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PEDAGOGY FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

IN SECOND GRADE

_____

A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

Education:

Bilingual/Cross-Cultural Education

_____

by

Cristina Quezada

June 2008

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June 2008

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Date

ABSTRACT

This is a critical analysis and comparison of writing instruction for second grade English Language Learners (ELL's). The purpose of this project is to find an effective form of writing pedagogy for second grade ELL's. The two "writing programs" under study are the Writing Blueprint from Houghton Mifflin and teaching the writing process with the use of Thinking Maps. Research supports my findings in that ELL's are capable of performing at a proficient level in writing after the proper writing instruction is delivered through plenty of mediation, scaffolding, collaboration, and making personal connections to material. Thinking Maps have proven to be effective tools to promote critical thinking and collaboration and to aid in teaching correct paragraph structure. Mandated scripted writing curriculum results in lower test scores in writing assessments when compared to writing assessment results with the use of Thinking Maps for writing instruction.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Writing has been a subject of great interest for me and my students. I am a second grade Structured Language Immersion (SEI) teacher and I have been searching to find a writing program which will be most effective to help teach my English Language Learners (ELL) to be successful writers. In my eight years of teaching, I have been using a multiple number of writing programs and teaching strategies to teach writing to my students, but I have not found one that I feel has been completely successful. In teaching writing, I have been using strategies from a variety of programs to give my students a better understanding of the writing process. I have attended a number of trainings in hope to learn new effective strategies and to learn about a program I will feel comfortable implementing and that will provide better results in my students' writing than those I get now. Through a teacher at my school, I heard of a program called Thinking Maps which has a component titled, Write From the Beginning. This teacher shared some Thinking Maps she used to teach writing in her classroom. I decided to use Thinking Maps to teach writing to my students as well.

The Thinking Maps served as a great tool for teaching writing in my classroom and because of the degree of understanding in writing my students got from using them, I developed a special interest for this program and will therefore include it in my pedagogical analysis. I want to critically analyze two writing programs to find the most effective one to teach writing to my English Language Learners. The one I currently use, the Writing Blueprint, is based on the language arts program, Houghton Mifflin. Write from the Beginning, which is a component of the program Thinking Maps, is the other program. A critical analysis and comparison of the writing pedagogy for English Language Learners in my second grade class will be performed to determine which of the two "programs" is most effective.

I am interested in finding an effective writing program and the most effective form of writing process pedagogy that will give me the results I am looking for in teaching my students how to be successful writers. Currently, the district I teach for (Rialto Unified School District) requires us to use the Writing Blueprint which is a scripted day by day writing lesson plan from the Houghton Mifflin language arts program, as mentioned previously. The lessons are divided into six themes. Step

Up to Writing is a program that is implemented throughout the Writing Blueprint. Write From the Beginning is a component of the Thinking Maps program. Thinking Maps can be incorporated into all subject areas.

Thinking Maps, Inc. is an educational consulting and publishing company specializing in providing professional staff development for K-12 schools across the country. Thinking Maps is considered a common visual language for learning within and across disciplines. It was developed by David Hyerle, Ed.D., in 1988. In 1998, Write from the Beginning, a writing program by Jane Buckner based on Thinking Maps, was published. Initially, this was a K-3 writing program. It later expanded to K-5. The program includes both narrative and expository writing for grade levels K to 5. Teachers provide instruction using improvement rubrics and focused mini lessons. Teachers teach students how to use learning tools (thinking maps) to organize their ideas and information before writing. "These forms are designed to help K-12 students generate and organize their thoughts and ideas" (Hyerle, 1996, p. 85).

In finding an effective writing program and implementing it correctly, our writing scores will very likely improve class, school and district wide.

Background of the Critical Analysis

Writing is an important skill necessary for student success across the grade levels. The California second grade writing standards require students at this grade level to group related ideas and maintain a consistent focus when writing (Writing Strategies 1.1). Students are to revise original drafts to improve sequence and provide more descriptive detail (Writing Strategies 1.4). Students are also supposed to write brief narratives based on their experiences. They are to move through a logical sequence of events; describe setting, characters, objects and events in detail (Writing Applications 2.1, 2.2). The previous standards are not taught from one day to the next. The standards are skills that students learn to perform gradually through consistent teaching using effective strategies and teaching tools. Students are to be taught how to organize their thoughts and how to manipulate their ideas to put them on paper to create a complete, high quality writing piece.

Because of the major importance of writing, it is necessary to implement an effective program to use consistently throughout the year to effectively teach the writing genres to our students so that they will become successful writers.

Considering that my class is mainly made up of English Language Learners (ELL's) and that writing can be especially difficult for this particular group of students due to their limited proficiency in the English language, I want to find the most effective pedagogy for my ELL's. I was an English Language Learner myself in elementary school and I am aware of the challenges that come with learning to write a foreign language. This is a very important topic to investigate due to the fact that many of our schools in the Rialto Unified School District are made up of a majority of English Language Learners. Finding a more effective writing program and pedagogy would benefit our students, our teachers, our schools, and our district tremendously (Not to mention the long term benefit this would bring in the lives of these children). It is therefore of major importance to analyze the writing pedagogy currently performed using the Houghton Mifflin Writing Blueprint and to test its effectiveness as well as to compare it to another form of pedagogy using Write from the Beginning and Thinking Maps to see which would be more effective as a tool to teach writing to our students.

The Problem

A significant number of second grade English Language Learners are not performing at grade level on writing assessments in my class. Because of this, it is critical to investigate current writing programs and teaching practices used and to compare them to other programs. It is necessary to use a promising writing program which will help teachers provide better writing instruction for our ELL students and one that will better prepare students to produce high quality writing across the genres.

Statement of the Problem

A majority of ELL second grade students in my class are not performing at grade level in writing. For Theme One Houghton Mifflin writing assessment, only one student in my second grade class passed the writing test with a score of a three. The rubric scale is from a one to a four. A score of one and two are not passing and a score of a three and a four are proficient. The genre for Theme One is fictional narrative. The students were to write a make-believe story about an experience in which they found a pair of magic shoes.

It is important to investigate this matter and to conduct a critical analysis on the current writing program

and the form of instruction being used. This critical analysis is necessary for the sake of improving writing instruction through the use of better teaching strategies and teaching tools. With this, there is more likelihood that students will produce better writing pieces.

My class is made up of eighteen English Language Learners. Two of my students are English only students. I have a total of twenty students in my class. I would like to find the best teaching strategies to use to meet the needs of my English Language Learners in writing.

I currently work at Boyd Elementary School in the City of Rialto, California. This school is in San Bernardino County. Boyd Elementary School is one of the seventeen year-round schools in the Rialto Unified School District. Built in 1954, and located in a low socio-economic area, the school serves an increasingly immigrant population. The school's race distribution according to 2005-2006 School Accountability Report Card was 88% Hispanic, 5% African American, 6% White, and 1% Asian. With a student population of seven hundred eight, 45% are English Learners, 71% come from low-income families and 24% are students whose parents attended or graduated college. Most of the three hundred eighteen students at the school designated as English Learners

speak Spanish at home. The factors above may have a strong effect on students' performance in school.

Research Question

Should the district adopt Thinking Maps and Write From the Beginning as our main writing component or should we continue to use the Writing Blueprint from Houghton Mifflin?

Definition of Terms

English Language Learners (ELL's): A student whose first language is one other than English and who is in a special program for learning English. (This program may be bilingual education or English as a second language).

Structured English Immersion (SEI): A program with goals of rapid development of English literacy. These include listening, speaking, reading and writing, and the use of grade appropriate content instruction and materials which address the California Academic Standards.

Houghton Mifflin: is a leading educational Language Arts program published in the United States. It publishes textbooks, instructional technology materials, assessments, reference works, and fiction and non-fiction books for both young readers and adults, including the Best American series (annual collections of

previously-published fiction and non-fiction). The language arts program was approved in 2001 by California State Board of Education and was adopted by local districts.

Writing Blueprint: A document that was developed in order to help teachers focus the lessons in Houghton Mifflin on the writing applications described in the California

Thinking Maps: Thinking Maps integrate thinking skills and mapping techniques. Learning to use these strategies helps students develop good writing skills. These techniques also help students become better learners as they develop life-long skills that help them to study. Thinking Maps use basic mental operations involved in perceiving, processing and evaluating information. They describe, classify, and sequence.

Write from the Beginning: A K-5 Developmental Program for School wide Writing Success written by Jane Buckner, Ed. S., 2000. The focus of the program is on early childhood training in those criteria that are necessary for successful writing achievement beyond the primary years.

Step Up to Writing: A writing program written by Maureen Auman which provides validated strategies and

activities that help students proficiently write
narrative, personal narrative, and expository pieces.

T-chart: A graphic organizer. The "T" splits the
graphic into two parts, making it easy to visually
organize information into separate categories.

Rubric: Specific descriptions of performance of a
given task at several different levels of quality.
Teachers evaluate student performance on performance
tasks. Students are often given the rubric, or may develop
it, so they know in advance what they are expected to do.

Performance levels: The present level of performance
specifies the strengths of the child, the unique needs of
the child, parental concerns, how the child's disability
affects their involvement and progress in the general
curriculum

Zone of Proximal Development: the distance between
the actual developmental level as determined by
independent problem solving and the level of potential
development as determined through problem solving under
adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable
peers.

Scaffolding: An instructional technique whereby the
teacher models the desired learning strategy or task, then
gradually shifts responsibility to the students. The

teacher continually adjusts the level of his/her help in response to the child's level of performance.

Collaborative Learning: is where group members have different levels of ability so more advanced peers can help less advanced members operate within their ZPD.

Multiple Intelligence (MI): An educational theory, first developed by Howard Gardner, that describes an array of different kinds of "intelligences" exhibited by human beings. Gardner suggests that each individual manifests varying levels of these different intelligences, and thus each person has a unique "cognitive profile."

Reciprocal Teaching: It refers to an instructional activity that takes place in the form of a dialogue between teachers and students regarding segments of text. The dialogue is structured by the use of four strategies: summarizing, question generating, clarifying, and predicting. The teacher and students take turns assuming the role of teacher in leading this dialogue.

Theoretical Framework

The major theoretical principals or foundations that are guiding my critical analysis are Vygotsky's Socio-cultural perspective principles. Throughout my critical analysis, I will be referring to Vygotsky's Zone

of Proximal Development. One definition of Vygotsky's ZPD is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). During my study, certain writing expectations will be set for my students. I will look into my students' writing developmental level and their level of potential development. I will teach to their level of potential development. In addition, I will be using scaffolding during the delivery of my instruction when teaching using Write from the Beginning. Scaffolding will instill the skills necessary for independent problem solving in the future. In my study, I will be using Thinking Maps as a tool to teach writing.

I will include information on how mediation is created through the use of writing tools such as Thinking Maps. I will focus on Vygotsky's theory of knowledge of social construction.

CHAPTER TWO

CRITICAL REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Philosophical, Social, and Historical Foundations

It is necessary to look into the historical,
psychological and philosophical foundations of teaching
writing to English Language Learners to get a better
understanding of the best practices, influences, and
writing programs to teach our English Language Learners
how to be good writers. Having this information in mind,
it will be easier to determine whether the district should
adopt Thinking Maps and Write from the Beginning as our
main writing component or whether we should continue to
use the Writing Blueprint to better serve our students
during writing instruction.

How do students learn writing? In critically
analyzing the philosophical and social psychological
foundations of how students learn writing, one must
recognize the significance that children's social
environment has in their writing development. "Several
researchers have studied the powerful influences exerted
upon the development of children's writing by their social
environment, including peers, family members, teachers,
home, and school, as well as television and movies" (Yaden

& Tardibuono, 2004, p. 31). Children's learning is significantly influenced by their environment. "Even the earliest stages of reading and writing develop simultaneously with one another and with other socio-cultural aspects of the child's environment" (Yaden & Tardibuono, 2004, p. 32). Lev Vygotsky, a Soviet psychologist and educational theorist (1934/1987), discussed the zone of proximal development as "the zone in which a more competent peer or adult provides a scaffold for the child to demonstrate abilities that are not evident if the child attempts the same task/s him/herself." As Vygotsky defined ZPD, it is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). On a daily basis, as teachers, we provide a scaffold to our students by modeling how to perform a task and guiding them to become independent in that task or in acquiring a particular skill. The delivery of modified and structured instruction and the use of scaffolding for our students on a daily basis play a major role in their academic development, including their writing development. "What the child is

able to do in collaboration today he will be able to do independently tomorrow" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 211). The social environment a child is involved in, then, is a crucial factor that affects the child's writing development.

We know that writing requires higher level thinking. According to Vygotsky, higher level thinking is a process learned through daily interaction with one's environment. Vygotsky felt that the intellectual ways of knowing the world that a student displayed were not primarily determined by innate factors, that is, inherited intelligence or mental abilities. Instead, Vygotsky saw patterns and levels of thinking as the result of interaction practiced in social situations of one's own culture (Vygotsky, 1987). This is Vygotsky's theory of social construction. In other words, according to Vygotsky, "cognitive skills and patterns of thinking are not primarily determined by innate factors, but are the products of the activities practiced in the social institutions of the culture in which the individual grows up" (Vygotsky, 1987 p. 211). As teachers, we must be aware of our students' backgrounds and culture to have an idea of our students' thinking patters. It is important to

consider the Multiple Intelligences as we provide writing instruction for our students.

A current application of Vygotsky's work would be to teach writing using scaffolding, reciprocal teaching, and collaborative learning (Vygotsky, 1987). Scaffolding, as stated previously, is where an adult continually adjusts the level of his/her help in response to the child's level of performance. Scaffolding instills the skills necessary for independent problem solving in the future. Second, reciprocal teaching is where the teacher and students collaborate in learning and students practice four key skills: summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting. The teacher's role in the process is reduced over time. Collaborative learning is where group members have different levels of ability so more advanced peers can help less advanced members operate within their ZPD. In thinking about current practices in our classroom, by following the writing program we currently use, we are not allowed to practice the four key skills suggested by Lev Vygotsky. As stated before, we currently use the Writing Blueprint which comes from Houghton Mifflin. The Writing Blueprint is a scripted lesson plan to where if followed by the word, we would be limiting the opportunity for interaction between the teacher and the students and the

students and their classmates. This interaction is necessary in order to practice scaffolding, reciprocal teaching and collaborative learning. The type of teaching performed using the Writing Blueprint is based on scripted lessons and mainly focuses on teaching isolated skills, such as grammar skills. The instructional practices consist of worksheets, grammar rules in isolation, lists of writing prompts and scoring guides. It is very difficult to make connections to any content of study or to work through the writing process following this scripted form of instruction.

By using Thinking Maps, on the other hand, we provide ample opportunity for the previously mentioned interaction. According to Vygotsky, curriculum should be designed so that there is interaction between students and learning tasks since children learn through social interaction (Vygotsky, 1987). By using Thinking Maps, we can teach writing by focusing on specific comprehension strategies such as sequencing, comparing/contrasting, cause and effect, etc. Students are taught to use Thinking Maps and they learn to organize their thoughts and ideas to structure their writing. The use of Thinking Maps in teaching writing allows for teaching writing in an entire process. Students learn that writing is a process that

includes brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. Through the use of Thinking Maps, instruction is mediated so that students get a better understanding of writing and its purpose. Students have the opportunity to think critically, to interact with peers and to see their thoughts in an organized, structured form on Thinking Maps. Students are able to make and see connections in their work so that the finished product makes more sense to them.

After the use of Thinking Maps for writing, my students began to understand that writing is not only a task that is to be completed for a half hour each day. My students began to make connections throughout the writing process. They understood the purpose of writing and each and every step that the process included. For brainstorming, for example, the circle map was used to come up with multiple ideas for a topic. They understood the first step of the writing process and were ready to work on the following steps. The fact that their level of understanding of the writing process increased was a huge source of motivation for their writing.

It is clear that social interaction plays a major role in the cognitive writing development of students. According to Ferreiro (1985), "a psychogenetic foundation

conceptual development systematically incorporates the child's social environment, the people with whom they interact, and the cultural activities in which they are engaged (p. 218). He adds that "one of Piaget's fundamental principals is that cognitive development is an interactive process" (Ferreiro, 1985, p. 218). Children learn about written language through immersion in a social community, supportive environments, and especially from their experiences with immediate and extended family members. It is a fact that the learning of writing is not limited to happening inside the classrooms only. Children are exposed to writing at home when parents or family members write notes, checks, letters, etc., on a daily basis. Most children tend to imitate adult behavior and desire to write as they see their family members write. Children may be exposed to writing out in public whether it be at a restaurant when a waiter or waitress is taking an order on a note pad or in a store when mom is writing a check to pay for groceries at the food store. Kroll (1983) reported that "children whose parents have a good understanding of literacy development and ensure their children have a good grounding in reading and writing, progressed well regardless of the methods and quality of teaching in school" (Dunsmuir & Blatchford, 2004, p. 462).

As a teacher, it is understood that students come from a variety of backgrounds and that some may have been exposed to writing more than others in their homes or out in public. Clearly, the background knowledge on writing that students come in to the classroom with varies. As teachers, we must work with what ever background knowledge our students come in with and use it to help make this knowledge grow.

The social environment a child is involved in plays a major role in his/her writing development. However, in looking at Piagetian/Constructivist Theory, a child's own internalized cognitive structures play a major role in determining a child's potential to their writing development. As Ferreiro (1986) states, "children transform environmental stimuli according to their own internalized cognitive structures" (Yaden & Tardibuono, 2004, p. 35). Thus, each student may interpret and take in information from their environment, whether it is writing instruction or everyday social exposure differently depending to their internal socio-cognitive schema. Considering this, as teachers, we must be aware of our students' prior knowledge and attempt to be aware of their cognitive schemas as closely as possible to better understand their capacity to learn and apply the

information we provide for them. We must know our students well enough to better assist them in their learning process. In addition, another feature of socio-psychogenetic perspective is that growth of knowledge does not develop in cumulative order but in "erratic spurts". This process is further described by Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982):

> In Piaget's theory, objective knowledge appears as the end result rather than as an initial piece of information. The path toward this objective knowledge is not linear. We do not move toward it step by step, adding bits of knowledge one on top of another. We reach it through great global reconstructions, some of which are erroneous (with respect to the ultimate goal) but constructive (in the sense that they allow us to reach it). (p. 16)

Ferreiro adds that "pedagogic practice in accordance with Piagetian theory must not fear error" (pg. 17). "Through the analysis of the processes of this 'error' a child's assimilative schemes or systems of reconstruction may be revealed" (Yaden & Tardibuono, 2004, p. 36). Having stated the previous, and considering that students have their unique learning style, we must be flexible in teaching our students to be successful writers. We must take into

account that teaching to a scripted plan of instruction contradicts Piaget's theory that acquiring objective knowledge does not happen in a linear fashion. Teaching writing using our current writing program, Writing Blueprint, is teaching in a "linear fashion." Lessons are scripted and are to be followed day by day. Students practice writing by following a list of prompts. The use of Thinking Maps, on the other hand, offers a variety of strategies to teach writing which allow for flexible teaching and student interaction with classmates and the teacher. In addition, the use of Thinking Maps allows for critical thinking. In planning writing, students must compare and contrast ideas, facts and information. Students are to manipulate and organize this information to apply in their writing. The use of Thinking Maps enables higher level thinking. Thinking Maps are also a tool for organizing and structuring writing. The writing process is easily followed using the Thinking Maps as writing tools.

In looking at the historical foundations of Thinking Maps and writing, we can focus on specific writing instruction strategies used that have proven to be effective. As teachers, it is important to know which instructional strategies are most effective in teaching

writing to our students. Robert Marzano identified nine
instructional strategies that have the greatest potential
for positively affecting student learning. The following
are the nine strategies: identifying similarities and
differences, summarizing and note-taking, reinforcing
effort and providing recognition, homework and practice,
non-linguistic representations, cooperative learning,
setting goals and providing feedback, generating and
testing hypotheses, and activating prior knowledge
(Brabec, Fisher & Pitler, 2004, p. 7). Using Thinking Maps
allows for the use of the previously mentioned strategies
across grade levels and across subject areas. For example,
the Double Bubble Map is used to compare and contrast. The
Circle Map can be used to activate prior knowledge. The
Flow Map can be used to summarize a story. In addition,
Thinking Maps are a form of non-linguistic
representations. Although the Thinking Maps do contain
text once they are completed, their physical form allows
for critical thinking. The maps are visual tools. Also,
Thinking Maps allow for cooperative learning. I have my
students work with a buddy and share their Thinking Maps
with their peers. They talk about the information they
contain. By talking about their thinking, students
reinforce their ideas and are better prepared to

manipulate their thoughts and present them in a well organized and structured writing piece.

Thinking Maps have been used successfully in many schools and have provided positive results in student achievement. According to Stefanie Holzman, Principal at Roosevelt Elementary School in Long Beach, California, Thinking Maps are an important strategy for students' success. She states that "Thinking Maps help all children, whether their primary learning style is kinesthetic, auditory or verbal" (Holzman, 2004, p. 1). Thinking Maps, then, can be used to serve students regardless of their learning style according to the Multiple Intelligences. Holzman (2004) adds that Thinking Maps can be effectively used to teach higher level thinking skills. Thinking Maps match the content standards. Roosevelt Elementary School is an example of a school that is successful thanks to the dedicated use of Thinking Maps. The following is what Holzman (2004) had to say about Thinking Maps:

- They are easy for students to use.
- They are helpful for differentiation, especially with English Language Learners.
- Once they are taught, they are owned.
- We can start teaching them in kindergarten.

- We can use them in our assessments. Data drives everything we do, and this is part of the data we use.
- They can be used in any content area or grade level (p. 1)

Also, Holzman (2004) states,

Thinking Maps have helped the school develop a common language. She adds that from an administrator's point of view, Thinking Maps make it easy to assess the following: student learning, the content being taught, whether student-centered learning is taking place, the kinds/levels of thinking being taught and whether differentiation is occurring (p. 1).

Thinking Maps have clearly served a variety of meaningful purposes.

"In a learning community, Thinking Maps become a common visual language among students and between students and teachers-not only within content areas but also across disciplines" (Hyerle, 1996, p. 88). Hence, Thinking Maps can be valuable tool in the classroom. Research shows their effectiveness. For example, "In North Carolina, many elementary and junior high schools that had introduced the Thinking Maps school-wide in 1993-1994 found significant increases in holistic writing test scores over successive

years" (Hyerle, 1996, p. 87). I can see how this is made possible as I saw major improvement in my students' writing after I began using Thinking Maps in my classroom for writing instruction.

Thinking Maps can be a very valuable tool for all students, especially English Language Learners. Significantly, the teachers who gave the maps the highest approval rating were those who worked closely with the large population of Spanish-speaking students who are learning English. They said that "the common visual language for thinking enabled their students to transfer patterns of thinking from Spanish into English, to focus on learning, and to build vocabulary" (Hyerle, 1996, p. 88). Although English Learners may not have the ability to structure sentences correctly, they do have the ability to process their thinking and to organize their thoughts through the use of visual tools such as Thinking Maps. Thinking Maps can therefore be a valuable tool to use in our schools that are highly populated with English Language Learners. Thinking Maps can be a form of mediation for these students. Vygosky's theory is that human mental processes are mediated by tools. This occurs just as human labor. These psychological tools are: language, signs and symbols. Once internalized, these

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psychological tools begin to mediate children's processes (Vygotsky, 1978).

Just like psychological tools mediate mental processes, the teacher is an important mediator and tool in the classroom. The teacher is a mediator who has strong influence on student learning. "In order to continue positive development of an individual, the teacher must be a sociocultural mediator-a 'tool' -who mediates teaching-learning experiences so that students achieve their fullest potential" (Diaz & Flores, 2001, p. 33).

Stefanie Holzman (2004) defines Thinking Maps as non-linguistic representations. She makes a clear distinction between Thinking Maps and graphic organizers in that Thinking Maps are visual representations of thinking. They help students see which thinking skills are used to solve problems. They help promote strategic thinking whereas graphic organizers do not. Graphic organizers promote activity only. Another major difference between Thinking Maps and graphic organizers is that Thinking Maps are a consistent graphic language for schools and graphic organizers are inconsistent graphics across classrooms. Thinking Maps are also student centered for cooperative learning whereas graphic organizers are usually text or teacher oriented.

According to Sarah Hileman (2006), "visual learning
environments are important for brain-based instruction"
(p. 19). All teachers of English Learners know that we
must provide an abundance of visuals and mediation during
instruction for our English Language Learners. We
consistently use pictures, graphics, charts, graphs,
bulletin boards and other visuals for instruction in our
classrooms. Hileman (2006) adds that "between 80 and 90
percent of all information that is absorbed by the brain
is visual" (p. 19). Thinking Maps are great visuals that
have proven to be successful tools for English Language
Learners in their learning of the writing process.

In teaching students the writing process, students
must be specifically taught thinking skills. These skills
are necessary in order for students to manipulate their
ideas and organize them in a way that will make their
writing complete, well structured and adequate. Hileman
(2006) states that "modeling and organizing projects and
activities that require higher level thinking should be
your main instructional goal when developing thinking
skills in students" (p. 20). The use of Thinking Maps
supports the previous idea.

Types of Thinking Maps

In support of the importance of teaching thinking skills, David Hyerle discovered that there are eight fundamental thinking processes. In 1988, using the Upton Model as a guide, he created "maps" to graphically illustrate each of these types of thinking (www.thinkingmaps.com). The following are the Thinking Maps he developed: circle map, bubble map, double bubble map, tree map, brace map, flow map, multi-flow map, and bridge map.

The first Thinking Map is the Circle Map. The circle map is made up of two concentric circles. The middle of the circle is where you write the key idea and on the outside circle you write everything you know about that idea. The circle map, then, is used for collecting ideas, brainstorming, etc.

The Bubble Map looks like a cluster or a web, but it is not. The purpose of the bubble map is to describe things. The only part of speech used in a bubble map is an adjective. This map can be used very effectively if used in combination with other maps.

The Double Bubble Map is used to write the thinking involved in comparing and contrasting. In this type of

map, the similarities are in the middle and the differences are outside.

The Tree Map allows for the classification and organization of information. The tree map is an outline form of the subject, the main idea, and the details. Students are able to understand text structures through a tree map. They are able to take information and organize it. The tree map can be a tool used to differentiate instruction. It may be that an ELL student for example, is unable to write a complete paragraph about a particular topic. This student can use a tree map to show his/her understanding of the information by presenting it on the tree map. More capable students may complete a tree map and then write a paragraph about the information on the tree map. The tree map can also be used to assess students' knowledge.

The Brace Map helps identify whole and part relationships. It is used to show how something concrete can be broken into components or subparts. The brace map shows the components of the whole. A brace map can be used to teach the setting of stories. For example, all the parts of a house can be broken into separate rooms or a town can be broken into different buildings. You can go whole to part of part to whole with a brace map.

A Flow Map can be used to show a sequence of events. You may use a circle map first to list things. Then these things can be put in sequence (what comes first, second, etc.). A flow map may be used to write a summary after reading a book, or to tell a story with a beginning, middle and end. Flow maps are great to teach transitions in writing. Also, flow maps are great for showing dates, as in history timelines.

The Multi-Flow Map is a very powerful map because it is used to show cause and effect. The event is in the middle. The causes are to the left and the effects are to the right. Cause and effect is an important reading comprehension skill that often seems more difficult than others. This map allows for easier understanding of this skill.

Finally, the Bridge Map is used to show analogies and metaphors. For example, a bridge map can be used for teaching vocabulary (antonyms) (Holzman, 2004).

According to Stefanie Holzman (2004), the purpose of using Thinking Maps in her school is to help students transfer thinking processes and integrate their learning. In addition, she says Thinking Maps are used to continually assess student progress. She adds that Thinking Maps are powerful tools because students become

aware of the types of thinking they can apply to a text or assignments. They learn to organize information in a way that makes sense to them. Also, students have control over the way they want to think about the text or assignment. Thinking Maps allow for students to demonstrate their thinking.

Students feel very comfortable using Thinking Maps in the classroom. Thinking Maps can be easily learned and understood by students beginning in kindergarten. Students from Olivet School have said that Thinking Maps help a lot with their writing. Students have stated that Thinking Maps help them organize their thoughts. According to Sue Myatt, a second grade teacher at Steele Lane School, "the writing in her second grade class has improved more than she has ever seen it improve in one day" (Holzman, 2004, p. 2).

> Researchers have found that presenting selected graphic organizers on computers helps students to see the relationships between main ideas and supporting details (as in the tree map), and that this in turn leads to higher scores on reading and writing tests. (Cronin, Meadows & Sinatra, 1990, p. 42)

Along with success stories from the implementation of Thinking Maps have came obstacles. One of the biggest

challenges is getting a school's entire faculty to commit
to using these tools. "The key to the success of this
approach," suggests Barbara Bell, "is the common thinking
process, vocabulary and visual language" (Hyerle, 1996,
p. 88). Barbara Bell is a principal of the Joe Hall
Elementary School in Miami Florida. During the 1993-94
school year, all of her administrators, teachers and 1,400
students began using the maps. Bell states: "The teachers
embraced these maps because they were able to incorporate
them directly into their everyday questioning techniques
and classroom activities. Students learned the maps easily
because the maps were reinforced across the whole school"
(Hyerle, 1996, p. 88).

<div align="center">

Critical Comparison of Brain Based
Learning and Scripted Instruction
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To continue with the psychological foundations on how
students learn writing, it is necessary to compare
learning styles and to investigate what research says
about brain based learning and teaching. As mentioned
before, we know about the great impact that the social
environment has on students' learning. Learning takes
place in the brain. "The brain changes physiologically as
a result of experience" (Caulfield, Kidd & Kocher, 2000,
p. 62). Knowing that the brain can change its structure

and function in response to external experiences, it is crucial that as teachers, we provide an environment that will allow for good learning experiences and opportunities for growth for our students. "To maximize the brain's capacity to grow connections, teachers must provide an environment that is challenging yet nurturing" (Caulfield, Kidd, & Kocher, 2000, p. 62). As stated by Caulfield, Kidd and Kocher (2000, p. 63), the following key brain compatible classroom practices were proven effective at Valley Park Elementary School in Blue Valley School District, in Kansas City, Kansas: "a safe, non-threatening environment; active and meaningful learning; rich, stimulating, varied input; and accurate, timely, and helpful feedback" (Jennings & Caulfield, 1997).

Can a connection be made between the previously mentioned brain based learning and teaching strategies and the ones currently used in our classrooms? Reflecting on writing instruction in my classroom, I can say that by using the Writing Blueprint, we may be limiting our students from maximum learning because of the fact that the program itself does not allow for the variety of brain compatible classroom practices that have been proven effective in the classrooms. For example, an enriched visual learning environment is important for brain-based

instruction. As Hileman (2006) noted, and stated previously, "Between 80 and 90 percent of all information that is absorbed by our brain is visual" (p. 19). The writing program we currently use at our school does not provide enough visuals for writing instruction. The lessons are scripted and tend to be monotonous. Thinking Maps, on the other hand, are visual tools that allow for critical thinking to take place. Thinking Maps allow for higher level thinking, while providing a clear visual structure of that thinking. "Modeling and organizing projects and activities that require higher level thinking should be your main instructional goal when developing thinking skills in students" (Hileman, 2006, p. 20). Hileman (2006) adds that "problem solving allows the brain to do what the brain does best, make decisions and promote creative, meaningful and productive judgment" (p. 20) The use of Thinking Maps supports the idea of the development of instructional activities that require thinking skills. That is exactly what Thinking Maps do. Students use the maps as a tool to organize their thinking and put in on paper.

Once an effective learning environment is established, students feel comfortable enough to learn in it. Not only do students feel safe in their learning

environment, they also find a purpose in the activities they do. Students become motivated to learn. They understand what is going on in the classroom and they know why. "People retain more of what they learn when the brain recognizes an experience as useful" (Caulfield, Kidd & Kocher, 2000, p. 63). An experience becomes useful when connections of understanding are made. "When students see the connections and the practical applications, they will remember the knowledge or skill" (Caulfield, Kidd & Kocher, 2000, p. 63). Hence, educators have the responsibility of creating an emotionally positive and engaging environment for the students. If this does not happen, then learning can very likely be affected.

It is known that every individual has his/her own learning style. Intelligence is multiple. Caulfield, Kidd and Kocher support Gardner (1985): "Human intelligence encompasses a far wider and more universal set of competencies than a single general intelligence" (p. 62). The type of teaching through the core writing curriculum, Writing Blueprint, offers scripted lessons that focus on skills only. This limits learning to a single intelligence. Thinking Maps, on the other hand provide ample opportunity for multiple intelligences as learning happens through the use of visual thinking tools. Students

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are able to make connections of what they study to their thinking processes. Students become owners of their work since it is their thinking which is represented through the Thinking Maps. They understand their thinking so well that they eventually own their work. This creates a sense of confidence that encourages sharing their work amongst peers. This interaction enriches student learning.

There are numerous factors besides the quality of writing program used, the teaching strategies and the learning environment that can influence writing development in ELL students. "Research has shown that factors such as effort, attitude, teacher and student expectations, maturity, motivation, self-confidence, behavior, and parent participation in school activities have a strong influence on students' writing development" (Mavrogenes, N. & Bezruczko, 1993, p. 237). In addition, the like or dislike of writing plays a big role on the quality of writing a student will produce. "If students do not enjoy writing, they may not be good at it, possibly because they have never learned how to do it" (Mavrogenes & Bezruczko, 1993, p. 239). "Other items that correlated significantly with writing development were parent participation in school activities, cognitive readiness, concentration, interest in schools, and teachers' and

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parents' reading books to students" (Mavrogenes &
Bezruczko, 1993, p. 244). Parents have a major influence
in students' writing development.

In general, students learn more in any particular
subject area when they are able to make personal
connections to what is being taught. To make education
meaningful, curriculum should be personalized or
student-centered. Curriculum should be student centered so
that it includes student's social characteristics, styles
of communication, personality, cognitive ability,
linguistic style and academic background (Gillani, 2000).
Through the use of Thinking Maps, there is more
opportunity to make personal connections to one's life or
experiences. Thinking Maps allow for critical thinking as
ideas are organized.

CHAPTER THREE

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF WRITING PEDAGOGY

Thinking Maps As Compared to the Writing Blueprint

Due to the fact that the majority of my students are not performing at grade level in writing, I found it necessary to conduct a critical analysis of writing pedagogy in hope to find a writing program or new teaching strategies to help my second grade ELL students become better, independent writers. As stated previously, we are currently required to use the Houghton Mifflin Writing Blueprint. As mentioned, I feel that something different must be done to improve my students' writing skills. After using a Thinking Map for writing instruction, I saw results soon after. I decided to include the use of Thinking Maps for writing development. I chose to include Thinking Maps in my critical analysis because from using it just one day, I noticed that my students had a better understanding of the organization of their ideas prior to beginning their writing. They were able to see how a Thinking Map can be used as a tool to help in structuring their paragraph. Their ideas were structured and organized and this made writing the paragraph an easier task for them.

The writing genre that I developed pedagogy for was expository description. In comparing the overall performance of teaching the Writing Blueprint and Write From the Beginning with Thinking Maps, I found better quality in the writing pieces produced by students who received writing instruction using Thinking Maps. The final drafts and the level of involvement and student response to the two forms of pedagogy was distinct. My students' attitude and interest in the two writing programs were very different. In addition, the writing pieces produced raised questions about the effectiveness of the Writing Blueprint program.

All of my students received writing instruction using the Writing Blueprint, as mandated by the district. This is due to the fact that as a district, we are obligated to teach writing using this resource. However, I also implemented the writing instruction using the program Write From the Beginning using Thinking Maps to half of my class only.

In order to see which program worked better, I administered a pre-assessment to my students, according to my district. Students were given a writing prompt which instructed them to write a description of their bedroom. Students were able to use a graphic organizer (T-chart)

provided by the HM program, Writing Blueprint, to plan
their writing. This assessment was given with no teacher
assistance other than my reading of directions and
explaining how to fill out the graphic organizer. Once
this was explained, students were required to complete the
description independently. The work samples were saved to
compare to the student work according to each program. I
kept a portfolio with student pre-assessments, student
practice drafts and final drafts produced from the
teaching of Writing Blueprint as well as from the teaching
of Thinking Maps. I compared work samples to see if the
samples as a result of using Thinking Maps in addition to
using the Writing Blueprint were of any higher quality
than the work samples using the Writing Blueprint
instruction.

My instruction consisted of twenty-five lessons. I
provided writing instruction using the Writing Blueprint
to the entire class for twenty-five days. Twenty five
lessons were provided using Write From the Beginning as
well. Half of my class received writing instruction using
the Writing Blueprint and writing instruction using the
Thinking Maps program, Write From the Beginning. This was
Group Two. Group one was made up of the students who

received writing instruction using the Writing Blueprint only.

Description of the Writing Blueprint

The Writing Blueprint has scripted day by day lessons. The complete name for the Writing Blueprint is *A California Blueprint For Writing Instruction Using Houghton Mifflin Reading* (Bowers & Valdes, 2005). It was made possible by the Riverside County Office of Education. The following is a scripted description of the day to day lessons I followed using the Writing Blueprint.

- Day 1: On day one, students took the pre-assessment on writing a description. Students described their bedroom using three of their senses. They focused on sight, touch, and hearing. I provided the writing prompt, a planning sheet recommended by Houghton Mifflin and writing paper. I did not provide any support or help to the students. My students asked questions and requested help but I reminded them that this was a pre-assessment for me to find out what they already know about writing a description and that I'll answer any questions later.

Day one is an introduction to expository writing. The materials to be used are blank paper, student text, and chart paper. I told the students that for the past five weeks we studied how to tell a story for the purpose of entertaining another person. I added that for this theme, we will move on to a type a writing that provides information to the reader. Writing to provide information is planned and structured differently than telling a story. Writing to provide information requires the listing of ideas in an order that makes sense. We organized ideas using a T-chart. I modeled how to make a T-chart and then had students use the description on page 154-155 in their anthologies to fill in their T-chart. The students were to come up with details about the New Fishing Rod. Students then prepared a new T-chart for the description they will write in Theme 2.

- Day 2: On the second day, I introduced the evaluation tool introducing the elements and the standards of description. Here I explained to the students the important elements of a good description. I displayed the scoring guide and

went over terminology and how students will be assessed. Students then read the descriptive story on page 154-155 once again and looked for the important elements of a good description. Students used a scoring guide to critique the description on page 154-155.

- Day 3: On day three, I prepared the students for writing their own description. We worked on prewriting. I used the HM lesson on page 155 A. The lesson focused on choosing a topic.

- Day 4: On this day, I taught the students how to organize and plan their work. I taught the students the importance of using vivid, descriptive words to give a clear picture of the person, object, place or experience being described. Students filled in their organizer with information they know about camping.

- Day 5: Day 5 focused on generating details. The lesson came from HM TE 155D. Students used a T-Chart to organize the information they have gathered about camping. Step Up to Writing color coding was used. The topic is camping in the forest. The details are sights, sounds, smells, feelings and taste associated with the topic.

- Day 6: On day six, I taught students the importance of using sensory language in a description. Students used a five senses chart to improve their elaborations of the details see, hear, feel, taste, and smell. Students filled in the right side of their T-Charts using sensory information.

- Days 7-8: On these two days, I taught the students how to structure the draft. Students used the information from the T-Chart to plan their writing. I showed students how to make an accordion planner in which they wrote their topic sentence, a detail about what they see while camping in the forest, and more elaboration on that detail.

- Day 9: On day nine, I followed a lesson from Houghton Mifflin on writing complete sentences. They then referred back to their accordion paragraph to make sure they had complete sentences.

- Day 10: On this day I followed another lesson from Houghton Mifflin to identify different sentence types.

- Day 11: On this day, I modeled evaluation of a
  student work sample using the scoring guide.
  Students had an opportunity to evaluate their
  own work using a scoring guide.

- Day 12: Used the lesson from Houghton Mifflin to
  teach students how to publish their final draft.

- Day 13-25: On these days, students chose a topic
  and went through the writing process
  (prewriting, drafting, revising, evaluating and
  publishing) to write a description about a
  person, place, item, or event that interests
  them and I guided students through this process.
  In the revision days, lessons from Houghton
  Mifflin about commands, pronouns and using
  exclamation marks were taught.

Description of Write from the
Beginning with Thinking Maps

Write From the Beginning is a component of Thinking
Maps: Tools for Learning. As stated in the Write from the
Beginning manual, "the purpose of implementing Write From
the Beginning is to give both students and teachers in
grades K-5 the knowledge and skills necessary for
age-appropriate writing instruction and achievement"
(Buckner, 2000). Buckner (2000) adds that "as teachers

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build upon and extend the instruction of the previous grade level by using Improvement Rubrics and focused mini-lessons, students are establishing a solid foundation in the writing process and high writing achievement becomes the expectation." The program guides teachers to eventually be able to develop mini-lessons focused on individual student and overall classroom needs. With this program, it is also intended that students will use Thinking Maps cooperatively and independently to organize and plan for writing. Cooperation is a very important factor that contributes to successful writing development according to the psychologist and theorists Piaget and Vygotsky.

Write From the Beginning provides instruction on the entire writing process for the students. It begins with pre-writing activities such as brainstorming using Thinking Maps with teacher support. Eventually, students are able to perform the previous tasks independently. Next, students work on the drafting step. During drafting, students write the first draft of their paragraph. Next is the editing and revising step. Then students complete their final draft and publish their work. This program provides daily lesson plans which focus on a particular writing genre. The following genres are presented:

thematic narrative, informational writing, personal
thematic narratives, personal, chronological narratives,
writing to tell how, and writing to explain why. Each mini
lesson provides the following steps: brainstorm, organize,
sequence for writing, extend with details, write a closing
sentence, orally rehearse the flow of the map, and write.
There is a Thinking Map used in each step. Students using
these steps have ample opportunity to explore and organize
their ideas. They are able to talk about their thoughts to
organize them and structure their ideas effectively on
paper.

The following lists the day by day instruction that
was given using Thinking Maps and Write From the
Beginning:

- Day 1: I reviewed what expository writing is. In
  addition, I reminded the students that for the
  next four weeks, we would be working on
  descriptive writing. I modeled a think aloud
  description of our sunny morning using many
  adjectives. I used a bubble map to brainstorm
  ideas. The students were able to help me fill in
  the bubble map using adjectives.

- Day 2: On day two, I modeled how to create a
  description of my own bedroom. I emphasized on

three senses: sight, touch and hearing. I first brainstormed what I remember about my bedroom through a think aloud. I thought about what I saw, felt and heard. I used the Circle Map to brainstorm ideas. In order to organize my ideas a little better, I created a Tree Map from the Circle Map. The Tree Map had a topic sentence as well as a concluding sentence space. On the tree map, I modeled the following topic sentence: There are different things to observe, hear and feel in my bedroom. In my example, I saw a king sized bed, I heard the sounds of birds singing from my window and I felt warm. After I modeled filling in my tree map, students began to brainstorm a description of their bedroom on their own. I provided them with paper, the sample of the Circle Map and the Tree Map to organize their ideas. They were able to work independently.

- Day 3: The students' final writing assessment will be to describe an animal. For the sake of preparing students for this assessment, I picked an animal to describe each day. Each day, during writing time, we described a different animal.

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Students helped me come up with a variety of adjectives for the animal of the day. For today, the animal picked was a dog. We focused on what it looks like, any special sounds it makes, how it feels when touched, where it lives, and what it eats. I used a Bubble Map to brainstorm with the students.

On this day, I used the Tree Map to construct the sequence on a Flow Map to help with writing my bedroom description. I extended the details telling my students more about the categories that I'm writing about. I wrote a closing sentence about how I feel about my bedroom. I orally rehearsed the Flow Map to show my student what I was going to write about. I observed that the students understood what I was teaching them and that they were very involved in the lesson. Students filled in their Flow Map using their Tree Map.

- Day 4: For daily practice for the final writing assessment, I used a daily Bubble Map with animal characteristics. Students read the characteristics and guessed the animal I was

describing in the Bubble Map. Today we described a cat.

I modeled writing my bedroom description by taking the information from the Flow Map and transferring it to chart paper. It is important that my students understand how to transfer information from a Flow Map to lined writing paper. After modeling, I asked my students to use their own Flow Map to write their bedroom description on lined paper. Most students were able to work independently. Three of the ten needed some guidance.

- Day 5: For the daily animal practice, we focused on a bird today.

After observing my students' bedroom descriptions for the last few days, I realized that they needed to enrich their writing using descriptive language. My students' writing pieces needed more adjectives. I read aloud a description of a playground with many adjectives. Students were instructed to recall as many nouns described in that passage. We worked together with brainstorming the adjectives that described the nouns in that

description. We used a Bubble Map to record the adjectives describing each noun. The students were able to come up with many nouns and their adjectives. I reminded students that adjectives help the reader make a clear picture of the item, person, or place being described.

- Day 6: Students worked on their daily animal practice. Today we described a fish.

  Today I went over the revision and editing steps of the writing process. The students were to read their bedroom description and chose three sentences that needed to be checked for punctuation, capitalization, and better adjectives.

- Day 7: Students worked on their daily practice. Today we described a frog.

  Students were asked to peer-edit their papers looking at the Writing Rubric. Necessary changes were made.

- Day 8: Students worked on their daily practice. Today we described a rabbit.

  Students were asked to show me their draft. Students wrote their final draft in their seats independently.

- Day 9: Students worked on their daily practice. Today we described a cow.

  I introduced a new description topic. I modeled how to create a description of a candy. I chose to describe gummy orange slices. I emphasized three senses to focus on: sight, touch, and taste. I gave students a chance to taste the candy. Then we brainstormed some things we saw, touched, and tasted. I used the Circle Map to brainstorm ideas. In order to organize my ideas, I created a Tree Map from the Circle Map. The Tree Map had a topic sentence. The students completed their thinking maps with my guidance.

- Day 10: Students worked on their daily practice. Today we described a pig.

  On this day, I used the Tree Map to construct the sequence using a Flow Map. I extended the details telling my students more about the categories that we are writing about. I wrote a concluding sentence about how I felt about the candy. I orally rehearsed the information on the Tree Map to show my students how I was going to fill in the Flow Map.

- Day 11: Students worked on their daily practice. Today we described a mouse.

  I modeled writing the candy description by taking the information from the Flow Map. I then asked my students to use my Flow Map to write their own description of the candy.

- Day 12: Today we described a giraffe.

  Students finished writing their description of the orange gummy candy. They began to edit/revise with a partner using a writing rubric.

- Day 13: Today we described a lizard.

  Students finished peer editing/revising. I called students to my table for individual conferencing. Students wrote their final drafts.

- Day 14-24: We continued describing a different animal each day.

  For the next eleven days students completed two more independent practice writing prompts. One prompt was a description of their favorite place. The second prompt was a description of their favorite toy. I continued to do extensive modeling and also gave my students numerous

opportunities for practice and individual conferencing.

- Day 25: Today, students completed their writing assessment for expository description. They were to write a description of their favorite animal. All students were given the same writing prompt and planning sheet to write their description. The students were then given the Thinking Maps to organize their writing. Another group was only given the graphic organizer provided by the Houghton Mifflin Writing Blueprint.

The Descriptive Writing instruction lasted a total of four weeks. On week one, students were to describe their bedroom. On week two, they described a gummy orange slice candy. Week three was about their favorite place. On week four, they described their favorite toy.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGICAL ANALYSIS

AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Analysis

Upon reflecting on the procedure of writing pedagogy using the core program which is the Writing Blueprint from Houghton Mifflin and teaching the writing process using Thinking Maps, it is clear that my students got a better understanding of the writing process by teaching them writing using Thinking Maps versus the Writing Blueprint. The level of student involvement was much greater during writing instruction using Thinking Maps than it was during the use of the Writing Blueprint. Students not only were more involved with the use of Thinking Maps, they were also motivated to write and share their writing with their peers. They understood what they were learning as they made personal connections to their work. The use of Thinking Maps allowed my students to see their thinking on paper. This made their level of understanding much deeper than the level of understanding that my students who were instructed using the Writing Blueprint got.

While teaching my students using the Writing Blueprint, the students were not very interested in the

lessons. I often felt like my students were bored and not learning. I was following the scripted lesson plans day by day as written in the teacher's manual. The students did not really understand the purpose of what we were doing. In following the Writing Blueprint, for example, I taught random grammar lessons that were supposed to help my students with their writing. The students were not able to make a connection between the grammar skill taught and the writing my students were instructed to produce.

Teaching my students the writing process using the Thinking Maps made much more sense to them and to me. Students were allowed to be flexible in their thinking yet still followed a structure that allowed for organization of thoughts and ideas. Students were not limited in terms of expressing their ideas, opinions and personal experiences when organizing their writing. I feel that my students felt as if they owned their work while using Thinking Maps. They were able to organize their ideas and understand the structure of their thoughts on the Thinking Maps. From the Thinking Maps, they were able to express their thoughts to me or to their peers with great ease. Once expressing their ideas and thoughts orally, my students were then able to transfer these ideas onto another sheet of paper in the form of a well organized

paragraph. Students, then, were very proud of their work.
They understood what they did and why they did it. My
students felt successful.

The following is a Comparative Analysis Chart (Table
One) of the Writing Pedagogy. The two "writing programs"
being compared are the core program which is the Houghton
Mifflin Writing Blueprint and the teaching of the writing
process using Thinking Maps.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis Chart

Definition	Core: HOUGHTON MIFFLIN WRITING BLUEPRINT	WRITING PROCESS WITH THINKING MAPS
Type of Teaching	Scripted lessons Focus on skills	Writing Process Focus on Strategies Cooperation Collaboration
Instruction Practices	Worksheets, grammar rules in isolation, lists of prompts, scoring guides	Process- use of Thinking Maps to organize writing Draft, revise, edit, publish

Many English Language Learners in my class were not
performing at grade level in writing assessments at the
beginning of the school year. In order to improve writing
test scores, a critical analysis and comparison of writing
pedagogy for ELL's in second grade was done. The core

program used in the Rialto Unified School District, the Writing Blueprint from Houghton Mifflin, and the teaching of the writing process using Thinking Maps, were the two "programs" under critical analysis.

It is clear to me that according to Vygotsky's theory, that learning is based on social interaction. According to Vygotsky (1978) learning occurs as a result of social interaction and immersion into the culture of the individual. It is through collaboration and making connections to one's own culture that students develop higher level thinking skills, according to Vygotsky. Higher level thinking is a process learned through daily interaction with one's environment. "What the child is able to do in collaboration today, he will be able to do independently tomorrow" (Vygotsky, 1987).

Thinking Maps and Write From the Beginning were used to teach the writing process to my second grade English Language Learners. This component provided great opportunities for daily interaction during writing instruction. Students were very involved in organizing their ideas on their Thinking Maps during writing time. Students were instructed to work in pairs to complete their Thinking Maps and to then share their ideas with a partner before transferring their information from their

Thinking Maps to their paper. After the use of Thinking Maps, the students were able to organize their thoughts in a manner that allowed them to write complete, well structured paragraphs about any given topic. The use of Thinking Maps, then, is an integration to curriculum that emphasizes interaction between learners and learning tasks. With the use of Thinking Maps during writing instruction, my students' writing scores increased significantly. The students were motivated to work on their writing everyday. They were involved during writing time and were enthused to share their work. They felt proud of their finished pieces. My students understood the writing process. They owned their writing and were proud of their finished products.

In support of Vygotsky's learning theory, when my students worked on organizing their ideas in their Thinking Maps, they collaborated with their classmates and with me. They developed higher level thinking skills through collaboration and exchange of ideas about their writing topics. Through collaboration, they organized their thoughts, organized them on their Thinking Maps and proudly shared their ideas with their classmates and with me. They owned their ideas at this point. This made the transition of ideas from Thinking Maps to paper much

easier. Students were able to take the information on their maps and write their paragraphs easily. Their paragraphs were structured correctly and the content was excellent for most of my students. I did not get these results with the use to the Writing Blueprint for writing instruction.

The use of the Writing Blueprint from Houghton Mifflin has not helped increase my students' writing scores. Teaching writing using the Writing Blueprint is teaching in a "linear fashion". The lessons are scripted and are to be followed day to day. There is not much room for flexibility in instruction. Considering that every student has a different learning style, we are limiting learning possibilities for children when we base our teaching on a scripted plan. The Writing Blueprint does not provide opportunities for social interaction and collaborative learning. The lessons do not promote critical thinking. Students were not motivated about their writing when I taught using the Writing Blueprint. My students' writing scores reflected their lack of motivation.

In completing my critical analysis of writing pedagogy, I looked at my students' pre-assessments, practice drafts and their final assessment pieces. The

rubric used has a grading scale of a one through four. A score of four is advanced. A three is proficient. A score of a two or a one are not passing. From Group One (Instruction with Writing Blueprint only) and from Group Two (Instruction with Thinking Maps and Writing Blueprint), one student scored a three (proficient) on their pre-assessment. The rest scored lower than a three. Both Group One and Group Two demonstrated growth from the pre-assessment to the post-assessment. Group Two, however, showed more significant growth. Group Two was the group that received the Write From the Beginning and Thinking Maps writing instruction. The writing pieces were complete and well structured. These pieces contained a significant amount of details whereas the pieces written by the students who received instruction from the Writing Blueprint only were quite basic. Some of these basic pieces lacked details, and many did not have a good flow of ideas within their description. The students in Group One had difficulty understanding correct paragraph structure. Four out of the ten students in Group One scored a three (proficient) on their writing assessments. Out of the remaining six students in Group One, four scored a two and two scored a one. Nine out of the ten in Group Two scored a three (proficient) or higher in their

writing test. Seven students from Group Two scored a
three. Two scored a four. One student scored a two. (See
table Two)

Table 2. Number of Students Scoring Proficient or Higher
on Writing Assessments
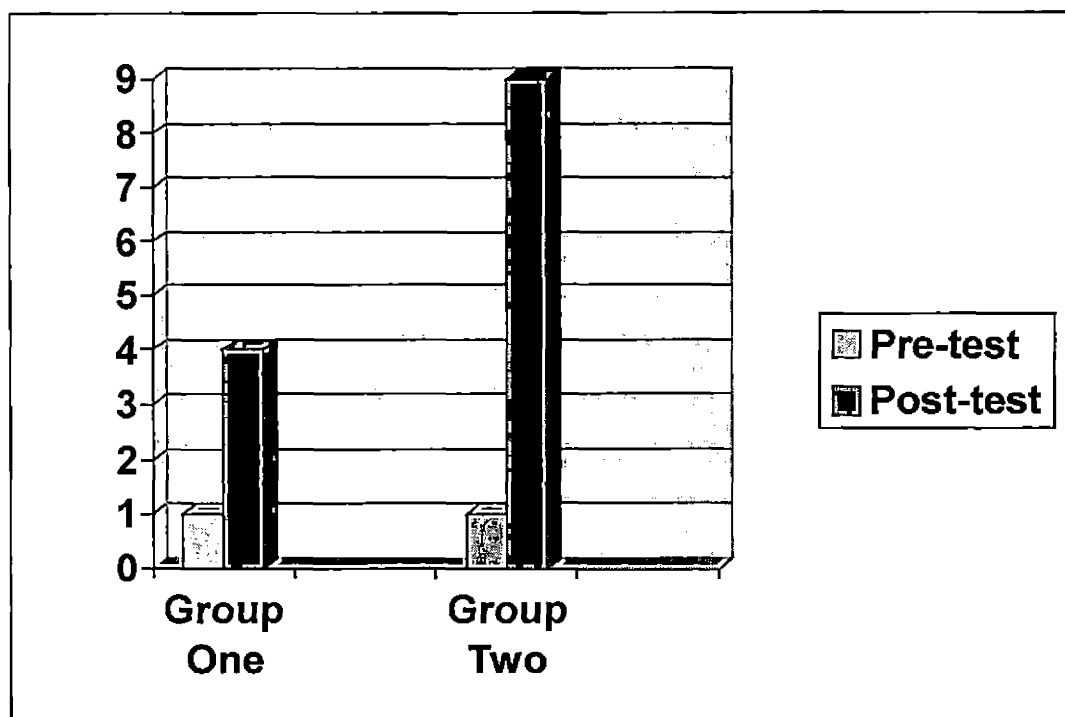
Recommendations

After conducting this in depth critical analysis and
comparison of writing pedagogy, I have reached the
conclusion that Thinking Maps are indeed effective tools
to use during the teaching of the writing process. They
have proven to be more effective than the current program

used (Houghton Mifflin Writing Blueprint) to teach writing to my second grade English Language Learners. Boyd Elementary School, then, would benefit tremendously from the adoption of Thinking Maps school-wide. It would be of great benefit to use Write From the Beginning and the Thinking Maps program to teach writing to our students. A possibility would be to continue the use of the Houghton Mifflin Writing Blueprint as a resource at teacher's discretion. It would not be beneficial to follow as scripted. We may use our professional judgment as teachers to use whatever we feel may be useful and valuable in the Writing Blueprint. If Write From the Beginning and Thinking Maps were to be adopted school-wide, our English Language Learners would produce better writing pieces across the genres. Thinking Maps serve as mediated tools to help reach our English Language Learner's needs in writing. The use of Thinking Maps would make it easier for us to teach our students to become successful writers.

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