The development of written language among kindergartners using interactive journals: Four case studies

Martha Galindo Gomez

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF WRITTEN LANGUAGE AMONG KINDERGARTNERS USING INTERACTIVE JOURNALS: FOUR CASE STUDIES

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

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

by
Martha Galindo Gomez

December 1996
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Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to developmentally analyze and evaluate the writing progress of four kindergarten students whose primary language is Spanish. Student progress in written language development will be based on samples taken from their daily interactive dialogue journals. Examination of their writing patterns using interactive journals showed definite progress and an increased understanding of written language.

This study demonstrates that Interactive Dialogue Journal Writing is a very effective tool in teaching writing to kindergarten language minority students.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the United States some language minority students do not do well in school. They experience persistent school failure. There are many explanations of school failure, ranging from genetic deficiency, to institutional discrimination (Hakuta, 1986). Some social scientists have emphasized the role of language and cultural differences in the minority school failure. Many appear to have concluded that a major part of the problem ties in cultural and language discontinuities between the minorities and the schools which only reflects the culture and language of the dominant group in society. For this reason public policies have moved towards the direction of generalizing bilingual and bicultural education as "solutions" to the problem of minority school failure (Ogbu & Matute-Bianchi, 1986).

The Bilingual Education Handbook prepared by the California Department of Education, (1992) identifies the ultimate goal of Bilingual Education to be to instill in students the intellectual, social, and ethical insights they need to become fully actualize
human beings: productive contributors to the economy, responsible citizens of our democracy and morally alert and fulfilled individuals.

Schools have a major challenge in dealing with the large number of language minority students who are in need of primary language instruction. It is estimated that currently at least 3.4 million children are limited in the English language skills and are failing in school programs designed for native English speakers. Because of these students it is important to adjust the teaching of the core curriculum to account for linguistic and cultural differences.

Bilingual Education programs are attempting to modify the existing curriculum of the limited-English proficient student by providing a setting in which the students' native language and culture are valued. Such programs should help students to develop a positive self image and create opportunities for academic success which will enhance solidarity with the community. (Burt & Dulay, and Hernandez, 1976). Bilingual students will be able to learn a second language and continue to develop their first language skills. Lessons are geared to the student's level of proficiency and there is
an attempt to make the content understandable for the student. Through this instructional approach, which is similar to the way children learn their first language, children can internalize grammar and vocabulary in the second language as they learn the subject matter (Cummins, 1989).

In a Bilingual whole language classroom, children are provided with an environment in which literature and print is used in a variety of forms, such as using interactive dialogue journals. Daily writings in the interactive dialogue journals develop students' oral and written language proficiencies in the students' first and second languages (Flores, 1990).

Interactive dialogue journal writing reflects a functional view of both writing and reading processes. Through the process of writing in the journals, children learn to write by writing from their own experiences and for their own purposes. Writing in a journal gives bilingual children an opportunity to use language authentically in a literacy context. Interactive dialogue journals insure that children and teachers will communicate on a daily basis and they facilitate genuine student teacher interaction that is meaningful and purposeful (Atweiger & Flores, 1991).
Learning is a sociopsycholinguistic event. That is, learning begins in social interaction and these social processes become internalized and form the basis of our thinking processes (Vygotsky, 1978). Through process writing, children learn to write by writing for their own purposes. The processes in language development both oral and written, are those in which children begin to organize language themselves into patterns they can use to give meaning to their experiences. Literacy begins as children learn to use the tools of language, from the spoken word to written communication in Spanish and English. Competency in reading and writing is promoted through functional use of the processes in ongoing daily experiences (Vygotsky, 1978).

The purpose of this project is to examine the writing development of Spanish-speaking kindergarten students over a nine-month period (from September to May) to determine the role of the primary language in supporting that development. This project will analyze authentic writing samples in the form of interactive dialogue journal entries of four Spanish-speaking kindergarten students; to determine what role the primary language played in the use of the daily interactive journals to acquire literacy.
Background of the Problem

Children learn to read and write in the same way we learn oral language, by using it in authentic events that meet our needs. Often children have trouble learning written language in school. Many times this is because teachers, paradoxically, have made it more difficult breaking written language (text) into small bits. Reducing the teaching of reading to its elementary components, however isolates print from its functional use. Similarly, teaching skills out of context and focusing on written language as an end in itself, have made the task harder. One way to assist children is to provide many opportunities for children to write through the use of interactive dialogue journals in a whole language setting.

As children play, draw, and scribble their first stories and engage in conversations, they are building the skills necessary to become competent readers and writers (Ulanoff, 1993). As they grow, children's first writing arises from their experiences and their environment (Vygotsky, 1978). The world in which children learn and play is filled with print. Children can identify many of the signs and logos that are all around them even before they start
school (Bissex, 1980). Children learn quickly that the print in the environment has meaning. They expect written language to be meaningful.

Children learn to read and write by participating in a variety of literacy events where written language is used for authentic purposes. One such context includes interactive journals. Students come to view their interactive journals as communicating systems. Interactive journals become vehicles for learning rather than objects of study, they provide opportunities for student to focus on meaning. The message in the classroom is that risk taking and active involvement are valued. Students actually construct knowledge for themselves in an environment where there are many opportunities to read and write (Haste, 1980). Reading and writing are used for a variety of purposes where children have opportunities to engage in learning in an environment that surrounds students with all kinds of rich environmental print in order to explore and discover language. This creates a warm and supportive atmosphere that encourages learning for Spanish dominant student.
The Problem

Children read and write to communicate with others. They learn written communication in the same way they learn oral language, by using it in an authentic literacy events that meet their needs. It is important to realize that written language has many of the same characteristics of oral language.

Often children have trouble learning written language in school. This is because well-meaning teachers have made it harder by isolating print from its functional use, by teaching skills out of context and focusing on written language as an end in itself. This is impossible for some children.

Statement of the Problem

Bilingual students need to learn to read and write by participating in contexts where written language is used for authentic purposes through the use of interactive journal writing in an environment that allows students to draw from what they already know in order to promote literacy development.

Research Questions

How does the use of interactive dialogue journals increase the
quality and quantity of kindergarten students?

Definition of Terms

This study requires the use of the following terms:

Interactive Dialogue Journals:

Writing in a journal gives bilingual children an opportunity to use language authentically in a literacy context. Interactive journals insure that children and teachers will communicate on a daily basis with self-selected topics. The primary goal of interactive journal writing is communication. The control of mechanics evolves during this authentic literacy event. Student and teacher communicate their ideas and feelings in their first and second language. Journals also provide teachers with a developmental record of each child’s writing (Flores & Garcia, 1984).

Authentic

The difference between authentic and unauthentic writing according to Edelsky and Smith (1984) is that a person to be engaged in genuine writing the four interacting systems of written language must be used interactively and interdependently to produce meaningful text. The four systems are: graphophonic, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic. In authentic writing, the pragmatic
A writer's purposes and intention, part of pragmatic, have graphophonic, syntactic and semantic consequences. In school writing, either one more systems of written language are often missing altogether, as in workbook exercises, or the connections between the pragmatic system and the other three are distorted or severed. Journal writing requires that meaningful communication be shared between the participants. If one of the participants does not comply, then communication is lost or meaningless.

**Conceptual Interpretation Writing:**

1) **Conceptual Interpretations**

   - Presyllabic level of interpretation - focuses on using symbols to representing their meaning,

   - Syllabic level of interpretation - indicates that the children can now represent the parts that we adults call syllables,

   - Syllabic/alphabetic level of interpretation - demonstrates that children can now represent more sound/letter correspondences,

   - Alphabetical level of interpretation - signifies that children have come to understand how the alphabetic system works.
according to the adult's logic—that is they can now represent all the sounds that they hear with corresponding letters.

2) Social Context

Context is a major determinant of human behavior. Contexts are constituted by what people are doing as well as when and where they are doing it. That is, people in interaction serve as social environments for each other.

3) Syllabic Conceptual Interpretation

Indicates that the children can now represent the parts that we adults call syllables.

4) Syllabic/Alphabetic Conceptual Interpretation

Demonstrates that the children can now represent more sound/letter correspondences.

5) Alphabetic Level

Signifies the children have come to understand how the alphabetic system works according to the adults' logic—that is, they can represent all the sounds that they hear with corresponding letters.

Written Communication

An avenue for sharing and exchanging ideas, concerns, beliefs,
attitudes, values, and feelings through written text.

Literacy Event

Literacy event as any action sequence, involving one or more persons, in which the production and/or comprehension of print plays a significant role.

Intended Purpose

Actual practice play a significant role in the shared social construction of an authentic literacy.

Daily Interaction

Establishing a daily consistent routine of daily corresponding with each student.

Acceptability

The child accepts the children means of communicating without focusing on mechanics, authentically becomes a shared value.

Intervention

The facilitator intervenes when the children are blocked or using the even erroneously.

Whole Language

Is more a philosophy than a methodology, according to Goodman.
(1986). It is about children becoming literate in a whole real context-learning to read by reading, learning to write by writing. Whole language learning assumes respect for language, for the learner, and for the teacher. The focus is on meaning and not in language itself, in authentic speech and literacy events. Learners are encouraged to take risks and invited to use language, in all its varieties, for their own purposes. In a whole language classroom, all the varied functions of oral and written language are appropriate and encouraged.

**Literacy Event**

Action sequence, involving one or more persons, in which the production and/or comprehension of print plays a significant role.

Interactive journal writing is a literacy event.

**Bilingual Education**

Use of more than one language for instruction, but can differ in structure and emphasis. By using the students' primary language school subjects are made comprehensible to students who are limited in English.
CALP

Conversation and Academic Language Proficiency, Cummins (1989) has termed "academic" language proficiency as the ability to make complex meanings explicit in either oral or written modalities by means of language itself rather than by means of paralinguistic cues, such as gestures, intonation, etc.

Zone of Proximal Development

The way children approach problem solving are socially mediated through formal and informal interactions with members of the culture group within what Vygotsky (1978) described as the "zone of proximal development." He defined it as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem as determined through problem solving under guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The use of interactive dialogue journals in a whole language bilingual classroom provides children with the opportunity to explore and experience print in order to communicate, and use language authentically.

Writing and Social Interaction

Young children approach writing in a manner different from adults. Adult writers try to communicate primarily through words, resorting to graphs and pictures when words are not enough. Young writers use everything they know about communication in oral language, art, music, and drama to make sense of the writing process to communicate to an audience (Harste, 1980).

Writing is now being viewed in its larger context of communication as a social event. Research suggests that young children convey meaning to others using many different communication systems and the they use what is known about one system to support the understanding of another system (Diaz, Moll, &
Mehan, 1986). They use the more familiar communication systems to add depth and meaning to their newly acquired skills of writing.

It becomes apparent that written language learning, like oral language learning is a social, historical process that involves language. According to this new research on how children come to know written language, there are four major views:

1) Cognitive psychology view of learning and relationships of language, thinking and learning including views of perception, cognition, schema theory and concept development. This view helped us discover that individuals can only learn about those things they already posses some knowledge (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982);

2) Sociopsycho-linguistic view of language function and learning relates to the individual that comes to understand the importance of situating language within social, cultural and historical contexts. This view has helped us understand school literacy as a socially constructed event (Goodman, K. & Goodman, Y., 1979, 1981);

3) Socio-cultural view has taught us about cultural differences and how they impact on the school. The students beliefs, life styles, interests, values and needs are valued and are a source of information. Students of all cultures have a place in the classroom.
and their contributions are welcome (Vygotsky, 1978; Diaz, Moll & Mehan, 1984); and

4) Sociopolitical view means that teachers through knowledge, become empowered, and they pass on that power to students, parents and other teachers (Freire, 1970; Shor & Freire, 1987)

These new studies on language learning have confirmed that language learning is both a social and cultural process. One cannot learn language unless one interacts with already proficient language users (Vygotsky, 1978). What one learns is highly influenced by the cultural norms and expectations of one's culture (Heath, 1986). Children acquire knowledge about both written and oral language before they come to school (Bissex, 1980; Ferreiro and Teberosky, 1982). This knowledge comes from children's active engagement with language. Children learn about oral and written language because they are surrounded by it and because they actively participate in discourse (Halliday, 1978).

Some children come to school with a great deal of knowledge about both oral and written language, while others come to school with more knowledge have a greater chance of succeeding in school
that those who come with less (Wells, 1986).

Reading and writing occupy an important place in education. Despite the various methods used for teaching writing, a great number of children do not learn to read and write. Traditionally, definitions of language programs use formal symbol; systems for purpose of receiving, processing, and expressing information (Bloom, 1978). The four language processes are essentially isolated rather than integrated for instructional purposes. In these traditional programs, writing activities are often designed primarily to promote skills in penmanship and correct spelling and grammar. The meaningful expression of ideas and feelings is of secondary importance, which becomes apparent to the students. Actual program activities, sometimes seem to fragment the language process to the extent that, rather than using language in a meaningful or relevant manner, students are only producing specific behaviors which are only relevant to functional linguistic situations (Halliday, 1978).

According to Goodman (1986) some traditional teaching practices may actually hinder language development by breaking language into pieces. Language teachers promote language
development by empowering the natural purpose of language and communicating meaning. The whole language system attempts to develop proficiency in reading and other language components by taking advantage of the natural relationships which exist among all components. Written language proficiency involves from the students previously acquired oral language competence and, eventually, the two systems function together in a supportive interactive system (Goodman K, & Goodman Y., 1979).

The teaching of written language and whole language are like regional dialects: they share major structural elements. Meaning has always been on center stage in both whole language and development of writing. Edelsky, Altwerger and Flores (1991) define whole language based on the following ideas:

a) Language is for making meaning, for accomplishing purposes.

b) Written language is language—thus what is true for language in general is true for written language.

c) The cuing system of language (phonology in orthography in written language, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatic) are always simultaneously present and interacting in an instance of language in use.
d) Language use always occurs in a situation.
e) Situations are critical to meaning-making.

Vygotsky (1978) supporting a notion of writing as a social event, discussed the development of writing as it relates to both the child and the context within which writing develops. "The teaching of writing has been conceived in narrowly practical terms. Children are taught to trace out letters and make words out of them but are no taught language. The mechanics of reading what is written are emphasized and they overshadow written language as such" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 36).

In addition to examining classroom practice in writing it is important to once again examine how written language is viewed: writing has been considered primarily a school-related activity....while children learn to speak the context of meaningful interaction with a great deal of assistance, writing has been considered a solitary activity, occurring without communicative support. It is only after the student takes the form of grade or brief, evaluative comments from the teacher rather than meaningful dialogue about the piece.
Thus, the more difficult accomplished with much less assistance. The work of researchers interested in the social basis of writing development has pointed out the development of written language (Peyton, 1988, p. 26).

There is a need for practical pedagogy in terms of such writing. Vygotsky (1986) discussed that need, stating that:

...practical pedagogy, despite the existence of many methods for teaching reading and writing, has yet to work out an effective, scientific procedure for teach him reading and writing, has yet to work out an effective, scientific procedure for teaching children written language. Unlike the teaching of spoken language, into which children grow of their own accord, the teaching of written language is based on artificial training. Such training requires an enormous amount of attention and effort on the part of teacher and pupil and thus becomes something self-contained, relating leaving written language to the background. Instead of being founded on the needs of children as they naturally develop and on their own activity, writing is given to them from without, from the teacher's hands.
Much of what Vygotsky called pedagogy are teaching methods, curriculum, and assessment techniques which emphasize the forms of language produced by children. In support of this view, Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) believe that writing is not based on artificial training model. It is an active interpretation of models of the adult world. Although far removed from the conventional writing, when children begin to write, they produce visible marks, putting into play their hypothesis about the very meaning of graphic representation. According to Ferreiro (1982) it is important to examine the way in which children acquire knowledge of written language:

...The process by which a child arrives at an understanding of a particular type of representation of spoken language, e.g. alphabetical writing, cannot be reduced to the establishment of a series of habits and skills, however complex. In this learning process the child's linguistic competence and cognitive capacities play a part. Written language is as much part of the environment as other cultural objects and it is difficult to imagine that they begin to wonder about nature, value, and function of this object.

The psychogenesis theory of Ferriero and Teborosky (1982) in
Spanish-speaking children's evolution of knowledge about written language is important in analyzing and documenting how children learn the alphabetic writing system. Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) delineate four possible conceptual interpretations that may be used. These levels are categorized into four writing systems: presyllabic, syllabic, syllabic-alphabetic, and alphabetic. These levels, according to Flores (1990) are not an ordered psychogenetics. Children may progress from presyllabic to syllabic, then from the syllabic interpretation to a syllabic-alphabetic. Finally, the children would progress to their alphabetic conceptual interpretation of Spanish which approximates the adult conventional writing. This research gives teachers the tools to understand and teach writing using authentic communication.

**Primary Language and Writing**

The process of constructing meaning through language is a social process, it is not simply a tool for communication. Creating social contexts in which children engage in authentic language and literacy use, provides opportunities for children to learn language (Flores, 1990). Edelsky (1986) examined the writing of second language learners in grades one through three over the course of a
year. She began with the perspective that writing is a complex, recursive, social, and cognitive process, and consistently found that the children's first language facilitated their development of writing in their second language and that the use of authentic writing activities engaged in for the purpose of communication served to support the students' learning. Edelsky (1986) concluded that it was crucial to contend with all sub-systems at once so that they have the chance to hypothesize about something as global as an audience or as local as a period. Kucer (1989) delineated three types of authenticity with relation to holistic, integrated literacy curriculum: cognitive authenticity which deals with the literacy and thinking processes and strategies used by proficient language users; socio-cultural authenticity which relates to the way individuals in society, culture or discipline use literacy and thinking to mediate their interactions with the world; and developmental authenticity which reflects the development of cognitive and social process.

In order for children whose first language is not English, to succeed in school they must have multiple, repeated, and reinforced access to certain language uses that match those of the school.
According to Heath (986) there are genres of language uses that children may use as maps which provide data that support the following school patterns that ground school learning:

1. **Label quest.** These activities name items or ask for the names of items.

2. **Meaning quests.** In this activity adults either infer for the young child what he or she means, interpret their own behavior or that of others, or ask for explanations of what is meant or intended. In schools, teachers ask students to explain the meaning of words, pictures, combinations of events and their own behaviors.

3. **Recounts.** The speaker retells experiences or inform known to both teller and listener.

4. **Accounts.** These provide information that is new to the listener or new interpretations of information that the listener already knew.

5. **Eventcasts.** In this genre, individuals provide a running narrative on events currently in the attention of the teller and listener as in a
sportscast or forecast events to be accomplished in the future, as in developing plans.

6. Stories. This is most familiar genre, because of our customary association with the written stories.

It is through these activities or genres that students display their knowledge in school.

**Language in the Classroom**

Krashen (1984) states that writing is acquired subconsciously much the same way that second language is acquired, through the use of comprehensible input. According to this theory, writing practice and instruction will not help the writer actually acquire the code. Krashen stresses that reading assists in the development of writing, reading in the child's primary language as well as in their second language. This language then becomes the base upon which the children draw from when they write. Their experience with reading facilitate their writing by demonstration. In order for children not to fall behind in subject matter, the first language must be used as a
medium of instruction.

Cummins (1989) substantiated the importance of initial L1 literacy with his interdependence principle. He states that instruction in the primary language is effective in promoting proficiency in the second language. Transfer of this proficiency to the second language will occur provided there is adequate exposure to the primary language (either in school or environment) and adequate motivation in the second language. Cummins (1981) suggests the need to develop not only Basic Interpersonal and Communication Skills (BICS) in the first language, but also develop Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) as it is these higher-level language skills which are required for literacy and for cognitively demanding content. A lack of development of (CALP) first language competence may explain problems some minority children have in school. Many times it is assumed that because a student can converse in the second language, that student can also function academically in the second language.

Dialogue Journals as a Form of Written Communication

Hudelson (1989) supports the idea that second language
writing develops within the framework of authentic communication. She found that personal involvement of the writer had an effect on the quality of the writing and that there was a qualitative difference in work controlled by the children themselves in contrast to controlled work by the teacher. Peyton (1990) argued that within the framework of the interactive dialogue journal the child share control of the writing with the teachers and often initiates the topics.

According to Flores (1990):

...Writing in a journal gives bilingual children an opportunity to use language authentically in a literacy context. Interactive journals insure that children and teachers will communicate on a daily basis with self-selected topics. Children can express themselves individually about topics that are meaningful and purposeful to them. They can communicate their ideas and feelings to others in their first and second language.

The use of Interactive Dialogue Journal writing in the Spanish language makes Spanish speaking kindergarten children more comfortable in the area of writing development and written
communication of ideas. Many students use dialogue journals to illustrate the natural relationship between reading and writing and focus on meaning as the central objective of both processes. Students always have ideas to share when they are writing about themselves. Writing becomes a natural form of communication, and the ability to express ideas clearly and correctly gradually develops (Williams, Snipper 1990).

Dialogue journal writing has been described as a means of achieving such written communication in the context of authentic activities. Staton (1988) defined dialogue journal writing as:

...the use of a journal for the purpose of carrying out a written communication between two persons, in this case a student and the teacher, on a regular continuous basis. The frequency of writing, the external form (abound notebook), and even the participants may all vary in different settings. The essential attributes of dialogue journal writing are these: a dialogue or conversation in writing carried on over an extended length of time, with each partner having equal and frequent (daily, semiweekly, weekly) turns. In addition to its interactive, continuous nature, each writer is free to initiate a
conversation on any topic of personal and mutual interest, with the expectation that the other comment on it.

Shuy (1988) making the connection between writing and such authentic context for meaningful communication, discussed the view that dialogue journals are similar to oral language in that a conversation is carried on between two people. He listed four conditions for the development of any language skill:

1) The task must happen in order to be learned.
2) The task must happen meaningfully.
3) The task must happen meaningfully in such that it can be monitored by the learner.
4) The task must happen meaningfully, be self-motivated and provide comparative constructive learning.

Shuy (1988) argued that dialogue journals meet all the above criteria. As the dialogue journal itself as passed back and forth between the teacher and the student there is a cumulative record and an opportunity for modeling in order that the students may engage in the generation of topics as well as the self-correction on their writing. Staton (1983) addressed the issue of using dialogue
journals as a tool to aide second language acquisition. He suggested
the dialogue journal allows beginning language leaners to express
their own ideas and encourage willingness to make an effort and to
tolerate one's own mistakes. Within the framework of journal
writing the language input that the learner receives from reading
the teacher's entry is comprehensible, modified roughly to the
learner's level of English proficiency, and slightly beyond the
learner's productive ability (Peyton 1990). As such, dialogue
journals serve as an arena for both reading and writing:

...these interactive written conversations are one
practical instance of reading and writing bound together in a
single, functional experience. Through the dialogue,
student and other teacher construct a mutually
interesting reading test about self-generated topics, with the
teacher elaborating on some of the topics introduced by the
student. In these longer discourse structures, teachers
automatically adjust their writing to the inherent
reading level of each student, providing a reading text which
is just beyond the grasp of the student (Staton & Shuy,
1988).
Flores and Garcia (1984) used dialogue journals to evaluate bilingual children's literacy and biliteracy development. They implemented the use of dialogue journals in a first grade classroom and through their use began to evaluate each childre interpretation of writing. They found that after the initial introduction of the journals the children themselves succeeded in redefining the task to suit their own needs with respect to the social function of the journals. When the teacher was not available for immediate feedback on the journals, the students turned to other students to continue the communicative event of journal writing. As such, the students were able to maintain the interactive written communication by mediating each other's writing and mutually participating in the activity.

"Children learn in the context of reading and writing real language" (Goodman & 1979). This is especially true for second language learners who may rely on this real language context even more so. Dialogue journals afford students who are learning a second language an opportunity to express themselves for the purpose of communicating a message. It is this interactive communication that becomes the basis for the shared meaning.
making that exist between journal writer and reader/respondent. Hudelson (1986) found that children are able to write in a second language before they exhibit complete control over all the systems of the language. Dialogue journals give students, especially those writing in their second language, an avenue for experimenting with written language within the framework of a socially mediated, interactive activity.

**Using Dialogue Journals as an Assessment Tool**

The primary goal of interactive journal writing is communication. The control of mechanics evolves during this authentic literacy event. Journal writing is part of, but not the sole means of evaluating children's growth in writing (Flores, 1990).

According to Flores, journals also provide teachers with a developmental record of each child's writing. Journal writing is an informal instructional strategy that provides both teacher and student with a vehicle where literacy can be practiced and met with great satisfaction and should be one of the first writing activities (Flores & Garcia, 1984).

Assessment and evaluation are not separate activities. They are intrinsic parts of the educational process.
Competence develops as an ongoing refinement process while children actively engage in writing and literacy activities by interacting with those around them. Assessment and evaluation must be child centered and focused on the student in the classroom. A child-centered philosophy provides daily ongoing information about student achievement and process. (Anthony, Johnson, Mickelson & Preece 1991).

In the school environment the focus of teaching should be to provide a variety of authentic situations that require the use of written language so that children can develop a range of strategies and skills that will enable them to function in society as literate adults.

Through the use of interactive dialogue journals children increase the quality and quantity of writing development. The writing journal gives bilingual children an opportunity to use language authentically in a literacy context.
CHAPTER 3
DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this project is to analyze the effectiveness of the use of interactive dialogue writing journals with kindergaten language minority students.

Data Needed

There are two parts of the data collection. The first part consisted collecting authentic writing samples in the form of dialogue journal entries from four students during a nine month period in order to examine the samples for evidence of developmental patterns and the evolution of such patterns.

The second part of assessment consisted of gathering data through observation of the four students in the study. The researcher will analyze and document the students that were observed in the process of learning during interactive dialogue writing sessions and their products. Observations about the children's composing processes, the forms, functions, and purposes for their writing, themes of their writing, structure, and use of writing conventions were also observed. The teacher made two types of observations to meet two different needs. The first is an open observation to
collect data so that the teacher could describe and document what was happening with each individual child observed. In these observations the teacher saw and heard the child being observed. These observations served to confirm that which was found in the journal entry writing samples.

In this project, journals were chosen based on four criteria:

1. The journals were written by children who demonstrated Spanish language proficiency based on the school's language test given at the beginning of the school year (Bilingual Syntax Measure, Burt, Dulay & Hernandez-Chavez (1976). It was used to assess Spanish and English proficiency for all children entering school.

2. Students who had sufficient entries in the journal to form a basis for analysis.

3. A wide range of developmental abilities were represented.

4. The journals were representative of the other journals in the classroom.

These dialogue journals provided the opportunity to observe and analyze nonsimulated, functional writing in the classroom.
setting over an entire school year.

This project is descriptive in nature. According to Anderson (1990), a descriptive study attempts to describe data. This type of study is important for understanding the accumulation of knowledge through the use of the data reported in tables organized to give a suitable overall picture at a glance. These tables simplify the description and lend meaning to the data which in raw form is hard to interpret.

A case study analysis, consisting of data collected through observation and documentary analysis was used to compare four kindergarten children. The use of a descriptive statistics is used as a convenient way to collect data of an individual child that reflects the holistic writing process.

Data Collection

Written data for this project was obtained from the students' interactive dialogue journals from September 1993 through May 1994. The students wrote in their journals on a daily basis. Journal writing occurred within the first hour of the school day. Samples were collected for each student on a weekly basis. One monthly sample was selected and analyzed to examine the evolution of
writing patterns. Also noted was the use of the students' primary or secondary language. A total of nine writing samples for each student were analyzed.

Subjects

The focus on this project was to examine the writing development of four Spanish-speaking kindergarten students in the social context of interactive dialogue journals. Second, the primary language during this evolution of knowledge of the written language.

The four students included in the study attended an elementary school in the Coachella Valley. The school is a k-6 grade level with approximately 937 student population. The ethnic profile reflects a Hispanic population of 99%. Approximately 51% of the students are classified Limited English Proficient. Also 24% of the school families receive Aide to Families with Dependent children and 85% of the student population is eligible to receive free and reduced lunch and breakfast. Over half of the school populations eligible for chapter 1 assistance according to the eligibility criterion of scoring 35% or below on the reading portion of the yearly Standardized norm-referenced test. At the beginning of 38
September 1992, a whole language pedagogy was implemented at the
school.

The four students participating in the project were in a
bilingual classroom throughout the school year. The class was self-
contained and the teacher has a whole language philosophy of
education.

Methodology

The Evaluation of Literacy Development Interactive Journal
Writing for Grades K-1 (Flores, Garcia, Gonzales, Hidalgo,
Kaczmarek, & Romero, 1986) (see Figure 2) were used to analyzed
the journal entries. They interpret literacy using levels of
knowledge that make sense or are logical to the students according
to their perceptions:

--the presyllactic levels of interpretation focuses on
using symbols to represent their meaning,

--the syllabic level of interpretation indicates that the
children can now represent the parts that we adults
call syllables,

--the syllabic/alphabetic level of interpretation
demonstrates that the children can now represent
more sound/letter correspondences,
--the alphabetic level of interpretation signifies that children have come to understand how the alphabetic system works according to the adults' logic--that is they can now represent all the sounds that they hear with corresponding letters.

The teacher was able to observe and evaluate the child during the writing of dialogue journals. The teacher was able to observe and evaluate not only the children's writing but also the use of dialogue journals as an instructional tool. One of the purposes of dialogue journals is to provide a context in which social interaction among students of different academic and linguistic abilities can take place. This context provides an opportunity for the students to work on aspects of literacy in collaboration with more capable peers (Yngotsky, 1978). The teacher observations of students writing provided many examples of their sharing of their ideas of the written system with one another. The teacher participation allowed her to evaluate the effectiveness of dialogue journals as means of the interchange of whole language concepts.
Writing samples photocopied monthly from dated journal entries are formally evaluated as to mechanics and quality. The teacher keeps an ongoing record of each child's writing growth. The teacher records growth using a graph indicating the time of journal entry and a four-grade rubric showing the child's conceptual interpretational growth. The teacher evaluate growth in spelling by documenting the percentage of invented spelling and conventional spelling in each entry.

The teacher documents this information of growth on Figure 1, (Peregoy & Boyle, 1990), for the qualities listed on the form and notes additional significant information if needed. Table 1- shows the teacher documentation of Student-A's growth from September to May.
A Continuum of Developmental Scripting Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WRITING TYPE</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>scribble writing</td>
<td>sequences of wavy lines or repetitive forms that bear little or no resemblance to actual letters, yet give the general impression of writing</td>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Example" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pseudo-letters</td>
<td>written forms that look like letters, but are not</td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Example" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>letters</td>
<td>recognizable letters from the (Spanish) alphabet</td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Example" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pseudo-words</td>
<td>strings of letters or pseudo-letters that are spaced in such a way as to look like words, but are not actually words</td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Example" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>copied words</td>
<td>words that have been copied from displays in classroom</td>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Example" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-generated words</td>
<td>independently created words that are spelled conventionally enough to be recognized</td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Example" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-generated sentences</td>
<td>fully formed, conventional or nearly conventional sentences which communicate an idea</td>
<td><img src="image7" alt="Example" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Peregoy & Boyle (1990)
Figure 2.

Evaluation of Literacy Development

Interactive Journal Grades K-1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing - Quality</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>Date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Writing System</td>
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<td>2. Understands Purpose</td>
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<td>3. Story - Ill. Match</td>
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<td>4. Self Select Topic</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. L1 &amp; L2 Language Use</td>
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<table>
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<th>Writing - Mechanics</th>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1. Use of Space-Line</td>
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<td>2. Spacing of Words</td>
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<td>4. Left to Right Directionality</td>
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<td>5. Letter Formation</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Punctuation</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Spelling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invented</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments:

Codes:
- C - Developing
- N - No Evidence
- PS (Pre-Systemic)
- S (Systemic)
- SA (Systemic-Alpha-Scopic)
- A (Alphabetic)
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

A case study approach was used to understand how in a whole language classroom, provided an effective teaching tool for writing in a kindergarten classroom. The data from journal entries was analyzed and discussed in order to reach an answer to the research question:

1. How will the use of interactive journals increase the quantity and quality of writing among Spanish-speaking kindergarten students?

In order to analyze the data that was gathered:

Case Studies

Student A. Abraham had a chronological age of 5.9 at the beginning of the data collection and 6.5 at the conclusion of the study. Abraham scored a 2 on the Bilingual Syntax Measure in English and a 3 on the BSM Spanish. His family spoke Spanish at home, but he has older siblings who speaks English. He had attended Headstart before entering kindergarten. When he entered kindergarten Abraham could write his name and knew some letters in the alphabet.
In September 1993, (Figure 3), Abraham organized his writing left to right using recognizable letters from the alphabet to represent meaning. He did not use scribble writing or psuedo-letters but wrote random letters. According to Ferreiro (1996), Abraham was engaged in the presyllabic writing system. This is the first period of development. Children begin to make the distinction between drawing and writing. Abraham remained in the first period as presyllabic for the first three months of the school as was evident in his journal entries.

In October 1993, (Figure 4), Abraham was still using letters but was also experimenting with punctuation and is still in the presyllabic representation.

In November 1993, (Figure 5), his repertoire of letters has increased significantly, becoming syllabic.

By December 1993, as evident in (Figure 6), he was using a syllabic/alphabetic representation: "Mi papa y maArma " (My father and mother).

By January 1994, see (Figure 7), Abraham's journal sample was more alphabetic than syllabic, but he was still using both. He was independently using both. He was independently creating sentence
that are spelled conventional enough to be recognized. "Mi mama Aa mma mi mama"- -(my mother, my mother).

Abraham was completely alphabetic by February (Figure 8) and the rest of the school year. His challenge from this point on was to learn the standard orthography.

In February 1994, (Figure 9), Abraham was using his knowledge of the written language in his primary language to conventionally spell words in Spanish. In (Figure 9), he wrote "Es mi Kzas"- -(It is my house). At this point Abraham wrote self-generated sentences that are fully formed, conventional which communicate an idea.

Summary of progression. Abraham had progressed using letters at the presyllabic level in September, 1993, to using self-generated sentences at the alphabetic level by May, 1994. (See Table 1)
Evoi

mi carro también es roja.
NAME_ Write a Sentence

A mí mi casa.
NAME

Write a Sentence

Me gustas tu árbol.
Figure 6. Student A - December 1993 Journal Entry

NAME

Write a Sentence

Mi PAPA y Mama A ma.
Figure 7. Student A - January 1994 Journal Entry

Write a Sentence

Es bonito tu dibujo de tu mamá.
NAME_ Write a Sentence

San sabrosas las manzanas.

AMIMMAEL YACIOCOIA
O. S. O. O. O. O.
Me gusta tu carro y tu casa. Abraham.
Figure 10. Student A - April 1994 Journal Entry

NAME: Abraham

Write a Sentence

es mitad de mi casa.

es bonito tu casa.
NAME: Abraham

Write a Sentence:

La casa es mágica.

Me gusta tu casa espantosa.
Table 1

Developmental Strategies Exhibited in Journal

Entries - Student A
Student B. Juan Carlos has a chronological age of 5.9 at the beginning of the data collection and 6.5 at the conclusion of the data collection. Juan Carlos scored a 1 on the BSM in English and a score of 4 on the BSM in Spanish. He is the youngest of two children and his family spoke only Spanish at home. Juan Carlos had not attended Headstart before entering kindergarten. Juan Carlos could write his name and knew very few letters of the Spanish alphabet.

In September 1993, (Figure 12), Juan Carlos did not attempt to write anything. He stated that he did not know how to write. He was not willing to take the risk of writing. He felt he must know how to write before he wrote anything. The teacher explained that he could write in whatever manner or symbols to communicate what he had illustrated in his journal.

In October 1993, (Figure 13), Juan Carlos was using letters from the alphabet to represent meaning. His journal entry showed that he has developed print awareness and was developing uppercase and lowercase letter formation. By November Juan Carlos was still at the first level (presyllabic) using letters, but was using a letter to represent the initial sound of a particular word in his illustration. He wrote in November 1993, (Figure 14), "Aa Aa Aa"
for Arcoiris, (Rainbow). In December 1993, (Figure 15), he was still using letters to represent the initial sound of a particular word in his illustration. Juan Carlos would self-select the topics. He was in the presyllabic writing system. There was more detail and color in his drawings.

In (Figure 16), in January he is still using letters. Juan Carlos represented his "Written string" of letters with more vowels than consonants.

In February 1993, (Figure 17), Juan Carlos continued to be at the first level but his evolution of knowledge about the written language was beginning to use more syllabic representation as was evident in the letters "POPU" at the end of the string of letters. The letters represented the word "PEPE" (Pepe).

By March 1993, (Figure 18), Juan Carlos had progressed to the syllabic/alphabetic: "la-le-li-lo-lu-papa-pepe-mama-ama mememo" (Mom loves Memo). He would self-select his own topics and was willing to take risks using Spanish, his primary language.

By April 1993, (Figure 19), Juan Carlos seemed to regress back into using a string of mostly vowels and at the end of the string of letters would represent a word "AeiOUPAV MAMA", "MAMA".
By May 1993, (Figure 20), Juan Carlos's journal sample was more alphabetic than syllabic. Juan Carlos was independently creating sentences that are spelled conventionally using the alphabetic symbols. "Es bonita mi casa," (My house is pretty).

By June 1993, (Figure 21), Juan Carlos is completely comfortable with the alphabetic symbols and writes for pleasure. He continues to be completely alphabetic for the rest of the school year. "me dan miedo los vampiros," (I am sacred of the vampires).

Summary of progression. Juan Carlos had progressed from being afraid to take risk to using a string of presyllabic levels in November 1993, to using self-generated sentences at the alphabetic level by May 1994. (See Table 2).
NAME  Write a Sentence

Olivo

Es bonita tu casa.
NAME  

Write a Sentence

OSQI PALA

Son bonitas casas de colores.
NAME

Write a Sentence

Me gusta tu casa
NAME ___________________________ Write a Sentence

Es divertido salir de paseo.
Write a Sentence

NAME

Es benito en carro de queso.
Figure 18. Student B - March 1994 Journal Entry

Una casa se cayo y se quemó.

¿Qué? ¿Qué? ¡Ay! ¡Ay!

Ayúdame, ¿me ne?
NAME: JUAN

Write a Sentence

A mi también me gusta la fruta como tu mamá
NAME: JUAN H. L. H.

Write a Sentence:

Es bonita mi Casa.
Table 2

Developmental Strategies Exhibited in Journal Entries - Student B
Student C. Jesus had never been in school prior to starting kindergarten. Jesus had a chronological age of 5.7 at the onset of the data collection and 6.8 at the end of the data collection. The language spoken at home was English and Spanish. His parents felt that English would be more beneficial for Jesus. The class was a bilingual whole language kindergarten classroom. Therefore, both English and Spanish were used for instruction.

In his first journal entry, September 1993, (Figure 22), Jesus was at the first period, presyllabic. He used left to right directionality. He understood the purpose of the dialogue interactive journal as a means of communicating. His illustrations matched the story writing. When he was asked about his drawing he stated that he did not know how to write, only his name, but, he was willing to take the risk to write about what he had illustrated.

Jesus was still using recognizable letters from the alphabet in October 1993, (Figure 23), but was also spacing between the groups of letters.

In the next writing sample, (Figure 24) in November 1993, Jesus was using A capital letter to start his sentence and mixed capital letters with lower case letters.
In December 1993, (Figure 25), Jesus uses English. He is still presyllabic writing system but his illustrations were more detailed. He was still spacing between groups of letters and using both uppercase and lowercase letters.

Jesus continues at the first level in his January 1994, journal entry, (Figure 26), and also in February 1994, (Figure 27), but now he was back to using Spanish. The teacher asked Jesus to use the language that he felt more comfortable in writing in his journal.

By March 1994, (Figure 28), his journal entry demonstrated that he was using the syllabic writing system by using simple words like: "me" (MY).

In April 1994, (Figure 29), Jesus was in the alphabetic writing system "El hermanito de Daniel" (Daniel's brother).

By May 1994, (Figure 30), Jesus continued to be alphabetic in his writing throughout the rest of the school year, "mi ma me ama," (My mother loves me).

**Summary of progression.** Jesus' journal entries indicated that he stayed in the first period. He used the presyllabic and was using the syllabic and at the end of the year year became alphabetic in Spanish. One month he would write in English and other times he
would write in Spanish. When he continued to use the Spanish language for a longer period he began to use the syllabic writing system. He used letters, pseudo-words and copied words in the developmental writing strategies, and finally became alphabetic. (See Table 3)
Rin ARMSTRAND

Es bonita la casa
NAME: Write a Sentence

I also like rabbits.
NAME

Write a Sentence

A mi me gusta como huele el humo.
I like to play outside also.
Figure 25. Student C - January 1994 Journal Entry

NAME_________________________ Write a Sentence

ROAC BHKV WNA X Y< NOTTON

Me gusta tu Casa de Índios
NAME ___________________________ Write a Sentence

SOICASA PAT OHA ANAVAS

Pobre niño se golpeó.

SOICASA PAT OHA ANAVAS

77
Es bonito cuando todos se aman.
El señor está esperando el bus.

Entonces va a la escuela.
Figure 29. Student C - May 1994 Journal Entry

NAME

Write a Sentence

If I or

NAME

Write a Sentence

ma maA meA ha

Es benita tu dibujo de tu mama.
Table 3

Developmental Strategies Exhibited in Journal Entries - Student C
Student D. Alfredo had a chronological age of 5.4 at the beginning of the data collection and 6.1 at the conclusion of the data collection. Alfredo scored a 1 on the BSM in English and a score of 4 in Spanish. Alfredo spoke Spanish at home and had older siblings that spoke English. Alfredo had not attended school prior to entering kindergarten. When he entered school Alfredo was able to write his name but did not know any letters in the alphabet.

In September 1993, (Figure 30), Alfredo used scribble writing and some of the letters in his name. He used left to right directionality. Alfredo began using Spanish his primary language, but towards the second month of journal writing he began responding in English, his second language. This was evident in October 1993, (Figure 31). He was at the first period using the presyllabic conceptual interpretation.

By November 1993, Alfredo was still responding in English to written text. In (Figure 32), Alfredo was using a written form that resemble letters.

In the following journal entry for December 1993, (Figure 33), Alfredo began conceptual interpretation of writing.

By January (Figure 34), Alfredo has started responding in
Spanish again. He was told that it was all right to use Spanish when he wrote his journal entries. Here he has "strings of letters," using letters in the alphabet.

Alfredo continued to be engaged in the presyllabic writing system. He was able to make the distinction between drawing. He would self select his own topics and was willing to take risks using Spanish, his primary language by February 1994, (Figure 35).

By March 1994, Alfredo was moving towards the second period, syllabic. His repertoire of letters had increased significantly and there was evidence of some letter/sound correspondence, as seen in (Figure 36) March 1994, "Pepe ama a mama, Pepe ama a papa," (Pepe loves mom, Pepe loves dad).

In April 1994 and May 1994 Alfredo has figured out the alphabetic written system and was totally alphabetic. In (Figure 37) April 1994, showed that he has written "Mama ama a Pepe." (Mother loves Pepe). In (Figure 38) May 1994, he wrote "Mama me ama a Pepe y a mi pajarito." (Mother loves Pepe and my little bird). The illustrations matched the text. He was also spacing between words. The illustrations were very detailed.

Summary of progression. In the beginning Alfredo was at the firs
period of the conceptual interpretation of the written language. He began scribble writing then moved to pseudo-letters and letters. When he attempted to use English his second language in communicating the meaning of his drawings he began using scribble writing again. Once he was encouraged to use his first language, he passed the second period within a month. By April 1994 his refinement of the alphabetic writing system was quite evident. She remained in the third period until the end of the kindergarten school year. (See Table 4)
Figure 30. Student D - September 1993 Journal Entry

NAME

Write a Sentence

Oki Opusu.
Pobre niños las atraparon.
I like your cat.
It is fun to walk to school.
A mi también me gusta caminar.
NAME: Write a Sentence

Are you...? Yes, X opens the book.

Es bonito para casa
NAME

Write a Sentence

Pepe

ama

A, mama

Pepe es bueno.
Mamá es muy buena ama a Pepe.
Figure 37. Student D - April 1994 Journal Entry

NAME ___________________________ Write a Sentence

MAMÁ me AMARÁ a Pepe

Es bonito tu pajaroitito.

Y ama PA JANTO
Es bonita tu casa.
Me gusta tu casa.
Table 4

Developmental Strategies Exhibited in Journal Entries - Student D
Case Study Results

The results of this case study on the use of interactive dialogue journals, strongly supports the importance of creating a classroom environment rich in print and allowing for development of social interaction in the primary language. In this context, students were given the opprtunity to develop their writing skills in a safe environment which resulted in an increase of the quality and quantity of writing.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

Interpretation.

By using language authentically kindergarten children can learn to write in a socially mediated context using interactive dialogue journals as seen from the case study data presented in this project.

The children entered kindergarten with some idea about the forms and function of print. The evidence presented within the framework of these case studies supports the notion that children should have primary language support to facilitate writing development. The two children that used their bilingualism added rather than detracted for the child's repertoire of available language allowing for a wider range of language choice.

It should be noted that the children in some cases fluctuated between alternative writing levels and did not follow a linear pattern which they proceeded to test and refine throughout the year.

Conclusions

In looking at the children's writing in dialogue journals it found that children were able to take control of their own written language
development by using strategies that made the writing task easier for them. They used illustrations to assist them in the task of developing an idea for writing. In addition, children used label and words or print that surrounded them in their environment. All the children progressed from scribbling or not writing anything to writing their own ideas, depending on the level of knowledge of the written language.

This research suggests that when children write frequently and are encouraged to use topics from their personal experiences they progress toward conventional writing.

The research also supports the use of children's primary language as a powerful strategy for writing development using interactive journals.

Implications.

This study has shown the writing development of four students over a period of a school year. It can be seen how these children take control of the process that is written language but delineating the scripting strategies over a period of time, as evident in their writing. In addition, there is evidence of the impact of the primary language on the writing development as has exhibited by these four
students. By abandoning the traditional educational practice that has looked at writing as an individual act practiced in isolation and that all knowledge is within the teacher, who will impart this knowledge on the child.

If students are to progress in writing and become competent orchestrators of their own written communication they should be allowed the freedom to negotiate meaning as part of interactive communication that grows from shared meaning between the student and a more competent other. This negotiation of meaning should take place within the framework of the primary language, if necessary, specifically for the child who relies on that language to communicate, and uses the language to engage in literate behaviors. Writing is a social activity with the purpose of communication as its basis. When teachers allow students to write for their own purposes and engage the students in authentic writing activities, students are able to perform within this context using writing for their own means, rather than to fulfill an assignment. "unless teachers make room for and encourage spontaneous writing in classrooms, they have little chance to observe a child's range. School assignments may narrow rather than utilize and expand that
range. Through the breath of a child's range and the kinds of writing it contains may vary greatly from individual to individual, differentiation of forms and purposes is another measure of progress in writing" (Bissex, 1980).


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American Education Research Association, Atlanta, GA.


