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Abstract

This study examined the instructional approach of interactive writing with emergent kindergarten writers in a classroom where half of the students were identified as English language learners. The purpose of the study was to examine the teaching of concepts of print during interactive writing and the students' use of those concepts in journal writing in order to contribute to the limited body of literature on English language learners' literacy learning at a kindergarten level, as well as emergent writers who are considered Native speakers. Three questions guided the qualitative research and the methodology of the study, which made use of several methods of data collection. The guiding questions for the study examined the ways in which the teacher used interactive writing as a way to explicitly and strategically teach early writers important concepts about print. In addition, individual student journal writings were examined for ways that the students were, or were not, applying those concepts about print in their journal work and compared across the two groups. This study will further knowledge in the field of children's writing by presenting teachers and teacher educators with the potential implications for interactive writing as an early writing instructional approach that can be used with students who are English language learners as well as Native speakers.
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Chapter 1

Upon entering school, children are asked to attend to the conventions of written language during the earliest stages of literacy development. Learning about the organization of English, as a written language, is crucial and can present a challenge for many young learners, especially when the primary language of the home is that other than English. Among the largest group of learners with unique instructional needs in the United States are those identified as English Language Learners (Verplaetse & Migliacci, 2008). English language learners (ELLs) are considered to be students whose primary language is that other than English and who may have limited scope of speaking, reading, and/or writing in the English language (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

As they enter kindergarten, some ELLs may be beginning to learn English, while others have some knowledge of English but still have greater proficiency in their first language. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2004) issued a report about the increase of ELLs in America’s schools stating that in 1990 there were approximately 32 million people in the United States whose primary language was not English. By the year 2000, the number increased to 47 million. Additionally, according to a 2006 report from the Department of Education’s Office of English Language Acquisition, of the 5 million students classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) enrolled in American schools, more than 70% of those spoke Spanish as their primary language (Verplaetse & Migliacci, 2008). According to Verplaetse and Migliacci, even though the highest numbers of ELL students are still located in border or gateway states such as Texas, Arizona, Florida, California and New York, over the past three years 19 Midwest states have reported over a 50% increase in ELL enrollments. Given the
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dramatic increase of this student population, the field of ELL literacy is one of the most pressing issues facing educators today.

Research on educating ELLs is a growing field, however, most of the studies with elementary-aged students focus on reading (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders & Christian, 2006). In fact, in their synthesis of research related to ELLs over the last 20 years, Genesee et al. (2006) found that most of the research related to literacy instruction focused on reading comprehension, vocabulary, and word attack strategies and skills. The characteristics of effective early writing programs for ELLs have yet to be described in any detail.

In the few studies that examined writing instruction with English language learners, most were with students in the middle school grades and postsecondary years (Juzwik, Curcic, Wolbers, Moxley, Dimling & Shankland, 2006). In their review of research related to language and bilingual writing, Juzwik et al. (2006) reported that although there has been a steady increase of empirical research in this field, little of this work deals with bilingual writing at the elementary level. More specifically, there is a dearth of research that examines beginning writing instruction at the preschool and kindergarten level with English language learners.

Scholars of ELL literacy development suggest that in order to develop proficiency with written text, ELL students need to interact with teachers and peers in conversation (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005; Genesee et al., 2006; Helman, 2009; Padrón, Waxman & Rivera, 2002; Saunders & O’Brien, 2006). Additionally, these scholars call for explicit instruction. Especially beneficial for ELLs is the use of instructional conversations (Padrón et al., 2002; Tharp, 1997). Instructional conversations are opportunities for extended dialogue between teachers and students that help develop complex thinking skills through explicit teaching of a skill or strategy. Padrón et al. (2002) contend that such conversations can
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be an important way to cognitively support the students and could be especially beneficial for
Spanish speaking children because it is an interactive instructional approach tailored to the needs
of the students through explicit instruction. One instructional approach that uses explicit
instruction through an extended dialogue with students is Interactive Writing (McCarrier, Pinnell
& Fountas, 2000).

Interactive writing would be one way to support the cognitive growth of early writers
because the teacher uses conversations with the group, or individual students, to make the
cognitive processes involved in concepts about written language visible and explicit for the
students. Through interactive writing conversations, a teacher is able to help children explicitly
think about the structure of the text they are constructing. The dialogue between students and
teacher is a valuable way to involve speaking and listening for early writers as they begin to
work with written text and concepts related to print.

Concepts about print are fundamental to a child learning to write because children need
an understanding of the rules and organization of written language. Scholars of early literacy
(Clay, 1989; Goodman, 1981; Johns, 1980; Juel, 1988) acknowledge that understanding the
codes of written language (i.e., concepts about print) provide a foundation for children to
understand language is structured. Marie Clay (2000), an emergent literacy scholar, refers to
these concepts about print (i.e., CAP) as the “rules of the road” and contends that once children
understand the concepts about print, they will learn to read and write. Through experiences with
print, such as interactive writing, children recognize the conventions needed to put language into
printed form. Concepts about print that are fundamental to a child learning to write include
spacing, orientation, one-to-one correspondence, direction, capitalization and punctuation.
Interactive writing could be an effective way to make the fundamental concepts about print
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explicit by engaging students in instructional conversations that direct their attention to those concepts.

Two previous studies on interactive writing offer evidence that this instructional approach is an effective method for teaching young children the fundamental concepts about print with Native Speakers of English (Brotherton & Williams, 2002; Button, Johnson & Furgerson, 1996). Button, Johnson and Furgerson used interactive writing to teach CAP and early writing strategies to Furgerson’s kindergarten class over the course of a school year. Findings from the study indicate that the students had exhibited growth in all areas of the Observation Survey (Clay, 1993).

Likewise, the Brotherton and Williams study examined which concepts of print and writing strategies a first grade teacher could offer her students during small group interactive writing instruction. Findings from this study also support the use of interactive writing as way to teach the concepts about print that are essential to early writer’s growth.

Findings from both of these studies indicate that interactive writing has the potential to be an effective way to teach concepts about print with early writers; however, none of the studies examined interactive writing with ELL students. Therefore, I examined the teaching of concepts about print during interactive writing and the students’ use of those concepts in journal writing in order to contribute to the limited body of literature on English Language Learners’ writing development at the kindergarten level. The evidence base on early writing instruction with ELL students is sparse, and so the findings to date should be considered speculative. The aim of the present research was to add to the evidence base on instructional approaches that are effective with ELL students by examining the use of interactive writing to teach concepts about print to early writers. The following research questions guided the study:
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1. What concepts about print are taught during interactive writing lessons? How are these concepts taught?

2. What evidence is there regarding student knowledge of concepts about print on the pre/post test measure and in student journal writings?

3. What distinctions can be made between the use of concepts about print by the English language learners and Native speakers (i.e., NS)?

To address the questions of the study, I used a qualitative research design. Based on the questions, data collection through observation during interactive writing lessons was crucial to document the concepts about print that the teacher taught and the manner in which she taught them to her students. Additionally, I collected journal writing from each of the students to record which concepts about print they were using in their independent work. Lastly, the CAP pre and posttest measure was given to capture which concepts about print students understood but were not using in their journal writing. I used a qualitative method (Patton, 2002) to analyze the data.

My decision to conduct the study in this classroom was made solely because the teacher used interactive writing with her kindergarten class. Interactive writing is important for kindergarten students for a few reasons. First, the lesson builds on a shared experience. This is an important way to activate prior knowledge with students and make connections to the message. In every classroom students have an array of personal experiences; using a shared experience as the basis for a lesson is an important way to provide an opportunity for each student to make a personal connection to the lesson. Secondly, interactive writing involves careful scaffolding of a writing task. The teacher is able to break the lesson into parts as needed for her students. This is an important way to explicitly demonstrate aspects of writing, such as concepts about print to kindergarteners.
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Teaching the concepts about print was just one aspect of Richelle’s interactive writing lessons. I focused my study specifically on print concepts because they are essential structural concepts for kindergarten students to understand before they can attend to other elements of writing. I also examined how Richelle’s students, both ELLs and NS, used those concepts in their independent writing and if any differences surfaced regarding the knowledge, they demonstrated regarding CAP.

Overview of interactive writing

There are currently only a few empirical studies (Brotherton & Williams, 2002; Button, Johnson & Furgerson, 1996; Craig, 2006; Williams & Lundstrom, 2007) that examine interactive writing instruction. These studies, however, do not examine the ways in which interactive writing might support students who are ELLs.

Interactive writing (Pinnell & McCarrier, 1994) is similar to shared writing (McKenzie, 1985) in that the teacher and students collaboratively decide on a message and work through the writing process together. The teacher will generally solicit a sentence from students based on a reading or prior class experience that all members of the class have shared. The most notable difference between interactive writing and shared writing is that during interactive writing, the students literally “share the pen” (Pinnell & McCarrier, 1994, p. 159) as they assume the role of scribe. When a child shares the pen, the teacher emphasizes specific concepts about print and writing strategies. Deciding the exact point at which the students serve as scribe is a responsive teaching decision that offers a scaffold to the emerging literacy needs of the students (Brotherton & Williams, 2002; Button, Johnson & Fergerson, 1996; Pinnell, 2001). Students work with the teacher and make decisions regarding word choice, spelling strategies, concepts of space, and directionality. The teacher facilitates learning through demonstrations and prompting that are
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dependent on the developmental needs of the students and focus on a specific aspect of the writing (McCarlier, Pinnell & Fountas, 2000).

Interactive writing has the potential to offer young writers explicit and authentic contexts for learning about written language. Interactive writing may be an important strategic approach for students whose first language is not English. Previous work on interactive writing has not explored this possibility to date.

*Overview of English language learners*

English language learners entering kindergarten that are U.S. born can sometimes demonstrate oral language skills comparable to their peers, however, it generally requires between 4 to 7 years for ELLs to reach grade level in reading and writing (Bialystok, 2007). The National Assessment of Educational Progress (U.S. Department of Education, 2005) released findings stating that 72% of students identified as having limited English proficiency performed below the basic level on fourth grade assessment in reading. Furthermore, the gap between Native Speakers of English and English Language Learners continues to grow through secondary school. Scholars in the field of ELL, such as Helman (2009), have suggested that the most important way to address the gap is through explicit instruction about the features and organization of the English language. Additionally, the 2006 Executive Summary by the National Literacy Panel of Language Minority Children and Youth (August & Shanahan, 2006), recognizes conversations during interactive instructional activities as a critical component that must be used during literacy tasks with ELLs.

Second language acquisition is a theory of learning in which the learner is actively engaged in the joint construction of knowledge with another person while using the second language. According to the most recent work from the field, *Inclusive Pedagogy for English*
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*Language Learners: A Handbook of Research-Informed Practices* edited by Verplaetse and Migliacci (2008), there are essentially four components of second language acquisition that are crucial to the proficient development of a language: the natural ability to acquire language, comprehensible input, opportunity for output, and interactive-stimulating environment. Language acquisition is supported when there is a cognitive ability to acquire a language and when the input of the second language is understandable and meaningful (Krashen, 1985). Additionally, there needs to be opportunity for output, repeated use of the language, by providing time to engage with others in an interactive environment that encourages experimentation with the second language. Furthermore, Tharp’s (1997) work cites five principles that contribute to the academic achievement of ELLs as being learning through joint activity, purposive contextualized conversations, everyday application to the world, engagement, and instructional conversations to question and share knowledge. Interactive writing has the potential to support ELLs in each of these areas through the explicit demonstrations and discussions that engages the student with teachers and peers.

*Explicit instruction.* As stated earlier, scholars in the field of ELL literacy learning have identified instructional approaches that are interactive and explicit as those most beneficial with ELLs. Those scholars identify and define explicit instruction as having the following components; demonstrations and modeling, contextualized activities (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005), “think-aloud” opportunities (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders & Christian, 2006), and guided practice during instructional conversations (Helman, 2009).

Demonstrations during explicit instruction involve the teacher guiding the students through the construction of text by discussing and showing the students what fluent writers attend to and how they organize written language. During the demonstrations, the teacher
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provides examples that are contextualized. Contextualized examples are defined by ELL scholars as examples that students are able to relate to from a shared experience in the classroom (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005; Genesee et al., 2006; Helman, 2009). Additionally, by providing ‘think alouds’ students are able to hear what the teacher is thinking, the choices she is making, and what to think about during an activity. Lastly, the teacher provides opportunities for guided practice. Students apply what they have learned in individual work with the support of the teacher. Interactive writing provides a model of explicit instruction as called for by ELL literacy researchers by including those components.

Interpretive framework

The purpose of this study was to document the teaching, prompting and demonstrations made during interactive writing lessons in order to examine how the teacher utilizes cognitive strategies to teach the concepts about print. A cognitive view emphasizes explicit demonstrations with activities that guide children’s understanding of literacy to a higher level through practice, direct instruction and deliberate scaffolding. It is here that Vygotsky (1989) identified the “zone of proximal development”, a level where most learning occurs through the scaffold of a more capable other from actual to potential development. The interaction between a learner and a more capable other, such as a teacher, is crucial to cognitively guide and scaffold learners to more capable roles (Vygotsky, 1978, 1989). A cognitive framework is especially beneficial in understanding how the writing process is broken into parts by the teacher during interactive writing lessons. The teacher’s support and interaction with students during the construction of a text, helps the students notice details that may not have. The teacher’s deliberate scaffolding and demonstrations of how written language is structured provides an important way for
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kindergartener’s to connect ‘the known to the new’ (Rogoff, 1990, p. 65) and supports their continuous development of literacy related tasks.

The emergent literacy framework (Clay, 1991), which views cognitive abilities in speaking, listening, reading and writing as interrelated, further supports the study. Marie Clay (1991, 1993) was the first to use the term emergent literacy and identified several key concepts that children must have experience with during the first years of schooling. Early concepts about literacy that children encounter in preschool and kindergarten are Concepts abut Print (CAP). Concepts about print such as space, order, orientation, and direction are all essential to young writers. The child can discover through shared and explicit activities, such as interactive writing, how these concepts work in written language.

Interactive writing has the potential to offer explicit instruction for young writers to gain control of concepts about print through the careful scaffolding of shared experiences. Writing activities in which the teacher shares the task with early learners and assists them with the complex aspects of the task are essential during the early stages of literacy development.

“If she works alongside of a child letting him do all that he can but supporting the activity when he reaches some limit by sharing the task she is more likely to uncover the cutting edges of his learning.” (Clay, 1991, pp. 65-66)

Sharing the task is an important feature of interactive writing. Often times the guidance that children need to solve a problem requires that the expert break the task into more manageable parts, or sub goals, and use questions that guide a student. For example, an expert or skilled partner might structure a task around questions or statements that appropriately organize and guide the learner through verbal cues to previous experiences. The focus of the task is on the
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manageable aspects or parts and works toward an understanding of the process of a larger task. Structuring the activity in such a way guides learners to assume an increased role for the task over time and offers learners a scaffold until they can complete the task independently. The learner is active and supported by those who are more experienced. Interactive writing provides emergent writers with the support that they need to expand their understanding of early print concepts by breaking the task into manageable parts and guiding students from the known to the new.

Conclusion

Early learners can benefit from interactive and explicit models of instruction that demonstrate the concepts necessary to understand the conventions of written language. The goal for all early learners is to get beyond close attention to concepts about print and begin to focus on other aspects of writing. The following review of literature examines research related to children's early writing research with a focus on English language learners' literacy learning to provide an overview of the conclusions that have been speculated to date (Question 3). Additionally, the review analyzes previous literature for ways in which those researchers collected data to assess student knowledge (Question 2). Lastly, a review of research on interactive writing provides evidence as to what is known about how this instructional approach has been used in the classroom (Question 1).
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Chapter 2

Literature Review

Existing research studies provide a reference as to what has been investigated as it pertains to each of the present research questions. The first section in this chapter has two subsections. The first subsection provides an examination of research related to children's early writing in general. This section provides a review of the various questions, designs and participants of the studies. The second subsection reviews research related to literacy learning of students identified as English language learners. Findings and conclusions from the studies reviewed in this first section provide a reference for the implications of Question 3 of my study.

The second section of the chapter provides a comprehensive review of how researchers collected data to assess student knowledge. This section is directly related to Question 2 of my study and provides information on the variety of data researchers have collected.

The third section of the chapter summarizes studies related specifically to interactive writing instruction and relates to Question 1 of the present study. The studies reviewed in the third section discuss each study because of the scarcity of research on this instructional approach to early writing.

Review of research for children's early writing

The following review of research was selected based on investigations that consider the importance and impact of scaffolding during literacy activities in the primary grades and is non-specific as to student's language identification. The studies reviewed in this section discuss the questions, research design, and participant selection of the research. In addition, the findings from the studies are also summarized.
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Questions

Two of the studies posed questions which focused on how scaffolding provides support for how students developed a better understanding of writing (Bodrova & Leong, 1998; Cress, 1998) and what knowledge students demonstrated (Button, Johnson & Fergerson, 1996) as evident in their individual writing journals. During such lessons, the teacher scaffolds the student through explicit modeling and conversation during a task. Ideally, the scaffolding is eventually removed, thus allowing the student to perform the task independent of the teacher.

Other researchers (Daiute & Dalton, 1993; Nixon & Topping, 2001; Sutherland & Topping, 1999; Yarrow & Topping, 2001) considered the impact of peer collaboration between those of varying ability in the classroom to examine how this scaffold supports novice writers. Allowing peers to work together was another way researchers investigated writing. Too often in schools, writing is an activity of isolation. Conversations between the students served as an instructional strategy and opened up opportunity for examination into how such relationships between peers might support writing endeavors.

Research questions involving the understanding of children’s knowledge of what writing tasks require, perceptions of themselves and others as writers, and students’ metacognitive awareness of their own writing abilities were also crucial to research in the field of children’s writing (Kos & Maslowski, 2001; Ruttle, 2004). In these studies, researchers posed questions that allow students to explain their perceptions of what was important in writing. Both of these studies found that peer conversation and interaction during writing is important for children to work through the surface features of writing and into the higher order process of organization, planning, and generation of writing.
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Design

Descriptive. Descriptive research designs are used often by educational researchers to provide an in depth descriptive account of the teaching and learning in the classroom setting from the participants' point of view (Patton, 2002). For example, several of the studies used this design to examine specific writing instructional practices (Brotherton & Williams, 2002; Button et. al., 1996; Craig, 2006; Williams & Lundstrom, 2007; Cress, 1998), and investigate student perceptions of themselves and others as writers (Kos & Maslowski, 2001; Ruttle, 2004). A few of the descriptive studies focused on watching the students' actions and taking notes on their conversations, which were collected as data (Button et. al., 1996; Cress, 1998). These studies looked for explanations into what students do during writing activities and how they make sense of instruction during these times.

Comparative. Comparative research designs were also found in the research reviewed. These studies compared the similarities and/or the differences of more than one group. Comparative studies are important to educational research because they allow investigations into the process of development or use of an intervention to compare groups before and after. These kinds of research designs are important for two reasons. First, comparative studies of before and after lend support for evaluations of instructional and curriculum changes by allowing researchers to assess students' knowledge after an intervention (Daiute & Dalton, 1993). Developmental comparative studies allow researchers to track the learning process of one or multiple groups over a period of time (Craig, 2006; Nixon & Topping, 2001; Sutherland & Topping, 1999; Yarrow & Topping, 2001).

Researchers made use of comparative design to compare how peers are grouped and work together (Daiute & Dalton, 1993; Nixon & Topping, 2001; Sutherland & Topping, 1999;
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Yarrow & Topping, 2001). The Daiute and Dalton study as well as the Sutherland and Topping study compared the effectiveness of collaboration between the same ability level of students and those with ability differences.

Participants and settings

Participants needed for research on emergent writers’ literacy skills are children in the early primary grades. Thus, the researchers most often chose a class ranging from kindergarten to second grade. For example, Bodrova & Leong (1998) chose a kindergarten class for their study. The sample is critical to answering questions about emergent literacy practices. Other research made participant choice less clear. Often the participants were chosen on the likelihood that the students could provide information necessary to make general claims pertaining to a specific group (Button et al., 1996; Craig, 2006; Kos & Maslowski, 2001; Nixon & Topping, 2001). No other group of participants could provide the information regarding emergent literacy practices that groups of kindergarten through grade 2 are able to provide about emergent literacy teaching and learning.

Providing a clear description of the setting and characteristics of participants is important to make claims to a larger population (Bodrova & Leong, 1998; Button et al., 1996; Craig, 2006; Dyson, 2002; Kos & Maslowski, 2001). Characteristics of the sample can constrain research generalizability. The researchers were quick to point out that the location and socio economic characteristics were a limitation that constrained the generalizability of their research, and suggested further investigation into other populations as a way to open up studies to a larger population.

Achievement levels of students were a key factor in sampling for the studies involving peer collaboration between cross ability (Sutherland & Topping, 1999). In this study, students’
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achievement level was taken into consideration when establishing peer groupings. Comparison of the two groups was important to determine peer collaborative ability with lesser ability students and how students use experiences from personal experiences in writing tasks.

Findings and considerations

The body of research reviewed has opened up opportunities for understanding children’s writing in a number of ways. First, by investigating peer collaboration, findings have surfaced that challenge us to continue to search for the ways in which children use conversations with teachers and peers to question their ideas, challenge one another’s reasoning and create new conceptual frames by active engagement and reflection. The zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) is continuously redefined as learners engage in tasks and conversations with more experienced others. Peer collaboration research has strong pedagogical and learning implications into the manner by which lessons are structured and the teacher facilitates crucial demonstrations and questions for investigation (Daiute & Dalton, 1993; Nixon & Topping, 2001; Sutherland & Topping, 1999; Yarrow & Topping, 2001).

Furthermore, understanding students’ perceptions and metacognitive awareness about writing is another factor central to teaching and learning. The research has given us new ways of understanding how students’ perceptions and teachers’ perceptions of a writing task differ. Misconceptions related to writing can then be addressed through further instruction as a group or individually. The research methods used have also opened up opportunities or an argument for the importance of collaboration and dialogue during writing events in the classroom with all learners, and could be especially beneficial for students who are English language learners.
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*English language learners*

The following review of literature examines literacy instruction with English language learners. Recently, Juzwik et al. (2006) examined the trends in writing research from 1999-2004. According to that review, research on bilingual and multilingual writing is the second most active area of research in recent years. In fact, out of 1,502 research studies examined, 309 of those where related to writing by language minorities. Despite this increase on how to support ELL in their literacy work, only a small portion is being conducted at the P-12 level, with most of the work in the field occurring during post secondary study (e.g., Leki, 1992; Silva & Matsuda, 2001). It is surprising that given the increase in population of this group of learners and the challenges with becoming literate in two languages that there is little writing research on the population of school-aged children in the United States.

*Questions*

Researchers posed a variety of questions to examine the intricacies involved in acquiring second language writing and the work involved in the schools of America. Two of the studies (Lanauze & Snow, 1998; McCarthy, Garcia, Lopez-Velázquez, Lin & Guo, 2004; McCarthy & Garcia, 2005) asked questions that compared instructional practices for ELL students in order to evaluate what events support the literacy development of learners who are bilingual. The Lanauze & Snow (1998) work investigated the approach that bilingual students took to writing tasks and the outcome of the writing of students that were in a bilingual program. McCarthy et al. (2004) examined three instructional approaches (i.e., primarily English classroom, English as a second language classroom, and a Native language classroom) to see which was most effective in the literacy development of ELL students. Additionally, the McCarthy & Garcia (2005) study investigated various home and school factors that contributed to a small sampling of bilingual
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students' positive or negative attitudes regarding writing tasks. Studies such as these focus on the ways in which a student approaches literacy tasks by using their first language.

Questions also investigated the construction of conversations and reading and writing that was going on in the classroom during literacy events (Delgado-Gaitan, 1989; Tabor, 1997; Townsend & Fu, 1998 and Willett, 1996). Researchers in these studies focused on the teacher-student and student-student activities related to listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Researchers also posed questions regarding ELL students' perceptions of writing tasks and themselves as writers when compared to their peers (Kuball & Peck, 1997). The work of Kuball and Peck posed questions that investigated how whole language might influence the perceptions, compositional skills, and grapho phonemic development of early school aged ELL students.

Research designs

Comparative. The majority of research reviewed is comparative studies (Delgado-Gaitan, 1989; Lanauze & Snow, 1989; McCarthy et. al., 2004; McCarthy & Garcia, 2005; Willett, 1996). These studies compared the similarities and/or the differences of more than one group of students. For example, McCarthy et al. (2004) conducted a four-month observational study that examined nine different classrooms and the varying opportunities for writing for ELL in three instructional contexts: primarily English, English as a Second Language class (ESL), and native language classes. Research in this design allows insights into how students that are exposed to a variety of instructional practices might approach literacy tasks. McCarthy & Garcia (2005) also conducted a qualitative case study spanning 1 ½ years that compared the literacy growth and patterns of Spanish-speaking and Mandarin speaking children.
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Another way that researchers used comparative research designs was to compare across one group, based on the reading ability of the students. Delgado-Gaitan (1989) used this design to compare teacher interactions and expectations of students in the same classroom who were considered ELLs or Native speakers of high and low ability readers.

Another form of comparative research with bilingual students examines the differences in language and literacy proficiencies in both languages. Lanauze & Snow (1989) compared students’ ability to write in second language based on their first language proficiencies. The students received instruction in both Spanish and English.

Descriptive. Descriptive research designs (Kuball & Peck, 1997; Tabors, 1997; Townsend & Fu, 1998) were also used. During these studies, researchers have described the conversations that occurred between second language learners and other members of the class. Kuball & Peck investigated conversations and play in a whole language kindergarten classroom, while Tabors investigated the interactions in a preschool. This kind of research is important to understand how different literacy instructional opportunities and approaches affect children’s earliest school experience. The authors collected a variety of data that was geared toward observation and description.

Setting and participants

When considering the research in the field of ELL teaching and learning it is important to analyze the populations and sampling that the research represents. For example, the work by McCarthy et al. (2004) and McCarthy and Garcia (2005) are representative of the Midwest population. Additionally, both studies were conducted with students in the 4th and 5th grades. Although they are separate studies, and the 2005 study actually spanned 1 ½ years, the population and general age sampling of students are the same. This age group is also represented
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in the study by Lanauze & Snow (1989). While the age of the students is the same, the
geographic location offers us additional insights because the Lanauze & Snow study was
conducted in Connecticut in a primarily Puerto Rican working class community.

A few of the studies (Delgado-Gaitan, 1989; Kuball & Peck, 1997; Townsend & Fu,
1998; Willett, 1996) took place with students in the early elementary grades. The study by
Delgado-Gaitan (1989) took place in California in a second grade classroom that consisted of
50% ELL students. Kuball and Peck’s work took place in a kindergarten class. Every member of
the class was recruited; however, there were focal students chosen as representative members of
the group that varied in ethnicity and gender. The Townsend and Fu research is included despite
the fact that it was conducted with a boy of Chinese ethnicity, rather than a student from a
Spanish speaking community. I felt that this year long, in depth study of a 2nd grade boy was
important to include in the review because it has strong implications for the use of native
languages to facilitate writing development of second language learners.

Findings and considerations

The findings from these studies offer evidence into what kinds of instruction and that
ELL might benefit from most. Findings from the Delgado-Gaitan (1989) study found that ELL
students that were grouped into different reading groups, based on ability, did not receive the
same instruction, opportunities for applying personal knowledge, nor an opportunity to take part
in thinking above a literal level. ELL students placed in lower reading groups received more
instruction in rote memorization and skills based tasks, while higher groups were permitted a
more interpretive lens while writing responses and incorporating their personal experiences. Both
groups had little opportunity for discussion with the teacher about the text.
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Findings from several of the studies indicate a need for students to be engaged in more authentic writing experiences to enhance literacy development. These writing experiences should allow students to utilize their own linguistic resources and personal experiences during school based writing tasks (Kuball & Peck, 1997; McCarthy et. al., 2004; TaborS, 1997; Townsend & Fu, 1998; Willett, 1996). The findings support that ELL students are not linguistically deficit when given the opportunities for meaningful experiences with print that involves teachers who view literacy as a functional tool in both languages (Delgado- Gaitan, 1989).

Additional findings from the McCarthy et. al., (2004) study provides evidence of the students’ lack of engagement while writing expository text. Expository writing did not draw on students’ experiences. Students had a difficult time connecting to a purpose for the writing piece because they did not clearly understand their audience or reason for the writing. This study also found that limiting students’ opportunities to share their work and get feedback from peers constrained the production and desire to produce sustained writing pieces. Not only does the absence of peer feedback deprive the students of an authentic audience, but the students also missed opportunities to be exposed to the writing of others and the conversations that entails. Journal writing that was open-ended appeared to have the greatest appeal to students and make connections to their own personal experiences.

Findings from a couple of the studies (McCarthy et al., 2004 ; McCarthy & Garcia, 2005) also indicate students’ desires and need to have the opportunity to write in their native language. This can be a way that students brainstorm and rough draft, which is later written in English, if the child is capable, as in the case of the 4th and 5th graders from this study. However, very young children who have not mastered English written language should be permitted and encouraged to use their first language and oral language capabilities to communicate. Limited opportunities to
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write in the students’ native language, sends a message that the home language and experiences are not valued in school because literacy serves as a functional tool in both languages (Delgado-Gaitan, 1984; Townsend & Fu, 1998; Willett, 1996).

McCarthy & Garcia (2005) found that students did not have many opportunities for sharing or writing for an audience other than the teacher. Furthermore, even though ELL students were allowed to use first language in journal writing, the teacher set an expectation for an increase in English writing as the year progressed. To compound matters in this study, most of the ELL students’ writing instruction occurred in ESL classrooms, not in the English-speaking classroom or in collaboration with the ESL teacher. When the ELL students did join the English-speaking classroom for writing, their responses were confined to responding to prompts instead of writing extended text.

In the study by Lanauze & Snow (1989), findings confirm the work of Edelsky (1986, as cited in Lanauze & Snow, 1998) that students use what they know from their first language to choose strategies when writing in a second language. Additionally, the Lanauze & Snow study found that most of the writing opportunities in bilingual classes were copying spelling words, responding to short prompts or filling in workbooks.

Assessing student knowledge

The following sections provide a comprehensive review of how the aforementioned researchers collected data to answer their research questions. Reviewing the data collection of previous research provides a framework as to what data would best answer and support the investigation of Question 2. The research studies from the first section have been synthesized in this section.
Observations. Observations are an important way for researchers to make descriptions of student actions, interactions and activity in the learning environment. Each of the studies in the preceding review used structured observations as a form of data (Bodrova & Leong, 1998; Button et al., 1996; Cress, 1998; Daiute & Dalton, 1993; Delgado-Gaitan, 1989; Kos & Maslowski, 2001; Kuball & Peck, 1997; Lanauze & Snow, 1989; McCarthy et al., 2004; McCarthy & Garcia, 2005; Nixon & Topping, 2001; Sutherland & Topping, 1999; Tabors, 1997; Townsend & Fu, 1998; Yarrow & Topping, 2001; Willett, 1996). One of the studies also used taped audio and video for additional observational data (Delgado-Gaitan, 1989). Structured observations provided focus during data collection. Studies that utilized this method approach the setting to be observed with an established idea of the phenomena they wish to observe. For example, in the study conducted by Daiute & Dalton (1993), the research team specifically observed peers during writing tasks. Their structured observations focused on the conversations among peers during writing activities.

Two studies used unstructured observations (Craig, 2006 and Ruttle, 2004). Unstructured observations are used when researchers collect data using a general frame of reference, but one that is not defined at the onset of the study.

Artifacts. Artifacts are an important data collection tool to offer evidence of developmental progress over time, as well as provide examples of before and after an instructional intervention of some of the studies. Writing samples were used as artifacts to document change over time in students’ writing development, as well as provide instructional information for teachers to plan literacy curriculum. (Bodrova & Leong, 1998; Button et al., 1996; Cress, 1998; Kuball & Peck, 1997; McCarthy et al., 2004; McCarthy & Garcia, 2005; Townsend & Fu, 1998, Willett, 1996). For example, Button, Johnson and Furgerson (1996) used
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the information gleaned from students’ journal writings to drive instruction. Assessment of the
student journals was conducted by the researchers and teachers, with special attention given to
evidence in the independent writings that directly related to the scaffolded interactive writing
lessons. These results were then used as evidence for implications for teaching subsequent
interactive writing lessons.

Bodrova and Leong’s study compared student writing unassisted with that of student
writing during scaffolded writing instruction, while Button et al. and Cress’ study examined
student artifacts to study writing development over time. Examination of artifacts, such as
student journal writings, can offer researchers evidence of growth related to writing.

McCarthy & Garcia (2005) collected native language writing samples from the students
as well as English writing samples. In the study by Lanauze & Snow (1989) student writing
samples were collected as students were given lined paper with a picture and asked to write a
description of the picture. Half of the students also completed the writing in Spanish first.

The three research studies using the Paired Writing Model also made use of student work
as data (Nixon & Topping, 2001; Sutherland & Topping, 1999; Yarrow & Topping, 2001) to
structure peer interaction. The model used in these studies was in the form of an organizer to aid
students in their development of sustained writing pieces. Researchers examined the student
writings before and after using the writing model to analyze the value of the tool for creating
elaborate writing pieces.

Artifacts such as standardized assessments are also used to assess student knowledge.
Two of the studies (Button et al., 1996 and Brotherton & Williams, 2002) used the Observation
Survey (Clay, 1993) as a measure to assess student knowledge of early literacy related tasks such
as; concepts about print, identification of letters and words, recording sounds and reading.
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Additionally, artifacts such as district assessment data (Stanford Achievement Test and district assessment for oral English fluency and written English fluency), was used in the McCarthy & Garcia (2005) study. This data enabled the researcher to use a standard measure to compare students’ progress over time.

*Interviews.* Interviewing offered researchers the perspective of the participant. Student responses to interview questions served as valuable tools for researchers to make sense of individual decisions while writing. While the present study did not utilize interviewing students as data, it is discussed in Chapter 5 as a possible limitation of the study.

In these studies, interviewing was a way to get participants to guide researchers through their internal cognitive processes, to explain their choices during writing. Students were interviewed in most of the studies (Button et al., 1996; Delgado-Gaitan, 1989; Jacobs, 2004; Kos & Maslowski, 2001; Kuball & Peck, 1997; Lanauze & Snow, 1989; McCarthy et. al., 2004; McCarthy & Garcia 2005; Nixon & Topping, 2001; Ruttle, 2004; Townsend & Fu, 1998). The Delgado-Gaitan and McCarthy studies interviewed the teacher about specific perceptions of student abilities and instructional decisions based upon those perceptions. The researchers collected two semi-structured interviews asking the teachers about goals for writing strategies in the classroom.

Kos and Maslowski (2001) used interviewing to determine what students thought and felt about writing. They asked second grade students to describe ‘good’ writing. Some of the questions they asked were explicit, while others were open ended. The work by Ruttle (2004) and Jacobs (2004) are examples of data collection in which students were asked to describe, retrospectively, what they thought about during writing. These interviews were recorded and
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later transcribed. Interviewing students about their thoughts, perceptions and ideas about writing tasks gave researchers a window into the mind of the learner.

Interviewing is not just restricted to the students. Interviewing the teacher as a research participant was another means of data collection for several studies (Button et. al., 1996; Nixon & Topping, 2001). For example, in the study by Nixon & Topping (2001), interviewing the teacher offered valuable insights into the ability level and performance of students in the research sample. Button, Johnson & Furgerson (1996) collected the bulk of their data through observations and interviews with students and teachers concerning writing choices.

In the 2005 study by McCarthy & Garcia, parent interviews focused on ways that literacy is used at home and in the community, literacy connections to school through activities, and family background with literacy. Parent interviews (Delgado-Gaitan, 1989) also collected data concerning parents’ beliefs about literacy, especially the importance of learning English and preserving their own language in the home.

*Interactive writing instruction*

This section reviews the entire existing body of empirical research on interactive writing. There are currently four empirical studies on interactive writing (Brotherton & Williams, 2002; Button, Johnson & Furgerson, 1996; Craig, 2006; Williams & Lundstrom, 2007). Findings from these studies indicate that interactive writing has the potential to offer a student a wide variety of fundamental literacy tools such as concepts of print, writing conventions, and spelling and writing strategies in the context of composing a meaningful text.

Button, Johnson and Furgerson (1996) examined student work with Furgerson’s kindergarten class over the course of a school year. Using the *Observation Survey* (Clay, 1993) as a pre and posttest measure, the teacher-researcher team documented how Furgerson used
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interactive writing to scaffold students' reading and writing processes. Using the Observation Survey (Clay, 1993), as a pre and posttest measure, students exhibited growth in all six areas of the survey, which include “Letter Identification,” “Word Test,” “Concepts about Print”, “Writing Vocabulary,” “Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words”, and “Text Reading.”

In a more recent study conducted by Brotherton & Williams (2002), the teacher-researcher team examined, through video documentation, exactly which concepts of print and writing strategies a first grade Title I teacher, Brotherton, offered her students during small group interactive writing instruction. Findings from this study indicate that interactive writing is a way to offer meaningful and authentic opportunities for teaching the concepts and strategies that support early writing development.

Craig (2006) used a comparative design to evaluate interactive writing as an instructional intervention. The kindergarten students in the study received one of two different treatments: “interactive writing-plus” or “metalinguistic games-plus”. The study examined the instruction over 16 weeks, with each group receiving ‘treatment’ four times a week for 20 minutes. Pre and posttest results suggest that children in the interactive writing-plus group had scores that exceeded the metalinguistic games-plus group in word identification, reading comprehension and vocabulary development. Although both groups had improved scores in phonological and alphabetic awareness, the gains by the interactive writing-plus group support this contextualized instructional approach to that of sequenced skills instruction.

Williams & Lundstrom (2007) investigated how word study instruction and interactive writing instruction might support young writers’ use of spelling strategies from one context to another. Results from the study were that Lundstrom taught 10 explicit strategies for spelling during word study and prompted the use of those strategies during interactive writing. The
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results suggest that a combination of the two instructional approaches examined could offer students, especially those who struggle with literacy concepts, an opportunity to apply strategies across instructional contexts.

These studies indicate that interactive writing has the potential to be a powerful approach for students to learn a multitude of strategies and concepts related to writing, however, none of these studies explores the writing of English language learners in any capacity, or the specific teaching of concepts about print.

Conclusion

If the reviewed literature suggest anything about early writing instruction, it is that we must continue to find risk free ways for students to be involved with others in writing activities that model how to construct a written text. Interactive writing is one approach to early writing that uses explicit instruction during group interactions to model effective writing concepts.

Given the findings of the research reviewed in this chapter on children’s early writing and ELL’s literacy learning, interactive writing could be one way to support a diverse group of learners’ needs during early writing instruction. The present study will contribute to the existing literature on children’s writing research with ELLs by providing an in depth examination of the instructional approach of interactive writing and the written artifacts produced during journal writing to examine what, if any, distinctions can be concluded.
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Chapter 3

Methodology

This section provides information on how I systematically collected and analyzed the data of the project. In the absence of existing literature on interactive writing instruction and ELL children's writing development, a four month qualitative study in a kindergarten classroom provided insights into how young writers, those identified as English Language Learners (ELLs) as well as Native speakers (NS), can be supported. Three questions guided the study:

1. What concepts about print are taught during interactive writing lessons? How are those concepts taught?

2. What evidence is there regarding student knowledge of concepts about print on the pre/post test measure and in student journal writings?

3. What distinctions can be made between the use of concepts about print by the ELLs and the Native speakers (i.e., NS)?

Setting and participants

The setting for the study was purposeful (Patton, 2002). I used several criteria to select the setting and participants for the study and they dictated the field site selection. The first criterion for a site was that the teacher would have interactive writing established as the primary form of writing instruction in the classroom, and that she was teaching the lessons as outlined by McCarrier et al. (2000). The text provided both the researcher and classroom teacher with a common frame of reference regarding the instructional approach of interactive writing.

Richelle's classroom fit both criteria. She had five years of teaching experience with three of those being at the kindergarten level. Interactive writing was her core writing instructional practice each year in the kindergarten classroom. During this particular study, Richelle's
kindergarten classroom consisted of 24 students, 12 ELL and 12 NS. A classroom with such a high number of ELL students could be rich with information about how the teacher used interactive writing to teach the concepts about print to a group of diverse writers, as well as provide evidence of any distinctions that ELLs and NS might have related to their emerging knowledge and use of early print codes, such as the concepts about print.

The research site was an elementary school in a small, independent school district in a suburb just outside of a large Midwestern city. The school serves approximately 300 students from kindergarten through grade 5, and approximately 75% of the students enrolled qualified for free and/or reduced price lunch. The study took place in one of the full-day kindergarten classrooms of this school. The district had three elementary schools. However, all of the ELL students in the district were enrolled in this school. The district’s reasoning for the placement of ELL students at one school was attributed to limited funding for instructional specialists that supported English Language Learners in such a small district. Officials within the district hoped that by grouping students in this way, the additional instructional services and reduced travel time of the specialists from one building to another would benefit both teachers and students.

Identification of ELL students. The parents of incoming kindergarten students were required to complete enrollment forms to register their child in school. The district used the “Household Enrollment Form” to document the number of children in any one household enrolled in the school system. Additionally, the school district chose to include four questions from the Home Language Survey (TransACT Communications, 2008) on this enrollment form, required by the state department of education. The questions included on the initial enrollment form were:
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What is your country of origin?

What is the language most frequently spoken at home?

What is the first language your child spoke?

What is the primary language spoken to your child?

If families indicated a language other than English in response to any of these questions, then the school administered the full *Home Language Survey*. The full survey documented the student’s birthplace, previous schools attended in the United States, the parents’ preference for language of communication with the school, and the parents’ description of what languages the child understood. If the parent indicated a language other than English, the district identified the child as an English language learner.

It is important to note that although the term *emergent bilingual* has surfaced in recent literature to identify students who come to school speaking languages other than English (Genishi & Dyson, 2009); the term is not an accurate description of the students in this study. Emergent bilingual refers to students who are learning in dual language classrooms, wherein the teacher instructs and the students read and write in a biliterate environment. That was not the case in Richelle’s classroom. English was the only language of instruction and communication. Although the students may have used a Spanish word in conversation during interactive writing lessons, it was not the primary language of the classroom during instructional or social conversations.

*Ethical considerations*

*Consent.* The parent consent forms were translated into Spanish to ensure full disclosure of information. I had consent letters prepared in English as well as Spanish to send to each child’s home. The classroom teacher distributed and collected the consent forms. As needed, I
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enlisted the help of a bilingual faculty member, who worked as an aide at the school, or Spanish translator services (i.e. Spanish Boosters), to address questions or concerns in the family’s first language. Parents signed the consent form if they allowed their child to participate in the research project. There were two students in the class, one ELL and one NS that did not have consent to be in the study. Those two students were included in the instruction but not in data collection.

Data collection

I began collecting data the first of February and ended on May 21st. Data analysis was on-going throughout the entire duration of the data collection period.

Pre and posttests. I chose the books Follow Me, Moon, from Clay’s (2000) Observation Survey, to use during the pretest in February and the book No Shoes for the posttest in May. The Observation Survey is an informal assessment that provides information on what children know, understand, and notice about written language. During the test, each individual student identified, located, and/or explained various items related to concepts about print in the book. In all, the “Concepts about Print” (CAP) task contains 24 items. I have listed some sample items below (Clay, 2002, pp. 42-43):

- Show me where to start (directional)
- Point to it while I read (word by word pointing)
- What is this for? (punctuation)
- Find a letter like this (capital and lower case letters)

Informal teacher interview. I interviewed the classroom teacher at the beginning of the study, informally, regarding her pedagogical beliefs related to children’s literacy learning. The interview provided additional information that addressed Question 1, and examined why the
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teacher used interactive writing, the limitations of interactive writing, and how interactive writing lessons changed over the course of the school year. The interview also provided information regarding how interactive writing had evolved prior to February and provided background information on the introduction of this instructional practice early in the school year. Additional questions also included how Richelle organized instruction in her classroom. For example, questions regarding how writing instruction was initiated at the beginning of the school year (i.e., morning messages, journal writing) and how she planned her daily instructional time each day provided information on what had occurred prior to the study.

Observations. Following the pre test, I observed the teacher’s interactive writing instruction twice a week. I took field notes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982) during observations to document the concepts about print Richelle taught and how she taught them. I also documented the materials she used to draw the students’ attention to a concept about print (e.g., books, environmental print).

Videotaping. I videotaped every interactive writing lesson; however, only the videotapes for February 10 and May 7 were included in the data analysis. The data from these two videotapes allowed me to provide a thicker description of Richelle’s instruction than was possible through field notes alone. The video documented some of the instructional tools, techniques, and strategies Richelle used to teach various concepts about print that were not captured by handwritten field notes.

Student writing samples. I collected student journal writing samples to provide evidence of which concepts about print the students were using in their journal work (Questions 2 and 3). Journal writing occurred immediately following the interactive writing lesson, and I photocopied
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each student’s writing on the days that I observed interactive writing. I stamped the corresponding date on the front of each writing piece.

Data analysis

Analysis occurred weekly from the initial field notes and spanned the entire data collection period. A discussion of the analysis procedures for the data collected are in the sections that follow.

Pre and posttests. I analyzed the students’ scores on the Concepts about Print task from the Observation Survey (Clay, 2000) following the pre and posttest. I calculated the score of the CAP by adding the number of items answered correctly by the child. I also took additional observational notes during administration of the pretest. For example, when asked the meaning of a question mark (Item #15) and a child responded, “It means you don’t know,” I noted those comments accordingly on the score sheet. This was important because it provided evidence of student knowledge related to that concept about print. That is, the child had knowledge of the meaning of the question mark even if the child could not recall / did not know the name of that specific punctuation mark. I compared the pretest and posttest scores as one form of evidence of student learning over time.

Observations. I used a qualitative approach to data analysis. The data from field notes of instruction were analyzed using analytic induction (Patton, 2002). Analytic induction allows a researcher to begin deductively by using existing research as a frame for knowledge of a question, but then further examines a phenomena to determine if the former work is supported, or not, and in what ways. This form of analysis allows new data to emerge during continued study of a specific phenomenon.
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"Analytic induction offers a specific form of inductive analysis
that begins deductively, by formulating propositions or hypotheses
[based on previous work], and then examines a particular case in
depth to determine if the facts of the case support the hypothesis.

(Patton, 2002, pp. 94-95)

My proposition was that interactive writing could be a way to support a group of
kindergarten students’, both English language learners and Native speakers, understanding of
concepts about print. Previous research on interactive writing supports the proposition that
interactive writing is one instructional approach that lends itself to teaching those concepts.
Thus, I began analysis with a frame of reference for the concepts that a teacher might teach
during interactive writing lessons. Examining the demonstrated knowledge of English language
learners and Native Speakers journal writings provided a particular case, or group of learners, for
an in depth analysis to determine if, in fact, there are distinctions between how diverse groups of
learners demonstrate their knowledge related to concepts about print when being part of the same
writing instructional approach. This form of analysis allowed for new data related to existing
research on interactive writing to emerge. The following paragraphs outline, exactly, how I used
existing literature as a reference and analyzed the data in a way that allowed new categories to
surface from my field notes, video and student journal writings.

Using the frame of analytic induction to support my work, I borrowed category codes
related to concepts about print from the study by Brotherton & Williams (2002). I also used the
descriptors from the Clay (2000) Concepts about Print task to add additional categories not
accounted for in the Brotherton & Williams study. The underlined categories in the coding data
tree below correspond to the CAP measure from the Observation Survey (Clay, 2000). I used

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these as starting point for coding the field notes from interactive writing instruction as it pertains to teaching the concepts about print. I added codes under each relevant category that reflected a concept about print from the interactive writing lessons. Most of the codes are reflective of the CAP measure; however, several codes are specific to Richelle’s instruction. These “in vivo” codes (Strauss, 1987, p. 33), a specific term or phrase used by the teacher, and not necessarily measured or referred to in the CAP assessment, are marked with an asterisk. For example, under the category, “Capitalization,” there are two codes marked as such, “When to use a lowercase letters” and “Emphasis of word.” Although the CAP does measure student identification of a capital letter, it does not measure how to mark the beginning of a sentence or show emotion with capitalized letters. Coding in this way was important because Richelle prompted the students multiple times during interactive writing instruction to mark the beginning of a sentence or a name with a capital letter, and how to show emotion or strong emphasis using capitalization.

**Concept of word**
- Space between words
- *Space on a line
- Print vs. picture

**Directionality**
- Where do I start?
- Left to right
- Return sweep (line/list)
- *Placement (list/letter format/chart)

**Writing Convention**

**Capitalization**
- Beginning of sentence
- *When to use lowercase letters
- Name of person/holiday
- *Emphasis of word

**Punctuation**
- Period-End of sentence; abbreviations
- Comma- slow down
- Exclamation point- really excited
- Question mark- asking something
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Using these codes, I conducted a phrase-by-phrase analysis of the data from my field notes. I identified and coded each concept about print that Richelle taught during each lesson (Appendix A). Borrowing coding protocol from constant comparative methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), I created new codes as new phenomena emerged. This step in the analysis provided information about which concepts Richelle taught and how often.

Throughout the analysis, I added and/or collapsed codes and categories as necessary, and my procedures reflected Miles and Huberman’s (1994, p. 11) “data reduction.” As I listed each code on the “Concepts Taught” page, conceptual categories began to emerge as to how Richelle was teaching the concepts about print. Three primary categories emerged, explicit teaching, demonstrating, and prompting. I used the code “explicit teaching” to identify instances when Richelle made explicit statements about a concept of print. For example, on February 17 the students were discussing using the words “President’s Day” in their writing. Richelle took this opportunity to point out that holidays are words to capitalize. She said, “President’s Day is a holiday. Holidays are capitalized. We need to capitalize both of those words.”

The code “demonstrating” identified instances when Richelle used her own writing or the children’s writing to teach a concept about print. For example, on May 5, as Tomé was writing the word ‘at’ on the interactive writing tablet, Richelle turned to the children seated around the tablet and said, “Did you see how he is using his finger for space?” Sometimes, Richelle used a “think aloud” technique to demonstrate her cognitive process. For example, on March 31, the class was composing the sentence, “When the mouse blew out the candle, Whoosh!” Richelle decided to write the word “out” during the lesson. She said, “I’ll write out. I need to remember to leave space between the words.” As she wrote the word, she put her finger down on the tablet, leaving space between the previous word.
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I used the code “prompting” to identify any instance when Richelle used statements or questions to prompt the writer to take a specific action. For example, on April 1, Trent was scribing the last word of the sentence. He finished writing the last word, paused and looked to Richelle. She remarked, “That’s the end of our sentence. What do you do?” Trent added a period to the end of the sentence.

Each week I sent the field notes to Richelle to allow her to comment on the accuracy of my descriptions of the interactive writing lessons. This was an opportunity for Richelle to ask questions or provide comments about the field notes.

Videotaping. I transcribed the videotapes from February 10 and May 7 and combined the transcriptions with the field notes for those corresponding days. The video allowed me to review the lesson and check my field notes for coding accuracy related to Question 1, particularly with regard to how Richelle taught the concepts about print. For example, videotaped data was particularly important when coding concepts of direction from left to right. During my initial analysis, I had not coded Richelle’s re-reading of the text as “demonstrating left to right directionality.” However, upon review of the video, it became clear that she physically demonstrated this concept for the students by pointing to each word as she read from left to right. I had failed to record this demonstration in my field notes and the resulting re-analysis resulted in a new code (left-to-right direction) and 15 instances of this concept about print. I analyzed the videotapes for physical movements made by the teacher and students during interactive writing lessons. This form of triangulation of data sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) proved a valuable way to ensure accuracy of my coding of the field notes.

Student writing samples. I borrowed the technique, “Questions to ask about writing samples,” used by McCarrier, Pinnell & Fountas (2000, p. 172) to guide my analysis of student
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work. Some of these questions included how the student used space to define words, directional concepts, and punctuation and capitalization. For example:

**Concept of word**

Is there space between words?

**Directionality**

Do the words/letters proceed from left to right and top to bottom?

Is there accurate return sweep?

**Writing Conventions**

Is the first word of the sentence capitalized?

What is the demonstrated knowledge of punctuation?

- Period - declarative statements
- Exclamation Point - excitement
- Question mark - questioning

I organized the data on monthly sheets for each student labeled, “Student Writing Monthly Summary” (Appendix B). Every month I searched each child’s journal writing for evidence of his or her knowledge regarding concepts about print, and I kept a monthly tally when a student demonstrated knowledge in the writing. For example, in the month of April I collected six journal writing samples. If the student demonstrated knowledge of “concept of space between words” in more than three of the six samples, I recorded it as student knowledge of that concept for that month. Analysis in such a way is supported by scholars such as Clay (1998) and Ferreiro (1993) who contend that a child’s accurate use of a concept will change as he or she learns and attempts to incorporate new concepts related to a task such as writing. For emergent writers this is not a sign of weakness related to print, but rather a period of cognitive growth as young writers experiment with what they are learning about print. Therefore, recognizing student knowledge in a way that does not require rigid consistency on every task takes into account that a number of possibilities may affect the attention of a child during any particular writing task.

I then recorded each student’s data from the “Student Writing Monthly Summary” on a table titled, “Student Writing Comprehensive Table” (Appendix C), which charted the data
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demonstrated knowledge of various concepts of print across the study.

In order to address Question 3, I used the data from “Student Writing Comprehensive Table” (Appendix C) to look for any distinctions between ELLs and NS with regard to concepts about print used in student journal writings. First, I divided the students into two separate groups, based on their primary language identification. I went through the table for each group and compared the February and May analysis to document what areas of CAP students were using consistently. Focusing on the beginning and ending month of the study allowed a comparison of each student’s growth over the four months of the study, just as the CAP pre and post test measure might indicate. I used the information from these months to record the strengths and weaknesses related to concepts about print for each group of writers (Appendix G). By organizing the data in this way, I was able to write a collective description for each group of writers and search for distinctions between the groups that surfaced during journal writing.

Conclusion

Multiple types and sources of data were included in this study to increase the accuracy and credibility of findings. By collecting a variety of data, such as field notes and video, a more precise picture was available about how Richelle used interactive writing to teach concepts about print. Additionally, the collection of student journal writings provide important data on how a linguistically diverse group of kindergarten writers demonstrated their knowledge related to those concepts. The following chapter reports my findings on the concepts about print evident during interactive writing instruction and student journal writing.
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Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate the ways in which a kindergarten teacher used interactive writing to teach students the concepts about print and to examine how English Language Learners (ELL) and Native speakers (NS) demonstrated their knowledge related to those concepts while writing in their journals. Analysis of the field notes taken during the interactive writing lessons offers evidence of which concepts about print the teacher focused on during her work with students, as well as how she taught the concepts about print. Analysis of student journal writing provides evidence of what knowledge the students demonstrated in their independent work.

Teaching the Concepts about Print during Interactive Writing

Question 1 examined what concepts about print were taught and how they were taught. In all, I recorded 191 instances of Richelle teaching a concept about print. In the sections that follow, I report, by category, the findings for each concept about print, with a description of how the concept was taught. A summary of these findings is included in Appendix A.

Concept of word

There were 61 coding instances related to “Concept of Word” over the course of the study. The category “Concept of Word” included codes such as “Space between words,” “Space on a line,” and “Print vs. picture.” The code “Space on a line” is not measured on the Concepts about Print task (Clay, 2000). I added it to the original coding sheet as it emerged during analysis of the field notes. This code is marked with an asterisk on the data tree. Findings from each code are discussed in the following sections.
Teaching Concepts about Print Using Interactive Writing

Concept of space between words. Using space to define a word is an important concept for early writers to understand because written language requires the use of space as a way to move a message from oral to written communication. McCarrier et al. (2000, p. 101) refer to the ability to accurately put space between words as “word by word matching,” a crucial indicator of early literacy learning. There were 55 coding instances of teaching students about the concept of space between words over the course of the study. The codes were further defined by “explicit teaching,” “demonstration,” or “prompting.” As it relates to the concept about space between words, approximately 12% (i.e., 7) of the instances were coded as “explicit teaching.” As mentioned earlier, the instances coded as “explicit teaching” were when Richelle made explicit statements about a concept of print. For example, on March 5 at the conclusion of an interactive writing lesson, Richelle briefly summarized the key points related to concept of space between words:

R: This is your job today in your journals. I need you to do this on your paper today just like we did. Remember to leave space. You can use your finger or the eraser. Remember, we talked about how to use the eraser to leave space between words.

Nearly half of the 55 codes (i.e. 49%) related to teaching children about concept of space between words were through demonstrations. Richelle frequently used student work at the tablet, as well as her own writing, as a way to make leaving space between words clear for her writers. On March 31, Richelle used her writing to demonstrate appropriate spacing between words:

R: I’ll write the word ‘out.’ I need to leave space after our last word. She places her finger on the paper and writes o-u-t.

On February 3, Richelle called on Brad, and on February 17 she called on Susan to come up to the tablet to “hold space” for the child who was writing. During these instances, the children would place two fingers on the lined tablet as their peer wrote the words. The instances of
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Richelle calling children up to physically provide a space were only documented on those two occasions during the earliest phase of data collection. Galperin (1969) refers to the use of objects or physical actions such as these during mental actions as "materialization." Materialization of this kind allows the learner to have a temporary support until the concept is internalized (Bodrova & Leong, 1998). After February, Richelle no longer called students up to hold space, but she would still point out how students used physical tools (e.g., fingers, erasers) on their own to keep the space between words, as the example below from March 5 demonstrates:

R: Look boys and girls how Evan uses his finger for space. Why is this important, Luke?

Luke: So we can write something else.

R: If I had a really long sentence, why would it be important to have space between the words?

Luke: If you didn’t we wouldn’t be able to understand you.

Richelle also used prompting to teach concept of space between words. Richelle prompted students’ writing at the tablet 38% (i.e., 21 codes) of the time. Richelle’s prompting encouraged the students to make connections between previous demonstrations and the writing task currently under construction. For example, on April 2, Shani was writing at the tablet. She was beginning to write the word ‘snow.’ Richelle noticed that she did not leave adequate space between the words, so she prompted Shani to make a connection to what she knew:

R: (to Shani) What do you need to do between words?

Shani: Leave space. (She moves the marker over, leaving space between the words)

At other times, Richelle would prompt using statements such as, “Remember to leave space” (Feb. 17, March 3), and “Don’t forget to leave space” (Feb. 24) as the student was writing at the tablet. Statements such as these proved to be a helpful way to direct the student’s attention to the concept of space between words.
Teaching Concepts about Print Using Interactive Writing

Concept of space on a line. Concept of space on a line was cued when Richelle would draw the students’ attention to the physical space remaining to write a word on the lined paper. There were 5 instances of teaching concept of space on a line over the course of the study. In four of the five instances, Richelle prompted a student to use the remaining space on a line. For instance, on March 3, Richelle and the children were adding to the writing from the previous day. The sentence they were to begin writing would start mid line after the first sentence. As Jasmin wrote, Richelle prompted her concerning the space left on the line:

R: Jasmin, do we have enough space on this line to write our next sentence?

Prompts such as these drew the students’ attention to the space remaining on the line for continued writing. In the fifth instance, on April 28, Richelle asked the children if the word she was writing on the tablet would fit in the space remaining. When the children said “No,” Richelle said, “Ok, let’s go to the next line.”

Print vs. picture. There was one instance of Richelle prompting a student to differentiate between the picture on the front cover of the book and the print. On February 19, Richelle used the picture book to begin an interactive writing lesson on personal memoirs. The sentence for writing was, “Franklin’s mom is special.”

R: Okay, Let's start with Franklin. Can you find the word Franklin, Bobby?

Bobby: It's on the book.

R: See the title (pointing). Where is the word Franklin, Camilla?

Camilla points to the picture of Franklin on the front cover.

R: We are looking for the word ‘Franklin’. Can you find that?

Camilla points to the correct word.

This was the only instance of Richelle taking time during interactive writing to make it clear that there is a difference between words and the picture.
Teaching Concepts about Print Using Interactive Writing

Directionality

Directional concepts involve learning the orientation of where to begin writing on a page. McCarrier et al. (2000) suggest that directional understanding is “an explicit goal of interactive writing” (p.100). There were 60 codes related to directionality. The code “placement of a word mid line,” was added to the original coding tree during data analysis. Students would often write several sentences during the interactive writing lesson, and so beginning a new sentence in the middle of a line became a part of directional teaching. I also coded the teaching of genres, such as personal letters and charts, in the directional category because of specific placement knowledge required for each.

Most of Richelle’s instruction about directionality was through “prompting” (58% of codes), the students to make connections to what they had previously learned. Thirty-three percent of the codes fell under the category of “demonstrations.” There were only five instances of “explicit teaching” of a directional concept, when Richelle presented the students with a new format for writing (e.g., list, letter, chart) in which the rules for direction changed. Clay (1991) notes that directional concepts are learned easily and may not require explicit teaching; however, she suggests that teachers should model directional behaviors for students until the concepts no longer require attention during writing tasks. The following sections address each of the codes for directional concepts:

Where do I start? There were 13 instances of Richelle prompting the children about where to begin the first word of a new writing piece. Richelle would prompt the students to begin on the top line, flush left with questions such as; “Where are you going to begin?” (Feb.3, May 12), “Where will you start?” (Feb. 4, March 26, March 31, April 1), “Where do we start our writing?” (Feb. 19), and “Where do we start our sentence?” (March 3, March 19, May 12). These are just a
Teaching Concepts about Print Using Interactive Writing

few examples of the questions that Richelle would ask to prompt students to use what they knew about directional concepts to begin a writing piece. The children would respond to the prompt by directly answering her question, pointing to the space on the tablet, or the student would simply begin to write at the appropriate place.

*Left to right.* There were no instances of an 'explicit' statement or explanation regarding the left to right movement across the line. However, there were 17 instances of Richelle demonstrating or prompting the students to read words from left to right on a page. Fifteen of these codes were demonstrations that occurred at the conclusion of the interactive writing lesson as Richelle, an individual student, or the entire class re-read the written text. The other two instances occurred at the beginning of an interactive writing lesson. Toward the end of the study, the text had become longer and often the students worked on them over the course of two days. Richelle began these lessons by re-reading the text and pointing to each word to demonstrate left to right direction before adding to the message. Then, the entire piece was re-read, demonstrating left to right direction, at the conclusion of the lesson. McCarrier et al. (2000) call for many demonstrations of left to right directionality during lessons to help children internalize the concepts of movement across a line.

*Return sweep.* Return sweep is taught to early writers so that they understand where to write once they have come to the end of space on a line. It literally means to move one line down and begin the next line of print flush left. There were 16 instances of Richelle teaching the students about return sweep directionality and 88% of the time, Richelle used prompting to remind students about return sweep, as an example from April 1 illustrates.

Richelle and the students were in the midst of adding the word ‘kinds’ to the sentence, “We made all different kinds of food.”
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R: (to Delores) The next word we are writing is ‘kinds’. Where does ‘kinds’ go? Will it fit at the end?

(Richelle is pointing to the end of the line where there is not enough space)

All: No!

Delores points flush left, next line.

On April 21, Richelle used a student’s understanding of return sweep to provide a demonstration for the class:

Andy is adding the word ‘the’ on the paper for the sentence, “First, we squeezed the glue in the bowl.” He writes ‘the’ on the next line, flush left without prompting from Richelle.

R: (to everyone) He even knew it was a lowercase letter and on the next line.

Placement of words. There were 15 instances of Richelle teaching the placement of isolated words in the format of a list, chart, or in a letter. There were seven instances of Richelle teaching the students about the placement of new words when making a list. On February 10, Richelle and the students listed things they could use to make a snowman. The first word on the list was ‘snow.’ Taylor came up to the tablet to add the words ‘two sticks’ to the list.

As Taylor begins to write the words, he begins to place the marker to the right of the word ‘snow.’

R: (to Taylor) When we make a list we go down. It is not like a sentence.

Taylor moves the marker under the word ‘snow.’

On March 12, they are making a list called “Ways to Travel.” Tomé has suggested the word ‘truck.’ Richelle prompts him to remember what he knows about writing a list.

R: That’s a great one. Come up and write that. Remember, we are writing a list not a sentence. Where will you start?

Tomé indicates the correct placement, under the previous word.

On March 26, Richelle and the students are finishing a letter to Mrs. Goshen’s class. The interactive writing lesson on this day consisted of the students adding the last line and closing signature to the letter.
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R: Now it’s time to end the letter. We have done that before when we have written letters. Up here we have the date, then we have the greeting, and we just finished the body of the letter. How do we end a letter?

Could we say who it’s from?

Trent: Yeah. Then write our name.

R: Right! How about if we say, “Your friends, Mrs. Fischer’s class”? Let’s begin under the date at the bottom of the body. (She motions under the date to the placement of the closing) Molly, will you write it?

Molly comes up to the tablet and Richelle holds her finger where the placement of the closing will go.

On May 7, Richelle used a chart to help the students organize information they had studied about animal habitats during social studies.

R: This chart organizes information for us. We organized with four habitats at the top and under those we have listed animals for each. When we make a chart it is similar to a list, so if jungle is here (pointing to the habitat name), I will list the animal underneath.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jungle</th>
<th>Forest</th>
<th>Desert</th>
<th>Ocean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>monkey</td>
<td>owl</td>
<td>snake</td>
<td>dolphin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above examples show how Richelle taught the children that the placement of words on a list, letter, or chart is different from writing a sentence.

Writing conventions

The category of writing conventions included subcategories related to capitalization and punctuation. Teaching early writers how to mark sentences with correct punctuation and to distinguish between upper and lower case letters in writing contributes to the meaning making process by helping students become aware of audience. Students learn to use these conventions to make the message understandable and readable. Forty-six of the codes in this category were related to capitalization and 24 were related to punctuation. This category had more instances than any other category in the study.
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*Capitalization.* Richelle used prompting a great deal of the time to teach the children capitalization rules. In fact, 66% of the data for capitalization are coded as Richelle prompting the students to determine when and why a letter should be capitalized or written as lower case. One of the coding categories under capitalization was “Beginning of sentence.” Richelle would often prompt the students writing at the tablet to capitalize the letter that was beginning a sentence, as data from February 4 illustrates:

Bobby comes up to the paper to begin the writing.
R: Where will you start?
Bobby points flush left, first line of the paper.
R: Does it need a capital letter?
Bobby: Yes, it’s the first letter.
R: Of what?
Bobby: Of the sentence.

Several times during the study, Richelle would use student work at the tablet to demonstrate for the children that the beginning of a sentence should be capitalized, as the example from March 19 illustrates:

Diego comes up to write, “They ran out the door.” He writes “They” correctly on the paper.
R: Why did you make that a capital T?
Diego: It’s the beginning of a sentence.
R: Good.

The following example from May 5 shows how Richelle would sometimes mix prompting and explicit statements to teach the children concepts related to capitalization:

Delorés comes up to write the sentence, “We went to Sunrock Farm.”
R: (to Delorés) “We” is a word we write a lot. How do you write the w? It’s at the beginning of a sentence.
Delorés: big.
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R: Right. We capitalize the beginning of a sentence (to everyone as Delorés writes). See how she is doing that?

Richelle not only taught the children about the importance of capitalizing the beginning of a sentence, she also taught them when to use lower case letters. Related data was coded as “When to use lowercase letters.” Many of the children often mixed upper and lowercase letters when writing, which is typical for emergent writers. Data from March 19 shows how Richelle prompted the students to use what they knew about using lowercase letters during interactive writing lessons. Diego is midway through the writing of the sentence, “They ran out the door.”

Diego writes ‘the’ on the paper, but he incorrectly capitalizes the t.

R: Let’s talk about that Diego. Do we need a capital T? Is it the beginning of a sentence?

Diego shakes his head no.

R: We can erase that and fix it. (She covers it with white out tape)

Diego corrects the “t,” making it lowercase.

Likewise, on April 30, Richelle prompted the students to remember when to use lowercase letters during writing.

Octavia is at the tablet to write the word “sun” on a list the class is making about ‘Weather Words.’

R: Octavia, where are you going to write this word?

Octavia indicates flush left, under the last word written on the list.

R: Right. (she looks to everyone seated) Will it be capital or lowercase?

All: lowercase!

R: Right because it’s not the first word of our sentence.

Octavia writes the s correctly on the line.

Richelle also used interactive writing to teach the children that names are capitalized. For example on March 26, she prompted Taylor to use what he knew about his own name to write the proper name of something else.

Taylor was at the tablet writing “Tiggy Tiger.”
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R: What kind of ‘t’ will you write?
Taylor: Capital. (However, then he writes a lowercase t)
R: Is that a capital T? Does that look like your name when you write it? We want a capital T like in Taylor. Do you see the difference? Make it look like the “T” in your name.
He does so.
R: Boys and girls, look at the t now! It looks like Taylor’s name now, doesn’t it?
All: Yes!

In this example, Richelle used print that the student was familiar with to reinforce capitalization of names. Scholars, such as Clay (1991), support the idea of focusing the student’s attention on familiar print, such as his or her name or environmental print, because it has personal importance to the child that can build a connection with print and letter knowledge. Typically, a child’s first writing will include the first letter of her or his first name, and in this kindergarten classroom, students’ names were on display in several places around the room.

On a couple of occasions, Richelle also demonstrated for the students how to use capital letters in a word to show emphasis or emotion. After a re-reading of the big book, Richelle and the children were writing a retelling of the story during interactive writing. The sentence they were working on in this example was, “The mouse blew out the candle and the house went, Whoosh!”
R: Whoosh! We like that sound.
The children repeat the word several times while making big circle movements with their arms.
R: Is this going to be capital or lowercase? It sounds like a loud word. How can we make it loud in writing?
Various children: Big letters!
R: All capital letters? Ok. (She writes the word on the tablet)

Likewise, on April 21, Richelle and the children were writing about a shared experience from a previous class when the children made gak (i.e., play dough like substance) with a parent
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volunteer. The sentence they were working on during interactive writing was, “Mrs. Stevens helped us make gak!”

R: When I say gak! (strong emphasis), it sounds silly! What is a way to write it to make it stand out?

Various children: All capital!

R: (to Octavia who is scribing) Now let’s write it all capitalized.

As these examples illustrate, Richelle used interactive writing to demonstrate for the students how the use of capitalization can affect the writer’s message.

Punctuation. Richelle used interactive writing to teach the students the importance of marking the end of sentences with the correct form of punctuation. Over the course of the study, Richelle taught the students to mark declarative sentences with periods, exclamatory sentences or phrases with exclamation points, and interrogative statements with question marks. Additionally, she also taught the students to use commas to separate words in a series. Once again, most of the codes were related to prompting. In fact, 20 out of 24 of the codes for punctuation were prompting.

When teaching the children how and when to use a period to mark the end of a sentence, Richelle would often ask questions that prompted the student who was writing to make a connection to what he or she knew and take appropriate action (i.e., adding a period). In fact, most of the time, Richelle’s prompting would occur once and then the student would respond by adding a period immediately. Questions such as; “Is that the end of our sentence?” (Feb. 2, 4, 17; March 19; April 30), “Is something missing?” (March 3), “That is the end of our sentence. What do you do?” (March 17; April 1; May 14), and “How will we end our sentence?” (May 5) are examples of how Richelle prompted the students to add an ending period to their writing.
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Richelle also used interactive writing to introduce how and when to use commas in writing. For example, on April 30, Richelle demonstrated how to use commas when writing words in a series:

R: Plants need water, soil, and sun. That is three things. Sometimes when we list things in writing, we have to put a comma between them. I’m listing things that a plant needs, so I have to put a comma after them to slow down.

Richelle used interactive writing to teach the students about exclamation points in writing. On March 19, Richelle taught the students how using an exclamation point can be an effective way to show emotion in writing.

R: If we say ‘shoo’ to the cows, how do we say it? Shoo or Shoo! (Richelle dramatizes the difference with inflection of the two punctuation marks)

Susan: excited mark.

R: Great. An exclamation point is something we use if we are excited about what we are saying. If I really want to get those cows out of the classroom, I will say, “Shoo!” (the children laugh)

Data from April 21 illustrates how Richelle prompted Octavia to remember what he knew about the meaning of punctuation marks:

R: (to Octavia) I am excited when I say ‘GAK!’ So, what is a good way to end this?

Octavia: question mark.

R: Am I asking a question? “Mrs. Stevens helped us make GAK!”

Octavia: No.

R: How about an exclamation mark to show we are excited?

Octavia adds the mark.

On two occasions, Richelle demonstrated and used explicit statements to teach the students about using question marks in their writing. These instances were at the end of the study, data from May 12 and May 15. The lesson was about writing math problems. On May 12
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the students were writing, "We have 5 donuts. We need 2 more. How many donuts do we have in all?" Richelle said the words slowly as she wrote the last sentence on the tablet.

R: (to the group) How do I end this?
Bobby: a question mark.
R: Right. I'm asking a question. How many donuts do we have in all, so I need a question mark at the end. (She adds the question mark.)

The data from the preceding section shows how Richelle taught the students to maintain the meaning of the text by clearly marking the ends of statements and questions with appropriate punctuation. Learning the forms and functions of punctuation and capitalization are essential if emergent writers to understand how oral language is expressed in written text (McCarrier et al., 2000).

Findings for Question 1 indicate that during interactive writing instruction Richelle taught the concepts about print assessed on Clay's (2000) Concepts about Print task, and she offered her students multiple opportunities to learn these fundamental concepts about print during interactive writing. The findings also demonstrate that Richelle used three primary techniques for teaching these concepts about print: explicit statements, demonstration, and prompting. Prompting was the technique she used most often (i.e., 58%) to support her emerging writers in making connections between their growing knowledge of print codes and application to written text.

Student Knowledge of Concepts about Print

The second question of the study examined evidence of the students' knowledge of concepts about print as found in student journal writing and on pre and post assessments of the Concepts about Print test from Clay's (2002) Observation Survey. The CAP assessment served
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to document students’ knowledge of concepts about print that did not appear in their journal writing.

*Student journal writing*

I collected student journal writings after each observation of an interactive writing lesson to examine which concepts about print were evident in the writing samples. As mentioned in Chapter 3, I used “Questions to ask about writing samples” from McCarrier, Pinnell & Fountas (2000, p.172) to focus my analysis of student work. Analyzing the writing samples using the same categories I used to analyze the interactive writing lessons, kept the coding language consistent.

In all, there were 21 pieces of writing for each of the 22 students over the course of the study. I analyzed each piece of writing, using the guiding questions below, and recorded the results per month on a “Student Writing Monthly Summary” (Appendix B). I recorded each student’s data from the “Student Writing Monthly Summary” on a table (i.e., “Student Writing Comprehensive Table,” Appendix C) which charted the data across the entire study. The following list of questions guided my analysis of each student’s writing:

**Concept of word**
Is there space between words?

**Directionality**
Do the words/letters proceed from left to right and top to bottom?
Is there accurate return sweep?

**Writing Conventions**
Is the first word of the sentence capitalized?
What is the demonstrated knowledge of punctuation?
- Period- declarative statements
- Exclamation Point- exclamatory
- Question mark-interrogative

The following sections report my findings of student knowledge related to a concept about print by each of the categories listed above.
Concept of space between words. I gave students credit with demonstrating knowledge of concept of space between words if the words written were clearly bounded by space on either side. The writing samples shown in Figure 1, collected on February 5, illustrate the difference between a student who did not demonstrate knowledge of concept of space (sample on the left) and a student who did demonstrate knowledge of this concept (sample on the right). (All text interpretations given with journal writings are as read to me by the student at the conclusion of journal writing.)

Figure 1. Examples of concept of space between words.

Text: I like sunny days. I like rainy days. I played in a mud puddle.

Text: I like sunny days because I can ride my bike!

Over the course of the study, the data indicated that the students demonstrated a growing understanding of concept of space between words (Appendix D). In February, only 11 of the 22 students demonstrated knowledge of the concept of space between words in their journal writing. In March, however, 14 students demonstrated knowledge of concept of space between words, and in April, 16 students demonstrated knowledge of this concept. At the end of the study, 19 of
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the 22 students consistently demonstrated knowledge of concept of space between words in journal writing.

Directionality. Evidence related to student knowledge of directional concepts was analyzed for two areas: “Do the words/letters proceed from left to right and top to bottom?” and “Is there accurate return-sweep on a line?” Each piece of student writing was analyzed using both questions, and results of the analysis indicated that student knowledge related to directional concepts was very high throughout the course of the study. As indicated in the discussion of findings for Question 1, directional concepts were a major focus of Richelle’s interactive writing instruction.

Only one student, Sara, struggled with directional concepts. Sara’s journal entry from February 10 indicates that Sara has knowledge of left to right direction on a line, but she lacks clear top to bottom direction.

Figure 2. Example of directional concepts in February.

Text: I would make a snowman.
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One explanation is that in order to accommodate the arrangement of pictures and drawing on the page, Sara spread the message over the page, disregarding top to bottom conventions. The drawing may have been her primary means for communicating her message, as drawings often take precedence over print with early writers. However, there was an increase in Sara's demonstrated understanding of top to bottom direction in March as indicated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Example of directional concept knowledge in March.

![Image of a drawing and writing: I like to ride my bike.]

Text: *I like to ride my bike.*

At the end of the study, Sara consistently demonstrated correct use of right to left and top to bottom directional concepts for all journal writings in the months of April and May.

*Writing conventions.* Conventions of writing, such as capitalization and punctuation, were also examined in student journal writings. I specifically focused my analysis on the capitalization of the first word of a sentence and proper names because Richelle spent a great deal of time with these conventions during interactive writing lessons. Analysis related to punctuation was focused on the students' correct use of periods, exclamation points, and
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questions marks because those were the punctuation marks addressed most often during interactive writing.

The findings related to student knowledge of capitalizing the first word in a sentence is represented in Appendix F. Overall, students showed a high level (i.e., 18 students) of understanding that the first word of a sentence should be capitalized; however, the data indicated that the students did not demonstrate this knowledge consistently. In February, 18 students demonstrated knowledge of this concept, as did 20 students in March. However, in April only 17 students capitalized the first word in the sentence consistently, and only 19 students in May. An example of this fluctuation is illustrated by two of Evan’s journal entries (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Examples of capitalization.

Text: I would scare the cows away. I said boo!

Text: First I squeezed the glue in the bowl. Then I squeezed food coloring. The gak felt slimy.

The March 19 journal (on the left) clearly shows that Evan has an understanding that the first word in the sentence should be capitalized. On April 21, however, Evan appears to be
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capitalizing the first word in every line, rather than the first word in every sentence. He
capitalizes First, Glue, Food, and Flte (felt), leaving only the word then uncapitalized. He also
fails to capitalize the word I, apparently forgetting Richelle’s instruction on this writing
convention. On several occasions, Richelle discussed the importance of capitalizing the word I,
as data from the February 3 interactive writing lesson shows:

    R: (to all) Why is the “I” capitalized?

    Diego: It’s the first word in the sentence.

    R: Good. It is the first word of our sentence. And, remember “I” by itself always gets capitalized.

Evan’s inconsistent use of these fundamental writing conventions may be attributed to his
focused attention on other aspects of the writing process. As Richelle concluded the interactive
writing lesson on April 21, she explicitly stated that she wanted the students to use sequencing
words in their journals:

    R: Use your five senses of look, smell, and feel. Think about making the gak and writing a beginning,
middle and end. Also, think about those sequencing words while you are writing.

A close look at Evan’s journal entry demonstrates that he did as Richelle requested; he
incorporated “First” and “then” as well as sensory details. After examining all of Evan’s journal
writings, it is interesting to note that he consistently capitalized the first word of every sentence
in his pieces until April. On April 2 and continuing through April 28, Richelle encouraged the
students to write longer pieces with more detail and to include a beginning, middle, and end to
their journal writings. Data from the April 28 interactive writing lesson conveys this point:

    R: (as the students are dismissed to journal writing): In your journal today write about fossils. You are
going to write a non-fiction piece about fossils. It needs facts because it is non-fiction. We have learned a
lot about fossils. We made fossils. We became Paleontologists when we used our chocolate chip cookies to
dig for fossils. Tell your audience what fossils are and where you can find them. Tell what you have
learned about fossils. Don’t forget your beginning, middle and end.
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It may be that as Evan focused on these newer aspects of the writing process, he gave less attention to previously learned print conventions.

Findings also indicated that students’ use of punctuation marks increased over the course of the study. In February, 14 students demonstrated knowledge of marking the end of a sentence with a period. In May, 19 students demonstrated use of this print convention. During her interactive writing lessons, Richelle repeatedly encouraged the children to use periods to mark the end of a sentence. Comments like these from the February 17 lesson were common:

R: Remember to leave space between your words. What goes at the end of your sentence?
Various children: period.
R: Good, remember that when you are writing.

The following journal entries show how Diego, who did not demonstrate knowledge of punctuating with periods correctly in February, demonstrated such knowledge in later journal entries (Figure 5):

Figure 5. Example of punctuation.
Teaching Concepts about Print Using Interactive Writing

In the February journal entry, Diego appears to be marking the end of each line of text with a period. By April, he seems to understand that the period is used to mark the end of the sentence.

In addition to punctuating with periods, students also began experimenting with exclamation points and question marks in their journal writing. Fifteen students correctly used exclamation points in their writing from February to May, and ten students correctly used question marks from March to May. Interestingly, there were no data to suggest that Richelle encouraged the students to use exclamation points or question marks in their journal writing. Several students chose not to include either of these types of punctuation over the entire course of the study.

Findings from student journal writings provide evidence that Richelle’s students demonstrated a growing knowledge of concepts about print over the course of the study. In an effort to document students’ knowledge of concepts about print that may not have been evident in their journal writings, I used the CAP section of the Observation Survey (Clay, 1993) as a pre and posttest measure.

CAP pre and posttest

The CAP measure provides an indication of what children recognize and understand about print. The measure has a possible score of 24. The student is given a point for each correct response while the test administrator reads a book to him or her. I used Follow Me, Moon for the pretest measure and No Shoes for the posttest (Clay, 1993). Table 1, below, shows the results for each student on the CAP pre and post test measure.
Teaching Concepts about Print Using Interactive Writing

Table 1. Concepts about Print- Pre and Post Test Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/#</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Mono, Bi, or Multi</th>
<th>CAP-Pre</th>
<th>CAP-Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Octavia 1</td>
<td>Bi</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Delores 2</td>
<td>Bi</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan 3</td>
<td>Mono</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan 4</td>
<td>Mono</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara 5</td>
<td>Mono</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marta 6</td>
<td>Bi</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna 7</td>
<td>Mono</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor 8</td>
<td>Mono</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brad 9</td>
<td>Mono</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmin 10</td>
<td>Bi</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomé 11</td>
<td>Bi</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adon 12</td>
<td>Bi</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen 13</td>
<td>Mono</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molly 14</td>
<td>Mono</td>
<td>15</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Mono</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andy 16</td>
<td>Mono</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobby 17</td>
<td>Bi</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diego 18</td>
<td>Bi</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mateo 19</td>
<td>Bi</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shani 20</td>
<td>Multi</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 21</td>
<td>Mono</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camila 22</td>
<td>Bi</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 22 students who participated in the study, 18 had an increase in CAP score from February to May. The results from the posttest indicate that for the 18 students who had an increase in score their knowledge related to concepts about print increased in the following areas: directional concepts (i.e., where to start, left to right on a line and page and identifying when the order of lines has been altered in text), the meaning of question marks and periods in text, and being able to distinguish between letters and words in print.

Four students’ scores did not change on pre and post tests, as indicated in italics above. The results for two of those students, Andy and Bobby, indicated a fluctuation of responses for
Teaching Concepts about Print Using Interactive Writing

locating changes in letter order and the meaning of question marks. Both boys were able to identify the bottom of a picture in February, but not in May. Additionally, Andy was able to give the meaning of a question mark on the posttest, while Bobby was able to able to identify a change in letter order in the text. Interestingly, the other two students, Delorés and Jasmin, had identical responses on the two tasks. Every item on their CAP pre and posttest was the same.

There were no students who had a decrease in CAP score. The average score on the pretest was 13.22 and the average score on the posttest was 16.04 indicating that the students’ knowledge of concepts about print increased from February to May. Although this growth cannot be directly attributed to Richelle’s interactive writing lessons, or any one cause, it does support the findings from the analysis of journal writing that students in Richelle’s class demonstrated growth in their understanding of print concepts.

*Distinctions between the Use of Concepts about Print by ELLs and NS Students*

To answer the third question of the study, I compared the use of concepts of print between students identified as English Language Learners (ELL) and those identified as Native speakers (NS). The goal of this analysis was to document any difference between the two groups’ correct use of the concepts about print in their journal writing during the months of February and then again in May. For each student, I coded “yes” on the “Student Writing Comprehensive Table” (Appendix G) for a concept about print that was evident at least 50% of the time in the months of February and May. I coded “no” if the concept about print was not evident at least 50% of the time in those two months. Findings from the analysis for Question 3 indicate that there were only slight differences between the two groups of students with regard to use of concepts about print in journal writing.
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*Concept of space between words*

In February, 11 of the 22 students were not demonstrating the concept of space between words in their journal writing; five of those students were Native speakers and six were English Language Learners. All 11 of the students who did not demonstrate knowledge of the concept of space between words used phonetic letter strings (Sulzby, 1990) in their writing in February. Phonetic letter strings are not random letters, they are letters written continuously on a line that indicate a beginning awareness of letter sound relationships in a word. For example, on February 19, Luke wrote “Mimomisspeintome” (e.g., My mom is special to me). Even though this letter string did not have space to define word units, some words were easily discernable even without the student reading the text. By May, only one NS student and two ELL students still did not demonstrate an understanding of leaving space between words. They continued to write sentences as phonetic letter strings. At the conclusion of the study, these three students still did not demonstrate appropriate concept of space between words in their writings. In fact, there was never a month during the study that any of the three students demonstrated knowledge of the concept more than 50% of the time.

*Directionality*

As indicated earlier, 21 of the 22 students demonstrated a strong knowledge related to directional concepts from the very beginning of the study. In fact, only Sara, a Native speaker, struggled with directional concepts during the study. By March, however, Sara demonstrated complete understanding of directional concepts.

*Writing conventions*

The NS students’ use of capitalization fluctuated over the course of the study. For example, in February only one NS was not capitalizing the beginning of a sentence. In May
journals, however, three NS who had demonstrated knowledge of capitalization were not doing so in their writing. As discussed in the previous section, the students were most likely focusing on different aspects of writing (e.g., Figure, 3) as the writing task became more complex. These three students were able to identify capital letters on the posttest. This supports the idea that the children focused on other aspects of the writing during the latter part of the study rather than capitalization. Three ELLs were not using correct capitalization at the beginning of sentences in February. Every ELL was correctly demonstrating this convention in May.

I also compared February and May journals for differences in the demonstrated knowledge of ending punctuation. In February, four NS were not using correct ending punctuation. By May, only one NS was still not demonstrating knowledge of ending punctuation. Her CAP pre and posttest responses indicate that she was also not able to give the meaning of punctuation in a book. Three ELLs were not using punctuation correctly in February journals. Each of these three students demonstrated knowledge of punctuation in May. However, two different ELLs who did demonstrate correct punctuation in February were not doing so in May. It is interesting to note that both of the ELLs did correctly identify the meaning of a period in May on the posttest. In fact, one of the students also identified a question mark. Information from the CAP pre and post test task offers support that these two ELLs did have knowledge of the concept as documented in February journals, although it was not demonstrated during entries in May.

Overall, the analysis indicates that there were no significant differences between the groups’ knowledge of concepts about print demonstrated in journal writing. One NS student and two ELL students continued to struggle with concept of space between words. Three NS students continued to struggle with conventions of capitalization, but this posed no problem for the ELL
Teaching Concepts about Print Using Interactive Writing

students. Two ELL students, however, continued to struggle with the use of periods at the end of a sentence. Each student in Richelle’s class, regardless of their primary language, demonstrated growth in their knowledge of print concepts.

Conclusion

Findings from the study indicate that Richelle was able to use interactive writing to teach a group of diverse kindergarteners’ important concepts about print. Furthermore, the students in Richelle’s classroom demonstrated an understanding of the concepts about print during journal writing. As the findings indicate student knowledge of concepts of print increased over the course of the study. In fact, when comparing the beginning journal samples and CAP pretest scores in February to the samples and posttest scores from May, there is definitely improved use and identification of concepts about print.

Lastly, the findings indicate that English Language Learners, as well as Native speakers exhibited a high level of understanding related to concepts of space, directional rules, and writing conventions during independent writing tasks.
Teaching Concepts about Print Using Interactive Writing

Chapter 5

Findings from the study indicate that interactive writing instruction is a context within which teachers can explicitly teach, demonstrate, and prompt students' use of a variety of concepts about print. This instructional context provides many opportunities for students to learn these fundamental concepts about written language. Furthermore, interactive writing instruction is equally effective for teaching concepts about print to English Language Learners and Native speakers. Examining the instructional implications of the study's findings will support teachers in their work with students learning the conventions of written language.

Implications

Learners emerging in their knowledge of concepts about written text need continuous experiences, such as interactive writing, that scaffold and focus their understanding from what they know to what is new (Rogoff, 1990, p.65). Students in Richelle’s class were able to see and hear how concepts about print worked during interactive writing demonstrations. Three important implications related to teaching and learning follow from this study. They are discussed in the following sections.

Using interactive writing to teach the concepts about print

Primary grade teachers should consider using interactive writing for teaching concepts about print as part of their literacy program during kindergarten and first grade. The findings from the present study reflect the findings of previous research, which indicates that interactive writing is an instructional approach that offers multiple opportunities for students to learn about print concepts. As discussed in Chapter 2, previous research on interactive writing (Brotherton & Williams, 2002; Button, Johnson & Furgerson, 1996) has shown that interactive writing is a supportive context for children to learn about the conventions of language during the
Teaching Concepts about Print Using Interactive Writing

correlation of a message. In fact, both of these studies documented multiple concepts about
print that the teachers were able to teach through demonstrations during the interactive writing
lessons. Early literacy scholars argue that learning concepts of print in emergent literacy (Clay,
1989; Goodman, 1981; Johns, 1980; Juel, 1988) provides a foundation for young children to
understand the organization and structure of written language. Interactive writing serves as one
way to support the early acquisition of those concepts.

Additionally, research on interactive writing also shows how this instructional context
can be used to teach other areas of literacy crucial to emergent learners (Craig, 2006; Williams
& Lundstrom, 2007). For example, Craig (2006) examined how kindergartners participating in
an adapted interactive writing lesson demonstrated higher scores in word recognition and reading
comprehension when compared to kindergartners who did not receive the same instruction.
Additionally, Williams & Lundstrom (2007) examined the cognitive strategies that students use
for spelling through word study and interactive writing instruction and found that interactive
writing is also a context conducive to teaching orthographic patterns, phonological and
alphabetic awareness.

Secondly, the present study supports the existing literature on interactive writing by
providing further evidence of how students are guided through the construction of the text. The
work presented here supports each of the earlier studies (Brotherton & Williams, 2002; Button,
Johnson & Furgerson, 1996; Craig, 2006; Williams & Lundstrom, 2007) by the ways in which
the teacher used explicit instruction to demonstrate concepts about print and pose questions that
helped her students make connections to what they knew about those print concepts. Interactive
writing provided opportunities for Richelle’s students to work on manageable parts of the text,
alongside an expert, through careful scaffolding before working independently.
Teaching Concepts about Print Using Interactive Writing

Assessing student knowledge

Teachers of early writers should use student journal writings, and other measures of early literacy skills, to monitor students' knowledge related to concepts about print as well as other skills related to literacy. Assessing student knowledge from multiple perspectives is important to make decisions regarding instruction (Clay, 1991, 1993, 1989, 2000). In fact, most of the research reviewed in Chapter 2 used multiple data to measure student knowledge, such as observations, written student artifacts and interviews.

Journal writing. Teachers of early writers need to recognize the wealth of information that journal writings can offer about the child's knowledge of print conventions during the first year of school. Students in Richelle's classroom wrote in their journals after each interactive writing lesson. Using the questions about writing samples from McCracken et al. (2000, p. 172) to guide the analysis of students' knowledge of concepts about print would be an important way for teachers to document what knowledge was represented in each piece. Clay (1998) suggests that when studying children's writing, we ask ourselves, "What is the child attending to in print?" (p. 139). Additionally, Clay argues that teachers need to observe and document changes over time in young children's writing.

Concepts about print task. The CAP portion of An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement (Clay, 1993) is one literacy measure that could be used as an indicator of student knowledge related to concepts about print. The CAP measure has been identified by researchers (Day & Day, 1980; Johns, 1980) as reliable and valid measure that teachers can use to record children's progress during the first year of school.

More recently, however, Denton, Ciancio & Fletcher (2006) conducted a study evaluating the validity, reliability and utility of five of the subtests of the Observation Survey and
Teaching Concepts about Print Using Interactive Writing

found that the subsets lacked adequate score distributions and benchmarks to be generalizable in
the United States. Despite these limitations, however, findings from their study indicate that the
Observation Survey could be used to assess elements of early reading progress.

As mentioned in the review of literature in Chapter 2, previous studies also document
multiple data including observations, artifacts and interviews to assess what students know or the
ways in which they choose to demonstrate knowledge during a literacy task. Teachers should
likewise rely on multiple sources of data to make instructional decisions (Button et al., 1996;
Clay, 1991; Craig, 2006; Kos & Maslowski, 2001; Kuball & Peck, 1997; McCarthy et al., 2004;
McCarrier et al., 2000; Nixon & Topping, 2001; Ruttle, 2004; Sutherland & Topping, 1999;
Townsend & Fu, 1998; Yarrow & Topping, 2001; Williams & Lundstrom, 2007). Each piece of
data can only give us a small window into the mind of the child at a given time. Collecting and
documenting student work and/or literacy measures over a period of time and then analyzing the
results will provide a more comprehensive understanding of what the student is applying in
various situations and provide a guide for teachers about future instruction.

Interactive writing with English language learners

Teachers of English language learners in the early school years should use interactive
writing, as a part of their literacy program, to teach concepts about print. Although interactive
writing offers a framework that will support the needs of emergent writers in general, it may be
an especially effective way to teach English language learners (ELLs) important concepts about
print because of the explicit instruction that teachers can put into place.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, ELL scholars (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, &
Christian, 2005; Genesee et al., 2006; Helman, 2009) who examined ELL research defined
explicit instruction as including demonstrations and modeling that are contextualized, “think-
Teaching Concepts about Print Using Interactive Writing

aloud” opportunities, and guided practice during instructional conversations. ELL scholars (Padrón, Waxman & Rivera, 2002; Samway, 2006; Tharp, 1997) contend that opportunities for students to ‘hear’ the thinking process of writing are especially meaningful for English language learners.

Emergent learners need to be actively involved in early literacy experiences (Clay, 1991; Genesee et al., 2005; Gibbons, 2002; Helman, 2006; Padrón et al., 2002; Rogoff, 1990). An important way for young children to experience an active role in their learning is through conversations with experts (Clay, 1998, p. 88). Helman (2009) identifies ‘shared or modeled’ approaches to writing as a way for ELLs to understand how print works. She contends that as teachers think aloud and discuss appropriate use of concepts about print, emergent ELLs can make personal connections to written text through repeated experiences. Such experiences allow students to observe essential models of the conventions of written language. As the findings for Question 1 indicate, Richelle was able to use interactive writing to provide those important models for her students. ELL research indicates that interactive approaches to instruction that allow students an extended dialogue with the teacher are most effective (Genesee et al., 2005; Padrón, 2002). Although we cannot directly attribute the findings of this study solely to interactive writing instruction, the findings support the implications that interactive writing is one way to support the early writers in noticing and understanding the print concepts of writing in English.

Limitations

One limitation of the work presented is the period of data collection. By collecting data from February to May, I may have missed many of the explicit teaching moments when students were first introduced to concepts about print. As discussed in the findings, the present study
documented Richelle prompting students 58% of the time during interactive writing lessons. Explicit statements were only used 11% of the time. A personal communication with Richelle concerning this finding provided information on how her teaching technique changed from the beginning of the school year.

*Explicit statements seemed more beneficial as an introduction, but the students would need more than that in order to master the skill. They needed continuous practice and a chance to experience writing for themselves.* (July 27, 2009)

It is possible that if I had collected data from the beginning of the school year, the results most likely would have reflected far more explicit instruction. When I began collecting data in February, Richelle had moved to prompting.

A second limitation of the study relates to data collection during journal writing. Documenting student responses and explanations to their own work through informal interviewing could have proved an insightful way to understand the choices that students made in their journals such as the placement of text and pictures. Multiple forms of data collection, such as, making observations as students write (Bodrova & Leong, 1998; Button et al., 1996; Craig, 2006; Cress, 1998; Daiute & Dalton, 1993; Kos & Maslowski, 2001; Nixon & Topping, 2001; Ruttle, 2004; Sutherland & Topping, 1999; Yarrow & Topping, 2001), and interviewing (Button et. al, 1996; Jacobs, 2004; Kos and Maslowski, 2001; Ruttle, 2004) are widely practiced and encouraged when attempting to make sense of what drives students' choices during independent writing. Clay (1991) contends that observing children during literacy tasks and collecting student writings are not enough to formulate a theory about the child’s understanding of a concept. In essence, without discussions with students about their written work, concepts that are directing
Teaching Concepts about Print Using Interactive Writing

their attention during writing are "hidden from our view" (p.142). The claims made regarding
student knowledge of concepts about print are only based on surface feature production in
journals and the CAP pre and post test. We cannot assume that just because the concept was not
used, that a student lacks knowledge related to that area.

Future research should address the limitations of this study to offer a more in depth and
comprehensive view of interactive writing by documenting instruction from the beginning of the
year with kindergarteners. Additionally, future research should consider using discussions with
students about the choices they make during journal writing.

Future Research

Future studies on ELLs in the area of writing are needed. To date, we know very little
about specific instructional approaches that provide the structure that ELL scholars identify as
'best practice'. Additionally, future studies with ELLs need to investigate students entering a
school after kindergarten and the kinds of literacy issues and needs that they encounter as they
move from school to school, or as a new entry to the country. For example, a study of ELLs
entering third grade could prove beneficial in documenting the continued development of literacy
skills as the focus of reading and writing shift from learning to read/write, to reading and writing
to learn. As noted in Chapter 2, most of the literature describing ELL research (Juzwik, Curcic,
We are sorely missing studies that examine students as they enter schools during the primary
grades. The present study takes the initial step in closing the gap by documenting early writing
instruction during initial school entry for kindergarten. We need further studies that explore when
and if the achievement gap does surface

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Future studies on writing need to explore the transition from emergent to early writing development and how teachers move students from an interactive writing format into a workshop model for writing instruction. In order to investigate this question, it would be ideal to conduct a longitudinal study with a group of students from first to 2nd grade. Of course, such a study would require that the site and participants are constant, and so finding a teacher part of a 'grade looping' structure would be necessary. Regardless, documenting how a teacher approaches the transition from interactive to writing workshop would be especially beneficial for elementary teachers. None of the studies on interactive writing (Brotherton & Williams, 2002; Button, Johnson & Furgerson, 1996; Craig, 2006; Williams & Lundstrom, 2007) examine how a teacher might take students into a different writing instruction format for second grade students. It would be helpful for elementary teachers to have a study that explores the possibilities and challenges of incorporating a workshop approach with transitional writers.
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(http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/index.html)
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### Concepts of space

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Demonstrations</th>
<th>Prompting</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between words</td>
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<td>2.3, 2.17 (students hold space for writer)</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>3.19 (finger), 4.2 (finger)</td>
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<td>3.3 (J), 3.3 (Andy)</td>
</tr>
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<td>3.3 (M), 3.3 (R), 3.5 (Evan)</td>
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### On a line

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<td>4.28 (R)</td>
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### Print vs. Picture

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### Directionality

#### Where do I start

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#### Left to right

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<td>2.17, 2.19, 2.24, 2.26</td>
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<td>4.30, 5.5, 5.7</td>
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</table>

#### Return sweep (line/ list)

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<th>Prompting</th>
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<tr>
<td>2.17 (line)</td>
<td>3.12 (list), 3.12 (list)</td>
<td>2.4, 2.10 (list), 2.10 (list),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.17 (list)</td>
<td>3.12 (list), 4.21 (Andy-line)</td>
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<td>Placement (mid line/letter format)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>*chart</td>
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**Writing Conventions**

**Capitalization**

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<td>4.1(M), 4.30(M)</td>
<td>4.21, 4.23, 4.28, 4.30</td>
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<td>5.5(Delores), 5.14(Trent)</td>
<td>5.5, 5.12, 5.12</td>
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<td>When to use lowercase letters</td>
<td>5.5, 3.19 (end)</td>
<td>2.17, 4.30</td>
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<td>Name of a place, person, or group</td>
<td>3.26(name), 4.2</td>
<td>2.3 (I), 3.26(name), 3.26</td>
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<td>Emphasis of word</td>
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<td>3.31, 4.21</td>
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**Punctuation**

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<th>Period-End of sentence</th>
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<th>2.3 (period), 2.4, 2.17, 2.17, 2.19, 3.3, 3.17, 3.19, 4.1, 4.30, 5.5, 5.12, 5.12, 5.14</th>
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<td>Comma</td>
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<td>Exclamation Point- really excited</td>
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<td>Question mark- asking something</td>
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Appendix B- Example of Student Writing Monthly Summary

**Octavia- February (6 journal writings)**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Concept of space/word</strong></th>
<th>5 entries</th>
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<td>Is there space between words?</td>
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<table>
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<th><strong>Directionality</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Do the words/letters proceed from left to right and top to bottom?</td>
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<td>Is there accurate return sweep? (line)</td>
<td>4 entries</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Writing Conventions</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Capitalization</strong></td>
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<td>Beginning of sentence?</td>
<td>2 entries</td>
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<td><strong>Punctuation- correct use</strong></td>
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<td>Period- declarative statements</td>
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<td>Diego 18</td>
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<td>Punctuation- Question mark</td>
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Appendix D- Chart of concept of space between words
Appendix E - Chart of concept of directionality over study
Appendix F - Chart of capitalization conventions
### Appendix G - ELL & NSE Student Writing Comprehensive Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELL Name</th>
<th>Space between words</th>
<th>Direction Left, Right; Top, Bottom on a page</th>
<th>Direction Return Sweep on a line</th>
<th>Convention Beg. of sentence capitalized</th>
<th>Convention Ending punctuated correctly</th>
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Appenxix G, continued- ELL & NSE Student Writing Comprehensive Table

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<th>Convention-Ending punctuated correctly</th>
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