and understanding the various steps in the writing process are the foundations that lead to writing success. I explored this area through the use of scaffolded writing. This instructional technique provides the support necessary for the learner to complete a task at a higher level than the learner's current level of functioning. Once the learner can complete the task at the next higher level independently, the scaffolding that led to that level is no longer needed (Gentry, 2005). This reflects the Vygotskian concept that what the learner can do today with assistance, he/she can do tomorrow independently.

Scaffolded writing enables struggling writers to work independently and facilitates their development in becoming proficient writers (Gentry 2005). My students are sixth graders who are in the beginning stages of recognizing and writing site words correctly. To support my emergent writers I created flashcards, a visual scaffold, on a ring with explicit instructions on the different steps of the writing process. For example, the first flash card read "Prewriting" and it directed the student to make a plan choosing to write a list, draw a picture or use a word web to stimulate their ideas about a topic before writing the first draft. Furthermore, I used materialization, better known as a manipulative, as an instructional intervention to increase my students' organizational writing skills and the overall quality of their written work. Materialization, a Vygotskian concept, involves using a tangible object or physical action to represent a mental construct (Gentry 2005).

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Many studies recommend drawing and other art activities as a way of facilitating ideas for writing. One study in particular led by Norris, Mokhtari and Reichard in 1998, indicated that the act of drawing prior to writing appeared to be beneficial in writing performances. As stated in their study "The data indicates that drawing became an effective planning strategy for students who appeared to rely on their drawing as a reference point to prompt them toward what should come next in their writing" (p.10). The approach employed in this study revealed that integrating drawing and writing can be used as a way of motivating students to write and enjoy doing it. Olshansky states, "When children's stories are driven by rich visual images, their writing is transformed in many powerful ways" (p.12). Image making has continuously proven to be a successful tool in the writing process. Therefore, I encouraged drawing in the planning stage to stimulate my reluctant writers.

According to the Vigotskian theory, for an intervention to be effective, it must support students within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Bodrova & Leon, 1995). This concept suggests that there is a tie between instruction and a child's development, and that the best instruction moves students to a higher level of independence (Bodrova and Leon, 1998). In the context of teaching writing to the LEP student, I identified each student's level of writing through the use of rubrics then I modeled and scaffolded the writer's move to the next highest level of writing. After my intervention I assessed my students writing ability with this same rubric.

To effectively move my student through the developmental stages of writing I also used the Gradual Release of Responsibility framework (Rhodes & Dudley-Marling, 1996) together with the peer-assistance learning strategies (PALS). The

Gradual Release of Responsibility Framework is an instructional technique that moves from teacher demonstration or teacher-led discovery to teacher/student support and finalizing with students independence. The PALS approach has been used successfully to improve young students' reading, writing, and math skills. This strategy pairs a strong and a weaker student together to practice applying a target skill with each student alternatively acting like a coach or tutor as the other student applies the procedure (Saddler & Graham, 2005). As stated by Saddler & Graham in their study, "PALS supports learning through active academic responding, collaborative practice, and immediate feedback and assistance from a peer" (p.3).

The participants in this study were 10 sixth grade LEP students in which only five had the flashcards accessible to them at all times during Writers' Workshop. The other five participants only depended on the lists and charts around the classroom. This study attempted to determine the impact a manipulative might have on the writing development of LEP students. The results of this study guided future instruction in my classroom as the findings reflected best practices for limited English proficient writers.

Definition of Terms

1. LEP: A student whose first language is not English; therefore, being identified as limited English proficient.

2. ELL: A student of limited English proficiency who is also known as an English language learner.

3. PALS: This peer-assisted learning strategy pairs a strong and a weaker student together to practice applying a target skill until each student alternatively acts like a coach or tutor as the other applies the procedure.

4. ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development is the developmentally appropriate instruction in a child's range of capability.

5. Gradual Release of Responsibility Framework: This instructional technique moves from teacher demonstration or teacher-led discovery to teacher/student support and finalizing with students independence.

6. Scaffolding: Types of assistance that would make it possible for learners to function at a higher level.

7. Materialization: It refers to the use of tangible objects and physical actions that represent or "stand for" a concept or strategy as the mental action is being learned. This concept is better known as a manipulative.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Challenges Facing the ELL/ LEP Student

It is now an accepted premise that the students who come to school from a different culture will be at a disadvantage. Where the language of the home and the language of the school are different, the problems are multiplied for the student. During the past decade, researchers have turned their attention to various strategies of intervention designed to help the English-speaking disadvantage student overcome the English deficit.

A new report released on November of 2006 by the Alliance for Excellent Education finds that the nation's growing English language learner (ELL) populations have been largely ignored as policymakers consider ways to improve students reading and writing proficiency levels. If the reading and writing skills of all students are to improve, the report urges, the unique needs of ELL students must be identified and addressed with targeted strategies.

Although many strategies for supporting literacy in native English speakers are applicable to ELL students, there are significant differences in the way that successful literacy interventions for the latter group should be designed and implemented. These differences have serious implications for teachers, instructional leaders, curriculum designers, administrators, and policymakers at all levels of government. Furthermore, because ELL students are a diverse group of learners in terms of their educational backgrounds, native language literacy, socioeconomic

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status, and more, some strategies will work for certain ELLs but not for others (Fitzsimmons & Short, 2006).

It should be understood that ELLs are second language learners who are still developing their proficiency in academic English. In addition, they are learning English at the same time they are studying core content areas through English. Thus, English language learners must perform double the work of native English speakers. And, at the same time, they are being held to the same accountability standards as their native English-speaking peers.

To bring the issues and challenges confronting ELL students into clearer focus, the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL, 2006), working on behalf of Carnegie Corporation of New York, convened a panel of researchers, policymakers, and practitioners working in the field to offer their expertise. The panel agreed to focus on *academic literacy*, that which is most crucial for success in school, and defined the term in the following way:

- Includes reading, writing, and oral discourse for school
- Varies from subject to subject
- Requires knowledge of multiple genres of text, purposes for text use, and text media
- Is influenced by students' literacy in contexts outside of school
- Is influenced by students' personal, social, and cultural experiences (p10)

The panel identified six major challenges to improving the literacy of ELLs:

- Lack of common criteria for identifying ELLs and tracking their academic performance
- Lack of appropriate assessments
- Inadequate educator capacity for improving literacy in ELLs
- Lack of appropriate and flexible program options
- Inadequate use of research-based instructional practices
- Lack of a strong and coherent research agenda about ELL literacy (p12)

During the course of the project, CAL researchers reviewed the literature on ELL literacy and conducted site visits to three promising programs. In addition, a sub-study was commissioned from researchers at the Migration Policy Institute to collect and analyze valuable information on the demographic trends and academic achievement of ELLs.

At the conclusion of the process, the panel recommended an array of different strategies for surmounting the six challenges by making changes in day-to-day teaching practices, professional training, research, and educational policy. With the small but growing research base on the best practices for developing ELL literacy becoming more widely disseminated through increased dialogue among educators, researchers, and policymakers, the right strategies for helping these students attain their full potential are being determined (CAL, 2006).

Teachers need professional development to teach content effectively to students who are learning academic English at the same time they are trying to meet content standards. Academic English is the formal variety that one needs to successfully read and write in the U.S. academic environment. Although it should be a national goal for teacher education, only three states (Arizona, California, and Florida) have enacted policies to ensure teacher candidates have background knowledge that will help them work successfully with ELLs . To successfully target the challenges facing the ELL/LEP student the following knowledge bases are recommended to be part of the teacher development programs for all teachers working with these students (Crandall, 2000; Crawford, 2003; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004; Grant & Wong, 2003; Short & Echevarria, 2004; Wong, Fillmore, & Snow, 2002):

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- First and second language acquisition theory—knowledge of how children learn their first language and how learning a second language differs, and which first language literacy skills transfer to the second language and how

- Subject-area content—a basic understanding of the subjects ELLs take in secondary schools for ESL teachers, a deep understanding for content-area teachers

- ESL and sheltered instruction methodologies—knowledge of how to integrate language development activities and explanations with content-area instruction

- Content-area pedagogy—knowledge of specific methods for different content areas

- Content-area language and discourse—an understanding of how language is used in a specific subject area or discipline and of subject-specific text genres and structures

- Linguistic and cross-cultural contexts—an understanding of language policies, sociocultural factors that influence language use and classroom behavior, and similarities and differences between English and student native languages

- Curriculum development—knowledge of how to design content-based ESL and sheltered subject curricula that integrate language development with content topics

- Assessment—knowledge of how to minimize the English language demands of assessments to allow ELLs to demonstrate content knowledge and how to employ and interpret multiple measures of assessment to get a fuller picture of student knowledge and ability

Fitzsimmons and Short (2006) stated that the needs of the ELL students in the nation's schools must be addressed. They believe America's educational system and society as a whole will be strengthened and enriched by helping ELLs learn and perform more effectively in school.

Best Practices in Teaching the ELL Student

Every student has the capacity to succeed in school and in life. Yet far too many students fail to meet their potential. Many students, especially those from poor and minority families, are labeled at risk by schools that have not been able to provide them with a rich and demanding curriculum with the appropriate assistance and support.

Studies made by August (2002) explicitly investigate the transfer of skills from a first language to English. Understanding these aspects of transfer is important in planning and effectively teaching strategies that will improve the ELL students' literacy performance. His two major longitudinal studies that address the relationship between amount of schooling in a first language and subsequent performance in English report that higher levels of literacy skills in the native language are associates with higher performance in English literacy (August, 2002).

A limited number of studies have sought relationships between vocabulary knowledge and reading for ELLs. As Carlo (2001) comments in a recent review,

> "Research on cross-language transfer has made some progress with regard to the issue of identifying particular skills that appear susceptible to transfer from first to second language reading. However, questions remain concerning the specification of the cognitive mechanisms responsible for transfer as well as the developmental parameters that constrains transfer effects" (p.8).

Carlo points out that mechanisms responsible for transfer could be occurring at a conscious metacognitive level, at a conscious declarative level, as well as an unconscious procedural level. For example, in the realm of word identification metalinguistic knowledge would entail a general understanding of how sounds map into graphemes in an alphabetic language. Declarative knowledge would entail

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knowing that the letter "p" in Spanish says /p/ and using this knowledge to read the letter "p" in English. Procedural knowledge would entail automatic recognition of the letter "p" in Spanish and thus automatic access to the saying of the sound /p/ when encountering the letter "p" in English. Finally, one cannot rule out the possibility that non-language specific skills such as memory account for at least some of the relationships between component literacy skills across languages. The processes that are involved in the transfer may differ depending on the age and/or level of first language literacy development of the student (Carlo, 2001).

The transfer skills research by Carlo (2001) indicated that ELL students can transfer a skill from their first language to their second. Knowing the strengths students bring to the process as a result of their first language, as well as the difficulties they might encounter and errors that may make when reading in their second language, can help inform the design and delivery of literacy instruction for second language learners.

A recent study by August (2002) suggest strategies to help make instruction comprehensible to English language learners: adjusting the level of English vocabulary and structure so it is appropriate for students given their current level of proficiency in English; using explicit discourse markers such as "first" and next"; calling attention to the language in the course of using it; using the language in ways that reveal its structure; providing explicit discussion of vocabulary and structure; explaining and, in some cases, demonstrating what students will be doing or experiencing; providing students with appropriate background knowledge; building on students' previous knowledge and understanding to establish a connection between

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personal experience and the subject matter they are learning; and using manipulative, pictures, objects and film related to the subject matter.

Effective literacy strategies build on students' prior knowledge and skills. According to Saunders and Goldenberg (1999), it is important to build upon students' existing knowledge, skills, and experiences. It is imperative that students make explicit connections between their background knowledge and the academic curriculum. The authors state that building student's background knowledge before, and throughout the literature unit, helps contextualize story themes, content, and vocabulary. Drawing upon, sharing, and discussing students' relevant personal experiences sustains motivation and help students make concrete and conceptual connection to the text, its content, and the themes under study.

In addition, effective teachers create opportunities for extended dialogue to enhance English acquisition and learning. Effective teachers also use questions that press students to clarify or expand on initial statements, as well as encourage students to participate in conversations. Recently, a good deal of attention has been paid to instructional conversation-discussion-based lessons that focus on an idea or concept that has both educational value meaning and relevance for students. The teacher should encourage students to express their ideas either orally or in writing and guides them to increasingly sophisticated levels of understanding (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999).

As educators work to develop second-language literacy in ELL children, they should bear in mind that individual differences and contextual factors will influence each student's rate of development. English language learners vary profoundly in

prior schooling and the opportunities they have had to develop high level of language and literacy in the home language. A student's educational background and reading ability in the native language will impact the task of learning to read in a second language. Educators would also do well to keep in mind the considerable amount of time it takes ELLs to develop both oral English proficiency and academic proficiency equal to those of their English-speaking peers (August, 2002).

August (2002) states that "with carefully crafted, research-based instruction and support, as well as attention to the individual differences and needs of students transitioning into English, educators can help English language learners become highly literate in English".

Drawing as a Pre-Writing Strategy

Why do students insist on drawing when requested to write? What needs justify the association of images with writing? What is the role of drawing in the production of texts and how does it develop throughout the learning process? What internal and external influences affect the different kinds of illustrations? These are some questions very few studies are trying to answer.

In a study by Gasparian (2006), drawing has been considered a preliminary stage and plays an important role in mastering the written language. The act of drawing and the illustration itself provide a supporting scheme inside which writing can be built. It works, alternatively, to motivate work, define its courses and justify the pauses in the process of writing. It makes part of writing an expressive resource and a way of performing a task.

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Integrating drawing with text is an essential part of the writing process. As observed by Gasparian, in the third and fourth grades some students gradually resort less and less to drawing as a means to start and plan their written task, although it does not disappear altogether. The picture is still connected with the text, but the process of moving from drawing to writing and vice-versa decreases during the elaboration of the assignment. To use drawing as an integral approach during the process of producing writing means that one can predict the role of the picture in the text that is being produced. Drawing is not used for the sake of fantasy but as a preparatory phase that leads students to master another more valued kind of language: writing.

Objectivity is, since very early, cultivated and drawing could not ignore this tendency. When a student is being objective he/she is expressing or dealing with facts or conditions as perceived without distortion by personal feelings, prejudices, or interpretation. Throughout the development, the image becomes, like writing. It is a way to say something that later is transformed. Besides being used as an alternative that "replaces" or "supports" writing, drawing in some cases can occur independently from the text and the message carried out. In many writing classes drawing is considered an auxiliary resource in the process of writing (Gasparian, 2006).

Gasparian (2006) believes that drawing is just like words and only reinforces their meaning through a different communicative channel. She adds that "such attitude is part of a very strict taming process of the imagination, in which the picture is only valid because of its objective and rational preciseness which outshines the artistic value". It seems quite reasonable that the illustrations in children books, their

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first school books and the priority given to writing in the school environment can, in fact, have an influence on the way an individual understands the role of illustration.

Crayons and markers are a vital tool in the literacy process as it reinforces art as a means of expression. Students read pictures to understand, they make pictures to tell what they mean. Art is the connection between the teacher and the students. When image making and writing are linked literacy is expanded. When drawing is part of the writing and reading process, it can help give ideas for writing and teach skills of observation, skills that encourage reading the world and reading the image. It can help propel thinking as it connects to drawing and writing (Ernst daSilva, 2001).

Getting students to use their imaginations when writing a story can sometimes be a very complex task. Drawing, however, can create a bridge between the ideas in a child's head and the blank piece of paper on the desk. Involving students in drawing activities prior to writing helps them visualize what they want to express in their writing. Drawing before writing makes writing an easier process. This reflects the Vygotskian concept that student's drawings capitalize on the narrative impulse that emerges in their earliest representational drawings, on their tendency to create stories in drawings, and on the talk that surrounds and supplements drawing events. This talk allows teachers to engage the student in the literacy setting, and provides opportunities for questioning, directing, assessing, instructing, and praising the student (Sidelnick & Svoboda, 2000).

Writers' workshops are focused on students making choices, selecting topics that, as Ralph Fletcher (2000) describes, they can "dig into" (p.2). When drawing is part of literacy, it helps the student know their subjects and their thinking and

encourages them to "dig in" (p.2). Drawing slows students down and helps them notice important skills for writers. It leads students into thinking, making connections, questioning and noticing details (Ernst daSilva, 2001). As it opens the imagination, drawing is the kind of "play" or prewriting that writers need.

Teaching drawing as a form of thinking is necessary when connecting art to writing. Just as doing a "think-aloud" shows students what a proficient reader does as he/she reads (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000), holding up a sketch journal shows students how a proficient writer thinks before he/she writes. Thomas Edison kept thousands of journals during his lifetime. They were filled with pages of writing and sketches about his thinking and inventions. He used both drawing and writing to figure things out and to solve problems. When writing and drawing are used in a recursive way in the writing workshop, more doorways to thinking are opened (Ernst daSilva, 2001).

A picture is a tangible image for a writer as it holds meaning and gives information. When students draw they gain access to these layers of meaning. Educators can teach children to read pictures to help them find ideas for writing and to make connection, just as they do with literature. When teachers do this, they are also teaching them that their pictures in a writer's workshop must have meaning. Drawing or copying a picture from a picture book, a photograph, or an art card is an explicit way to teach students to search for meaning in a picture. Drawing helps students have a physical contact with the picture and it will then help them "read" it, think, get ideas, and then write.

Writers need time to find the details of memory, and reading pictures slows us down enough to do that. Pictures are tangible and important pieces of literacy that

can lead students to see and hold onto the images in their minds. Pictures allow students to re-see or re-experience their thinking before moving to drafting. Once the drafting process has begun, picture making and art continue to be essential tools in the revision process. Georgia Herd writes that "the true meaning of the word revision is this: to see again" (1995, p. 121). Pictures can help us see our writing and then make changes.

Studies by Cowan (2001) across grade levels reflect that the writing process became energized when drawing was integrated. When Cowan questioned two students in a first grade classroom about their drawing and writing one student said, "I draw because I can look back at my picture to help me with the words." The other student added, "If I forget to put all the words in the story, you can just look at it [picture] and know what's happening anyway" (p.16) The findings in Cowan's studies on the use of art as an intervention strategy indicated that "reading" the pictures helps students express themselves in written form. Their drawing helped them find words to tell their stories when they were composing verbally or in writing. She also found that the writing helped them develop a plot, sequence information, and energized their writing with action verbs.

When teachers link art to the process of writing, they go after the power that the partnership holds, creating classrooms where students find their stories and all the important meanings in their lives (Ernst daSilva, 2001).

The Gradual Release of Responsibility Framework

How can teachers best help the ELL writer? Clearly a one size fits all approach to writing instruction is not appropriate. The ELL student often experiences

difficulty mastering basic writing skills. To support the writing process for these students it is essential to incorporate the gradual release of responsibility framework. This model stipulates that the teacher moves from assuming all the responsibility for performing a task to a situation in which the students assume all of the responsibility. Demonstration of the writing process allows the learner to observe and participate in the decision-making process, in relation to ideas, structural organization and learning features which will lead to the completion of a piece of writing.

Studies that have experimented with guided use have uncovered a general lesson sequence and aspects of instruction that teachers find useful to consider in carefully sequencing lessons for students who need a great deal of support to achieve independence. A study by Fisher and Frey (2003) indicated that the gradual release model provided a way for the teacher to scaffold instruction to the point where students were successful independent writers. Interactive writing was one of the steps used with this model. This approach has been used with emergent (young) writers (Callela & Jordano, 2002; McCarrier, Pinnell, & Fountas, 2000). Interactive writing is used in large and small group settings to engage students in meaningful conversations that include the purposes and conventions of writing. Interactive writing follows "from ideas, to spoken words, to printed messages" (Clay, 2001, p.27).

It is far easier to encourage movement toward independence when students see themselves as becoming increasingly capable. Rhodes and Dudley-Marling (1996) synthesized five distinguishing features of the gradual release of responsibility framework. These include, the teacher demonstrates the new learning but encourages students to take over the demonstration and/or thinking aloud about it;

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as the students take over the demonstration and think-aloud, the teacher observes the students' use and provides feedback; students work together at using the new learning in small groups or pairs, with the teacher observing and providing feedback; students use the new learning, knowing that they will reflect on the use of it in a self-assessment that is structured to guide their thinking; students use the new learning with the assistance of a written guide that provides structure for their thinking.

Another use of the gradual release of responsibility framework was investigated by Kong and Pearson (2001). Analysis of their data delineated the approach taken by a literacy teacher and her class of culturally and linguistically diverse students, as they learned to engage in literacy discourse in a community of learners.

The study revealed three overlapping but distinguishable stages in this transition. Though the teacher continued to provide guidance and support to her students, teacher talk and teacher-led talk in stage one gave way to student-centered talk in stage two. Stage three was distinguished from its previous stage by the quality of student-centered conversations. By the end of the year students assumed more responsibility in their group and whole class discussions by raising topics of interest, monitoring their own discussions and constructing knew knowledge together.

Scaffolding as a Writing Strategy

Scaffolding instruction as a teaching strategy originates from Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and his concept of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD). "The zone of proximal development is the distance between what children can do by themselves and the next learning that they can be helped to achieve with competent

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assistance" (Raymond, 2000, p.176). The scaffolding teaching strategy provides individualized support based on the learner's ZPD (Chang, Sung, & Chen, 2002). The scaffolds facilitate a student's ability to build on prior knowledge and internalize new information. The activities provided in scaffolding instruction are just beyond the level of what the learner can do alone (Olson & Pratt, 2000).

An important aspect of scaffolding instruction is that the scaffolds are temporary. As the learner's abilities increase the scaffolding provided by the more knowledgeable other is gradually withdrawn. Finally the learner is able to complete the task or master the concepts independently (Chang, Sung, & Chen, 2002, p. 7). Therefore the goal of the educator when using the scaffolding teaching strategy is for the student to become an independent and self-regulating learner and problem solver (Hartman, 2002). In the educational setting, scaffolds may include models, cues, prompts, hints, partial solutions, think-aloud modeling and direct instruction (Hartman, 2002). Following the use of teacher provided scaffolds, the educator may then have the students engage in cooperative learning. In this type of environment students help students in small group settings but still have some teacher assistance. This can serve as a step in the process of decreasing the scaffolds provided by the educator and needed by students (Hartman, 2002).

Current research continues to find that scaffolding is an effective teaching strategy. Two recent studies (Toth, n.d.) regarding the use of scaffolds came to the realization that scaffolding is applicable to various educational settings and it can serve as an effective strategy for teaching scientific skills. In one study the instructional goal was to teach fourth graders valid experimentation skills. During the

first part of the study a teacher-specified table of variables was the scaffold provided. Students had to select the appropriate variable related to their experiment. The results of this part of the study led to the conclusion that the "... use of the pre-developed table representation may have helped students abstract the overall structure of the experiment and thus aided their understanding of the design..." (Toth, n.d., p.9) The teacher designed table helped focus the learners' thinking on only those items that were important for the task. Additionally through the use of the table it became obvious to the students if they had omitted an important variable from their experiment. This helped the students learn what things must be considered when designing an experiment.

In the second study the effects of two different external representations, evidence mapping vs. prose writing, were evaluated in research with ninth grade students (Toth, n.d.). Students used either a software tool or prose writing to record their thinking during a problem-based-learning activity in which they had to find a solution to a scientific challenge. The students that used the software had to categorize the information they were evaluating by selecting the appropriate shape and entering the information into the shape. The students in the prose writing group just documented their thinking by writing. One finding of the study was that the students who used the software tool correctly categorized more of the information as hypothesis and data than those students in the prose writing groups. The correct categorization of information was attributed to "...the effect of the mapping representation that scaffolded students' categorization efforts" (Toth, n.d, p.12). Eva Toth concluded from the research that the use of external representations helped

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scaffold students' development of the experiment. She also concluded that the evidence mapping, which used the software tool that scaffolded students' thinking and categorization efforts, a was successful coaching approach in instructing students how to classify and label scientific information and how to assess a hypothesis based on observed data. The study also found that the use of explicit rubrics supported the scaffolding effect.

One of the primary benefits of scaffolding instruction is that it engages the learner. The learner does not passively listen to information presented, instead through teacher prompting, the learner builds on prior knowledge and forms new knowledge. In working with ELL students scaffolding provides an opportunity to give positive feedback to the students by saying things like "…look what you have just figured out!" This gives them more of a can do versus a "this is too hard" attitude. This leads into another advantage of scaffolding in that if done properly, scaffolding instruction motivates the student so that they want to learn. Another benefit of this type of instruction is that it can minimize the level of frustration of the learner. This is extremely important with many ELL students who can become frustrated very easily then shut down and refuse to participate in further learning during that particular setting.

According to McKenzie (1999), the defining features of successful scaffolding include clear direction, purpose, and expectation. Results include on-task activity; better student direction; reduced uncertainty, surprise, and disappointment; increased efficiency; and palpable momentum. As noted by McKenzie scaffolding involves

building on students' schema with new information. It is adding on, and expanding on previous knowledge.

Dorn and Soffos (2001), who work primarily with elementary school children, suggest that in order to successfully write, a student must master three interrelated skills: comprehension of ideas, expressive language, and facility with mechanics. They state that the most important achievement for educators should be to encourage students to synthesize information. When students synthesize they combine old knowledge with new knowledge. If new information is overwhelming for the student, this will interrupt the connection of ideas.

What specifically does a teacher do to orchestrate, or scaffold, student learning in the area of writing? Dom and Soffos (2001) suggest that teachers ask four simple questions before they begin: *What is easy for the writer to do? What is hard for the writer to do? What does the teacher expect the writer to do? What does the teacher expect to do for the writer?* Constantly reevaluating allows a teacher to plan activities that will encourage developing writers to attempt new skills. Once mastery is underway, new goals can be set and new support systems devised. Scaffold instruction is individualized and can have a positive impact on students' learning and development.

Chapter III

Method

Introduction

This study took place in a bilingual classroom in a city school in Rochester, New York during Writer's Workshop lessons. There was a bilingual teacher and two ESOL teachers working with the students at the time. The main purpose was to determine the impact a writing process booklet might have on the writing development of LEP students. The results of this study have guided future instruction in the Writer's Workshop as the findings reflected best practices for limited English proficient writers.

Participants

This study included ten sixth graders who were Spanish dominant with different second language abilities. The participants were placed in a bilingual program because of their English proficiency and the resulting inability to participate in mainstream classes conducted in English. The students in this research have been in the United States for approximately two to three years and are not classified with any disability. Working with students without an individualized education plan (IEP) is important in this study to ensure the accuracy of the results. The five students that were able to use the writing process booklet and other resources on the wall, also known as silent teachers, were referred to as Group A. The writing process booklet describes each step to the writing process and guides students as they complete an effective writing piece. The students that did not have a writing process booklet were referred to as Group B.

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Procedures of Study

Teachers reviewed the writing process with both groups starting with the planning stage. Each day a different step was reviewed and modeled for all students. The Gradual Release of Responsibility Framework was used throughout the teaching of the writing process. Only when students were comfortable with one step did the teachers move on with the next one. Every step was written down on chart paper with examples for each. The chart paper was then taped on the wall for all students to see. The PALS (peer-assistance learning strategies) approach was also used as students peer conferenced. In addition to the chart paper on the wall Group A was also given a writing process booklet with the steps used in the writing process. Every step had a checklist (see Appendix A) all students in Group A had to go through before moving on to the next step. Group B only had access to the silent teachers. The students were assessed after completing three writing pieces.

Instruments of Study

After the introduction of a specific writing genre students in group A and B were given a rubric (see Appendix B) they used as a guide for the requirements of their writing piece. All students' first writing drafts and final copy results were analyzed quantitatively within their assigned group. Students in both groups were also given a survey (see Appendix C) to assess their attitude toward use or non use of silent teachers and the writing process booklet. The results of this survey were calculated through Microsoft Excel.

Students in both groups were also assessed through interviews (see Appendix D). Students met with the interviewer individually at the completion of the writing assignment as they individually discussed their perception of the use of silent teachers and the writing booklet in the writing process.

Chapter IV

Results

Student Achievement

At the completion of three writing pieces, students in Group A and Group B were assessed using a rubric (See Appendix B). The results of the assessments are reported in Table 1 found on the next page. The students were scored using the following criteria:

4
- I engaged the reader with a strong beginning.
- My thoughts are in an order that make sense.
- The sentences in each paragraph support the topic.
- I used descriptive words.
- My ending has a smooth finish.
- I have few or no spelling and/or grammatical errors. My errors do not interfere with meaning and clarity.

3
- I engaged the reader.
- Most of my thoughts are in order and make sense.
- Most of the sentences in each paragraph support the topic.
- I used some descriptive language.
- I attempted a smooth ending.
- I have some spelling and grammatical errors that slightly interfere with meaning and clarity.

2
- I slightly engaged the reader.
- Most of my thoughts are not in order and don't make sense.
- Most of my sentences in each paragraph don't support the topic.
- My ending is weak.
- I have some spelling and grammatical errors that interfere with meaning and clarity.

1
- I failed to engage the reader.
- My thoughts are not in order and don't make sense.
- The sentences in each paragraph don't support the topic.
- I didn't provide an ending.
- I have many spelling and grammatical errors that interfere with meaning and clarity.

Table 1

<u>Comparison of Students Writing Pieces</u>

	Group A With Writing Manipulative	Group B Without Writing Manipulative
Assessment Average	3	2
Highest Grade	4	3
Lowest Grade	3	2

The five students who were in Group A and had the writing process booklet obtained an average of 3. The highest score in Group A was 4 and the lowest score was 3. The five students who were in Group B had no writing manipulative. Their average score was a 2 and their highest score was 3. The lowest score in Group B was 2.

Students' Attitude Towards Manipulatives and Silent Teachers

At the completion of the unit on The Writing Process students in Group A and Group B were given a four statement survey to assess their attitudes towards learning with a writing manipulative and/or silent teacher. The first statement on the survey, "I enjoy Writers Workshop", was used to assess students' attitudes towards writing after the unit was completed. The survey used a four-point scale with 1 = disagree; 2 = somewhat disagree; 3 = somewhat agree; 4 = agree. The average scores for each individual group survey are reported in Table 2 and Table 3 on the next page.

Table 2

Survey of Students Using the Writing Process Booklet – Group A

Statement	Group A Average
1. I enjoy Writer's Workshop	2.8
2. I like using the writing process booklet as a guide.	4
3. I work harder when I can use the silent teachers and the writing process booklet as a guide.	4
4. I learn best in the Writer's Workshop when I am holding a reference guide in my hand.	4
Group Average	3.7

The outcomes on Table 2 show that every student agreed or somewhat agreed that they enjoyed using the writing manipulative. The survey reflects that as a result of the manipulative, students worked harder and preferred this method in learning the writing process over the silent teachers. Although the average for the statement "I enjoy Writer's Workshop" was a 2.8 which resulted in a response of "somewhat disagree", students performed very well and enjoyed the extra assistance at hand.

Table 3

Statement	Group A Average
1. I enjoy Writer's Workshop	2.6
2. I like using silent teachers as a guide.	2.8
3. I work harder when I can use the silent teachers as a guide.	2.8
4. I learn best in the Writer's Workshop when I can look up and see a reference guide.	2.8
Group Average	2.75

The outcomes on Table 3 show an average of 2.6 for the statement "I enjoy Writers Workshop". This response is interpreted as "somewhat disagree" and is similar to the response given by Group A for the same statement. It also illustrates that the students weren't pleased using just the silent teachers and for this reason didn't work to their fullest potential knowing that the other group had extra support at hand.

The five students in Group A were interviewed after the completion of all three writing pieces. Each student was asked the same three questions (see Appendix D). The interview results indicated that the students, overall, believed that learning the writing process with a manipulative was better than with silent teachers. Several students described their writing manipulative as "fun and cool". The results also showed that the students felt they learned the writing process faster with the manipulative stating that after the second writing piece they were hardly using it because they knew what to do. One student said, "I like having the booklet because I can quickly help a classmate with the next writing step instead of pointing to the chart

paper and trying to read it from a distance". Several students said that they put much effort into their writing pieces because everything they needed to know was in the booklet and they did not have to call on the teacher as much.

The five students in Group B were also interviewed after the completion of all three writing pieces. Each student was asked the same three questions. The interview results indicated that the students were not happy with just using the silent teachers. Students were not motivated especially knowing that Group A had extra assistance. They used words like "ok" and "helpful" when describing the writing process written on chart paper. One student said he noticed that the students with the writing process booklet were finishing faster than the students in his group. Overall, the students in Group B found the silent teachers to be helpful but would have preferred to use the manipulative stating it would have been easier to follow the writing process.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study attempted to determine the impact a writing process booklet might have on the writing development of ELL students. Through this study I sought to verify the use of a manipulative in the Writers Workshop and how it results in higher assessment scores. By analyzing the results of the students' assessments, surveys, and interviews I have drawn some conclusions about the effectiveness of scaffolding instruction in the Writers Workshop.

When observing the data, it was clear that students in both groups performed at different levels. Interestingly, the students in Group A averaged a higher score than those students in Group B. This suggests that the writing process booklet used to follow the writing process was more effective as a referenced guide to accomplishing a well written piece. This finding aligns well with current research that continues to uncover that scaffolding is an effective teaching strategy. This study showed that when a manipulative is used as a scaffolding strategy, students achieved higher scores than students who only used the silent teachers on the walls as guides. By using this scaffolding strategy with several writing pieces, students were able to independently construct a well written essay.

Several interesting conclusions can be drawn by analyzing the survey results. If we look at the positive statements, it is evident that students in both Group A and B found the manipulative and/or the silent teachers on the wall to be helpful guides. Interestingly, the results from the statement, "I enjoy Writer's Workshop" was very similar in both groups; that students in both groups somewhat disagreed with this

statement. I was surprised that although this is clearly not the students' favorite subject they performed fairly well.

The survey results also showed that the students felt they learned the writing process faster with the manipulative stating that after the second writing piece they were hardly using it because they knew what to do. This correlates well with Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and his concept of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD), an important aspect of scaffolding instruction. Scaffolds are temporary and as the learner's abilities increase the scaffolding provided is gradually withdrawn. When the abilities of the students in Group A increased they gradually used their booklet less relying more on their new found knowledge.

In the interviews several students in Group A described their writing booklet as "fun and cool". One of the primary benefits of scaffolded instruction observed through this study was how it engaged the learner. The learner did not passively listen to information presented, instead through manipulatives the learner built on prior knowledge and formed new knowledge. This was clearly accomplished in this study. Students in group B voiced their frustration through the writing process saying that extra support would have led them to stay motivated.

To ensure language acquisition, I believe more research needs to be completed to discover other ways scaffolds can be effectively implemented in the ELL classroom. Successful studies have shown that effective scaffolds may include models, cues, prompts, hints, partial solutions, think-aloud modeling and direct instruction. An important aspect of scaffolded instruction is that the scaffolds are

temporary. As the learner's abilities increase the scaffold is gradually withdrawn. Finally the learner is able to complete the task or master the concepts independently.

In working with ELL students, scaffolds provided an opportunity to give positive feedback to the students by saying things like "…look what you have just figured out!" This gave them more of a can do versus a "this is too hard" attitude. Scaffolded instruction also motivated the students so that they wanted to learn. Another benefit revealed through this study was that it minimized the level of frustration of the learner. This is extremely important with many ELL students who can become frustrated very easily then shut down and refuse to participate in further learning during a particular setting.

Although many studies have been completed on this topic, most of them were done with monolingual students. In order to positively influence the ELL student's academic achievement educators must be aware of the many ways scaffolding can be used and how it is applicable in different educational settings. Knowing these strategies can lead the teacher to guide students to be independent learners and problem solvers.

I now use scaffolding strategies in all my classes as I have found through this study its importance in the ELL classroom. By reviewing the literature on the many aspects of scaffolded instruction I have gained knowledge on the benefits it serves for students when these strategies are successfully integrated in all educational settings. Through this study it is clear how students can gain a higher level of academic achievement and become more actively engage in the learning process.

These findings reinforce what research has shown. Scaffolded instruction is individualized and can have a positive impact on students' learning and development.

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Appendix A:
Writing Process Booklet

Writing Process Booklet

Pre-Writing

- Decide on a topic or subject to write about.
- Gather information.
- Organize your thinking by :
    - Brainstorming
    - Making a Venn diagram
    - Crating an outline

Drafting

- Turn bits of ideas into complete thoughts.
- Use your Pre-Writing ideas to write your beginning (introduction), middle and end (conclusion).
- Be sure to use transition words as needed ("first," "next," "then" and "finally").
- Be sure your thoughts are written in logical order.
- Be sure to include a lot of detail.

Revising

- Read your first draft.
- The beginning should grab the reader's attention.
- Your thoughts should be in an order that makes sense.
- Sentences in each paragraph should support the topic.
- Decide if you have used descriptive words.
- Decide if your ending has a smooth finish.

Editing and Proofing

- Read your paper slowly and silently to look for mistakes.
- Make sure all sentences are complete and that there are no run-ons.
- Circle possible spelling errors.
- Look for beginning and ending punctuation.
- Check for capital letters, commas and quotation marks.
- Check for indented paragraphs.

Peer Conference

- Read your paper to your partner.
- Ask your partner to respond.
- Take notes while your partner shares his/her responses.
- Use these notes later to help revise your paper.
- Now it is your turn to listen to your partner read his/her paper.

Teacher Conference

- Give your draft to your teacher for review.
- Listen carefully and make notes on the feedback.

Publishing

- Write the final draft of your paper.
- It should be error-free.
- It should be neat and organized.
- Look over the Revising and Editing checklists one last time.
- You are now ready to turn in the final draft of your paper.

Final Copy Conference

- Make sure to read your paper before your final conference.
- Bring your rubric.

Appendix B:
Essay Rubric

Essay Rubric

4

- I engaged the reader with a strong beginning.
- My thoughts are in an order that make sense.
- The sentences in each paragraph support the topic.
- I used descriptive words.
- My ending has a smooth finish.
- I have few or no spelling and/or grammatical errors. My errors do not interfere with meaning and clarity.

3

- I engaged the reader.
- Most of my thoughts are in order and make sense.
- Most of the sentences in each paragraph support the topic.
- I used some descriptive language.
- I attempted a smooth ending.
- I have some spelling and grammatical errors that slightly interfere with meaning and clarity.

2

- I slightly engaged the reader.
- Most of my thoughts are not in order and don't make sense.
- Most of my sentences in each paragraph don't support the topic.
- My ending is weak.
- I have some spelling and grammatical errors that interfere with meaning and clarity.

1

- I failed to engage the reader.
- My thoughts are not in order and don't make sense.
- The sentences in each paragraph don't support the topic.
- I didn't provide an ending.
- I have many spelling and grammatical errors that interfere with meaning and clarity.

Appendix C:
Student Survey

Group A Student Survey

Question	4 Agree	3 Somewhat Agree	2 Somewhat Disagree	1 Disagree
1. I enjoy Writer's Workshop				
2. I like using the writing process booklet as a guide.				
3. I work harder when I can use the silent teachers and the writing process booklet as a guide.				
4. I learn best in the Writer's Workshop when I am holding a reference guide in my hand.				

Group B Student Survey

Question	4 Agree	3 Somewhat Agree	2 Somewhat Disagree	1 Disagree
1. I enjoy Writer's Workshop				
2. I like using silent teachers as a guide.				
3. I work harder when I can use the silent teachers as a guide.				
4. I learn best in the Writer's Workshop when I can look up and see a reference guide.				

Appendix D:
Student Interview Questions

Student Interview Questions

1. How do you feel about Writer's Workshop?

2. Do you feel you learned best by using the method assigned to your group?

3. Did you put forth your best effort throughout the writing of your three essays?