Instructional Methods for Teaching Writing in ESL Contexts

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This study employed qualitative methodology to describe the current nature of writing instructional practices, in particular, the types of instructional methods that two ESL teachers used in writing instruction for English language learners (ELLs). Data were collected over a five-month period at an elementary school in the Midwest in the U.S. The convergence of a range of different sources of information, including classroom observations, teacher interviews, and classroom artifacts, supported triangulation of data for this study. Examining each teacher's practices in terms of four dimensions of instruction (i.e., explicit instruction about writing, integration of writing and reading, process-oriented writing, and scaffolding) provided valuable insights for instructional methods for teaching writing. The study provides an opportunity for educators or researchers to understand the current picture of writing instructional methods that experienced ESL teachers in ESL contexts provided for ELLs, laying the foundation for suggesting potential ways of assisting ELLs in EFL contexts with their writing development.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the 1990s, the primary concern of second language (L2) writing research, which had historically focused on international ESL writers in higher education, has started to address different L2 writers in a variety of contexts, including young English language learners (ELLs), L2 writing in K-12 contexts, or L2 writing in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts (Matsuda & De Pew, 2002). More important, "one of the fastest growing, yet traditionally under-represented areas of research in second language writing is early L2 writing" (Matsuda & De Pew, 2002, p. 262).

However, there has been little research on early L2 writing of ELLs in various contexts, including EFL contexts (Matsuda & De Pew, 2002; Peregoy & Boyle, 1991, 2000), although researchers have conducted bilingual literacy studies that include children's writing in the 1980s (Edelsky, 1986; Hudelson, 1989; Urzua, 1987) and in the 1990s (Boyle & Peregoy, 1990; McKay, 1992, 1993; Peregoy & Boyle, 1991; Valdes, 1992). Moreover, there has been little concern for L2 writing studies even within the field of

second language acquisition (SLA) (Carson, 2001; Ellis, 1994; Matsuda, 1998).

Understanding the nature of early L2 writing instruction is an important task that deserves careful attention and investigation, given that the nature of writing instructional practices makes a significant impact on ELLs' writing development. In particular, the nature of instructional methods used by teachers operates as an essential factor that generates effective environment that promotes ELLs' writing development.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the research question, "What are the instructional methods that second- and third-grade ESL teachers provided for teaching writing for ELLs?" The study will provide an opportunity for educators or researchers to understand the current picture of writing instructional methods that ESL teachers provided for ELLs, laying the foundation for suggesting potential ways of assisting ELLs in an EFL context with their writing development.

II. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS FOR TEACHING WRITING

1. Balanced Writing: Writing Competence vs. Writing Performance

Teachers and students need to be aware of the difference between writing competence and linguistic competence. Linguistic competence refers to knowledge of language conventions reflected in grammatical and lexical aspects of the text; whereas writing competence is "the abstract knowledge the proficient writer has about writing" (Krashen, 1984, p. 20).

It is common that language teachers tend to teach writing by focusing on the surface-level of language forms, especially for ELLs at early stages of language learning. However, this is teaching language, not writing. Although linguistic competence is important to create good writing, writing competence is a different body of knowledge which plays a critical role in generating good writing. In order to teach writing, teachers need to reach beyond language teaching and teach *about* writing competence so that students can learn about writing.

It may be assumed that teaching writing competence may be too early for ELLs at the early stage of language learning. However, it should be noted that "teaching [second or] foreign language writing is essential at all levels of language study" (Scott, 1996, p. 141). The development of writing ability calls for persistent efforts and time. There is no reason to delay teaching about writing, while other skills are being taught. The earlier exposure to learn to write ELLs have, the better balance of language proficiency they will achieve.

In addition to the call for more attention to teaching writing competence at all levels of language study, another important aspect related to learning to write is writing performance. As Krashen (1984) defines it, writing performance is "the ability to put this knowledge to

use in an actual piece of writing" (p. 20). Writing competence and writing performance are separate domains to achieve to be a successful writer, considering that writers who have acquired writing competence may still be unable to display their knowledge about writing due to their insufficient writing performance.

Writing competence and writing performance are two essential elements composing one's writing proficiency. Thus, it is important to provide balanced opportunities for developing writing competence and writing performance to help students be successful L2 writers (Scott, 1996).

2. Integration of Writing and Reading

Traditionally, the two acts of reading and writing had been conceptualized as separate entities in language learning and instruction. For example, separate periods of the school day have often been devoted to reading or writing instruction. However, within the past two decades there has been a renewed interest in the nature of reading and writing and their interrelationship.

Much research has confirmed that reading and writing involve highly similar cognitive structures and processes and that they reinforce each other (Graves & Hansen, 1984; Kucer, 1985; Tierney & Pearson, 1984; Wittrock, 1984). The reconceptualization of the reading-writing relationship has led to an integrated approach of reading and writing. Many researchers have considered the integration of writing and reading as effective for second language learning (Gajdusek, 1988; Hu, 1995; Huie & Yahya, 2003; Wolff, 2000).

The significant role of reading in the development of writing competence is well supported by Krashen (1984). According to Krashen (1984), reading provides authentic examples of various textual features of writing that L2 writers may become familiar with, pick up probably subconsciously, and produce in their own writing. He stated,

> Writing competence, it is hypothesized, comes only from large amounts of self-motivated reading for interest and/or pleasure. It is acquired subconsciously; readers are unaware they are acquiring writing competence while they are reading, and are unaware of this accomplishment after acquisition has taken place. It is reading that gives the writer the 'feel' for the look and texture of reader-based prose. (p. 20)

In addition to the significant role of reading in the development of writing competence, reading is used as a springboard for discussion in writing. When students write about what they have read, they can have some topics to think and write about. Summarizing and responding to reading selections in writing had been frequent types of writing tasks, which can be done at any stage of language learning.

3. Process-oriented Writing

Traditionally, the teaching of L2 writing had focused on the production of grammatically accurate writing from the view of writing as product. In the 1970s, the advent of the process concept in L1 writing pedagogies had influenced L2 writing programs and instructional practices, and L2 writing pedagogies shifted from product-focused to meaning-focused. Advocates of process writing approaches have suggested that process writing can be beneficial to help ELLs develop writing abilities because it allows them to engage in multiple drafts of writing and encourage sharing their works and getting feedback in a non-threatening environment (Au, 1993; Edelsky, 1986).

Although the process approach has been widely acclaimed and used in L2 writing pedagogies (Raimes, 1987; Ruiz-Funes, 1999; Zamel, 1976, 1982), some researchers have critiqued the uncritical acceptance of the writing process concept. They have suggested reconsidering its efficacy for linguistically and culturally diverse students, questioning whether the process writing approach would remain effective for them to develop writing in English (Celce-Murcia, 1991; Delpit, 1988; Gutierrez, 1992; Reyes, 1992).

As Reyes (1992) pointed out, the process writing approach may not be the best approach because it is not designed to gear toward helping students develop fundamental literacy skills, which would serve as a basic for ELLs. Rather, process instruction needs to be tailored with appropriate adaptations to account for the needs of linguistically diverse L2 learners, especially their need of explicit instruction in the conventions of language forms or writing conventions. As Celce-Murcia (1991) stated, the process approach without the teaching of forms or skills may lead to "the development of a broken, ungrammatical, pidginized form of the target language" (p. 462).

Meanwhile, Delpit (1988) vehemently denounced the skills/process debate, stating that,

> The debate is fallacious; the dichotomy is false. The issue is really an illusion
> created initially not by teachers but by academics whose world view demands
> the creation of categorical divisions—not for the purpose of better teaching,
> but for the goal of easier analysis. (p. 500)

Recognizing the unnecessary debate over skills versus process and the importance of both aspects in that each approach has a different purpose of teaching respectively, many researchers have argued for the balanced learning and instruction with emphasis on both skills and process approaches for L2 instruction, calling for the optimum combination of both form-focused and meaning-focused instructional practices (Huie & Yahya, 2003; Savignon, 2002; Tompkins, 2000).
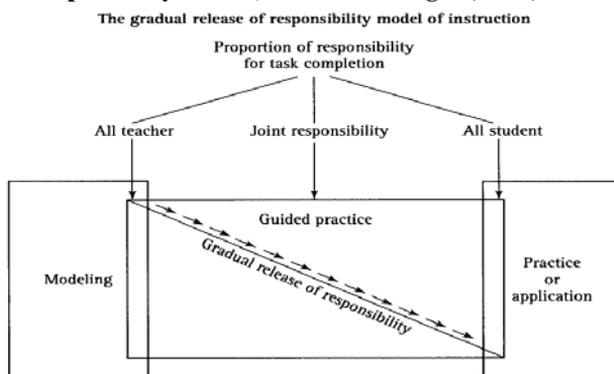
4. Scaffolding

Incorporating scaffolding into L2 writing processes is one of the efficient ways to help ELLs accomplish given tasks and ultimately foster their language development. Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976), who were the first to use the term *scaffolding* in its educational sense, defined it as "a process that enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts" (p. 90).

The gradual release of responsibility model, developed by Pearson and Gallagher (1983), is a construct that is very helpful in understanding scaffolding. Figure 1 depicts graphically its essential features. The model indicates a temporal sequence along the diagonal line on the graph which represents a gradual progression from situations where the teacher takes all or most of the responsibility for successful task completion, to situations where the teacher gradually releases task responsibility and students take increasing task responsibility, and finally to situations where students assume the majority of the responsibility for the task. In order that the students get to the point where they become an independent learner with total responsibility for a task, the model assumes that they need some guidance or scaffolding such as *modeling* or *guided practice* in reaching that final stage of independence.

FIGURE 1
Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983, after Campione, 1981)

Scaffolds can be provided to help with background knowledge or vocabulary development (Watts-Taffe & Truscott, 2000). Activating and expanding background knowledge, which is one of the main focus of prewriting activities, plays an important role of supporting L2 writers' comprehension and production processes; otherwise, they may face difficulties due to the cultural, linguistic, and textural differences they would experience. Scaffolding background knowledge in three main areas such as "content (topic schema), language (linguistic schema), and text structure and organization (text schema)" (Watts-Taffe & Truscott, 2000, p. 261) may be supportive for L2 writers. Vocabulary

knowledge is also a crucial means of interacting with texts. It is directly linked to the production of written texts in that L2 writers browse an appropriate word or phrase to express their ideas in writings.

III. METHODOLOGY

1. School Context

The selected school was renowned for its multilingual/multicultural programs for students who come from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, which may be confirmed by the fact that the school's ESL programs for ELL students had been in a nationally recognized program called *A Project to Achieve* for 5 years as an exemplary model for other schools.

The school provided free-standing, daily 90-120 minutes of ESL programs for ELLs separately across grade levels. For example, second-grade and third-grade ELLs had a separate ESL class with approximately 18 students. The school also employed a literacy block system. For reading, language arts, and writing sessions, ELLs were taught in ESL class, whereas monolingual students were taught in regular classes. In addition to the literacy block system, the ESL instruction featured content-based ESL instruction which integrates content learning such as science or social studies into English language teaching and learning.

2. Participants

Participants of the study were a second-grade ESL teacher (Grace, pseudonym) and a third-grade ESL teacher (Elizabeth, pseudonym). They were purposefully selected based on the following criteria—the variety of writing instructional practices they employed, their educational background and teaching experience, and their students' English ability. In other words, their instruction contained a variety of types and forms of writing practices, based on their belief that the role of writing in second language learning is very important. Their emphasis on the importance of writing was represented by their providing many opportunities to write in their instruction. In addition, they have been certified and educated for the theory and methodology of second language acquisition and have many years of experience teaching ELLs (see Table 1 for a summary of characteristics of teachers, including grade level, educational background, and years of teaching experience).

The majority of the students in their classrooms were designated as either non-English or limited English, according to the results of the writing test that the school executed. In Grace's class, 46% of the students (6 out of 13 students) was designated as non-English; 54% (7 out of 13 students), limited English. Likewise, in Elizabeth's class, the majority of the students (13 out of 14 students) were evaluated as the limited English level of writing

proficiency, except for a student who was at the non-English level of writing ability. Two teachers had English language learners at beginning levels of English language proficiency.

TABLE 1
Characteristics of Teachers

Teacher	Grade level	Educational background	Years of teaching experience
Grace	Second	B.A. M.A. ESL endorsement	29 years as an elementary teacher (5 years of teaching ESL students, 3 years of teaching 2nd and 3rd grade)
Elizabeth	Third	B.A. ESL endorsement	9 years of teaching ESL students (3 years of teaching ESL for 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grade, 6 years of teaching ESL for college students) 10 years of teaching kindergarten

3. Data Collection

Data were collected over a 5-month period in 2005 at an elementary school in the Midwest in the U.S. Different sources of data consisted of observational field notes, transcripts of teacher interviews, and students' artifacts.

1) Classroom Observations

Over approximately 4 months, the second- and third-grade ESL classrooms were observed eight and nine times for 90-100 minutes each, resulting in a total of 800-810 minutes observed for each teacher. Each observation consisted of 5-minute observation segments, so that a 60-minute observation had 12 observation segments. During each observation segment, the researcher described teachers' writing instructional practices and ELLs' engagement in various writing activities in as much detailed as possible. After the class was dismissed, classroom artifacts and print environment features in classroom which are associated with the writing instructional practices were observed and recorded. In addition, the detailed information on materials used in conjunction with writing instruction or writing activities was documented.

2) Interviews

After all classroom observations had been completed, the researcher conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews with the teachers. Interviews were conducted in their own classroom, audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim. Each interview lasted between 45-60 minutes, during which teachers were encouraged to speak at length about questions asked.

First, questions focused on teacher demographic data and general background information regarding their teaching experience, educational background, and opportunities

for professional development. Next, the focus items included descriptions about their own writing instructional practices for ELLs.

3) Artifacts

Throughout the observations, classroom artifacts, both formal and informal, were noted, collected, and examined. Samples of writing that almost all of the ELLs had constructed throughout the study were borrowed and scanned (i.e., all of the ELLs' writing samples that were available were collected). Instructional materials used in conjunction with writing instruction or writing activities were photocopied or documented. Other artifacts noted included posters, charts, signs, available books, or classroom materials displayed in classrooms, if they linked to the instructional purpose and theme.

4. Data Analysis

For data analysis, the researcher examined multiple types of data (i.e., field notes, transcripts, and artifacts) for each teacher, discerned salient categories of information which represented a phenomenon being studied, and continued looking until the categories of information became saturated.

Data analysis began with typing, reading, and summarizing each field note of an individual observation. Next, the researcher read and reread the field notes with summaries, annotated meaningful insights in the margins, sorted, and organized information with headings. The same procedure was repeated for each set of field notes for each teacher.

Each of the recorded teacher interviews was completely transcribed and annotated for specific information related to the research question of the study. Each segment of teacher's turn of the talk was summarized, and significant information was annotated and organized with headings.

To address the research question regarding instructional methods, the researcher examined the reconstructed observational field notes, the annotated transcripts of teacher interviews, and the students' writing samples and merged these data sources in order to look for primary themes and particular information that would represent instructional methods.

IV. RESULTS

1. Instructional Methods in the Second-Grade ESL Classroom

1) Explicit Instruction about Writing

Grace seldom delivered explicit instruction about writing, that is, teaching about writing

competence. The number of lessons that included explicit writing instruction was twice out of eight lessons observed. The content of writing instruction was related to writing letters, including the number of letters in a word (e.g., three letters in *red*), kinds of letters a word has (e.g., small, small, tall letters in *red*), how to properly write letters on three-line ruled paper, and cultural differences in writing letters. Other than the lesson regarding writing letters, explicit instruction about writing that is geared for promoting good writing skills or writing strategies was seldom provided.

2) Integration of Writing and Reading

Based on the observations made, the integration of writing and reading seldom occurred because few reading events took place, at least during the period of data collection. This infrequent integration was probably due to the teacher's heavier reliance on other writing tasks which focused on learning about discrete, subcomponents of a language, such as vocabulary, the conventions of language forms, and writing conventions.

When reading did occur, the teacher had the students perform something in writing associated with the texts they had read or the teacher read aloud for them. The writing tasks included a written retelling of a part of the book read aloud or a reading log of recording information about the book they read independently. The reading texts were mainly children's literature, including both fiction and nonfiction. For example, the teacher read aloud an informational trade book titled *Reptiles* and asked students to write at least five sentences about one among many kinds of reptiles addressed in that book.

The teacher illustrated another example of the writing task integrated to reading through personal communication, which was to complete worksheets based on a reading passage provided. The common theme of these tasks was about fish. The students were asked to read a passage regarding facts about *fish* (see Appendix A for the reading passage) and then complete two page worksheets which were supposed to check their understanding of the reading (Appendix B for the worksheets).

Grace believed that it would be another method of fostering their motivation to write by using reading selections they like and stated that students tend to love nonfiction or informational texts. The following excerpt from the teacher's interview provides evidence confirming that the use of nonfiction books would be beneficial for the development of writing.

> It's been very interesting because the students love nonfiction. And I never used to use very much nonfiction. I always used fiction books. And they love the nonfiction, and so now I've tried using probably more nonfiction a lot than I have regular fiction. And they love it. And in fact a lot of books they choose to read on their own are the nonfiction books….They really have enjoyed writing about nonfiction. They've done a lot of nonfiction writing associated

with journal because we've done a lot of reading along with science. But it just works so well. In the last I think probably 5 years there's been a flux and an explosion of nonfiction books for kids. That really helped. And plus I've been to a lot of workshops, and they bring up nonfiction a lot, using nonfiction for writing, using nonfiction for reading. And I think that's really helped. That's made a big difference, too. (from interview in December, 2005)

3) Process-oriented Writing

There was little opportunity for process-oriented writing provided in this classroom. At least during the period of data collection, only one writing task—writing about the topic of *Halloween*—was process-oriented, comprised of prewriting and drafting stages. The students constructed writing based on their brainstormed ideas and details at the prewriting stage. Rather than all of the stages for process writing (i.e., planning, drafting, revising, and publishing), partial stages of process writing were employed. They did not have opportunities for revising and publishing their writing.

4) Scaffolding

Grace seemed to employ the concept of the gradual release of responsibility in teaching writing with ELLs. She appeared to be controlling and gradually increasing the level of student's responsibility for the writing task to accomplish by accordingly decreasing the extent of the teacher's help, whereby it gets to where they can perform all by themselves.

Grace employed *modeling* by showing the processes of a certain writing task or providing an exemplary writing sample as a model. To explain to the students about how to perform a certain writing task, she rehearsed the processes of the writing task and encouraged the students to rehearse its processes as a whole group before moving to an individual task. For example, when she asked them to construct original sentences using some words, she first showed them how to come up with her own sentence using a word as a model of the sentence construction task. For writing a sentence with the word *red*, the teacher asked a question to the class *What is something that is red?* then wrote the sentence *An apple is red* on the board. Or, the teacher had the students practice constructing sentences as a whole group before they did so individually. For creating a sentence with the word *want*, the teacher let each student read aloud his/her sentence one by one (e.g., *I want to go to the mall, I want to play video games,* or *I want to take a shower*), whereby the students could hear and share their peer's examples as models, too.

For constructing a paragraph(s) beyond sentences, a teacher's modeling would be more critical, especially for those who are at the beginning stages of learning English. During the teacher interview, she recalled a writing task in which the students were asked to select

some words from a list of words given and write a little story by using these words. Without the writing example as a model and the teacher's modeling, she found that the students had a hard time constructing a story, because their ability to write was limited to the sentence-level writing.

The importance of modeling as fundamental guidance or scaffolding for ELLs especially who are at the early stages of language learning, has been highlighted by the teacher as follows:

> They (English language learners) need more modeling….Good teachers mean good modeling and so that kids get really understand, then they have confidence to do it. If you just say "I want you to write this" and they don't know what to do. You're not helping them at all. You're not helping them with self-esteem. You're not helping their ability to write…. They need practice. They need to see it. (from interview in December, 2005)

For *guided practice* shown in the model, the concept of the gradual release of responsibility was applied in certain writing tasks by having the students engage in writing in order of difficulty, shifting from the less difficult word-level to the more difficult sentence-level writing. For example, the students were engaged in writing certain words and then constructing sentences with those same words.

For another example, as Appendix B shows, the worksheets of two pages had the students deal with tasks of varying difficulty. The first worksheet was a cloze writing activity in which they filled out the blank lines with some main words from the reading passage. The second worksheet was to answer questions which were based on the reading passage. Students experienced repetitive reading and writing of the same content but with the different level of difficulty, one for the word-level and the other for the sentence-level writing.

In addition, ability grouping, which is a form of instructional grouping, served as a crucial means of scaffolding in teaching writing for ELLs in that it could provide support they need at their level of writing proficiency. More important, they could work more eagerly when they were instructed at their appropriate level. For example, a group of six less-proficient students worked with a classroom aide for relatively easier tasks than the other two groups with the classroom teacher. When the less-proficient group of students was working on word-level writing tasks, which were most of the time completing worksheets accompanying art work such as drawing and coloring, the more-proficient group with the classroom teacher worked on worksheets that required sentence-level writing tasks and grammar drills.

2. Instructional Methods in the Third-Grade ESL Classroom

1) Explicit Instruction about Writing

Elizabeth provided explicit instruction about writing for helping the students be aware of good features their writing should have. Having spent a part of time in two consecutive days of instruction, she provided writing instruction on how to write a paragraph in a coherent manner. She taught her students about ways of creating a five paragraph writing by including supporting ideas and the conclusion in their writing.

For another example of writing instruction, the teacher provided a 5-minute mini-lesson to remind the students of some aspects of writing conventions, such as capitalization and punctuation, before they started engaging in prewriting and writing tasks. On another day of instruction, she directed the students to use transition words such as *first*, *second*, and *last* for their writing to describe the processes of how to play a game.

2) Content-based ESL Instruction

Elizabeth used the content-based approaches in teaching English for her students, mainly integrating science or social studies into English language teaching. The content-based language instruction provided the students with a more integrated view of learning and enabled them to see the interconnection between the classes they participated in. For example, when the students studied about planets in the solar system and constellations in the third-grade regular content classroom and these same topics were addressed in the ESL classroom, there was reinforcement of learning and a strong sense of related learning. One day, the students engaged in the narrative writing of retelling the story of the book which included the concept of the moon phase changes. On another day of instruction, they were requested to create the expository writing regarding facts about a planet that they selected among many in the solar system based on the information gleaned from books they had read.

In particular, the themes derived from the content area (i.e., science) served as a means for promoting thematic integration in Elizabeth's instructional practices. For example, during two days of instruction, a range of activities were integrated toward the instructional theme—the solar system and the planets. She had the students engaged in various activities focusing on this common theme, including singing a song about the solar system, a small play for visual explanation about the moon phase changes, the teacher's reading aloud fiction and nonfiction trade books about the planets, prewriting and writing about these books, doing the solar system art work, and creating a folder of *Space* in which all of their writing and art works were collected.

She believed that content-based approaches in teaching English, mainly integrating science or social studies into English language teaching, are beneficial, as shown in the

excerpt of her interview as follows:

> Right now in our programs they're learning something in science, and I try to teach them the same thing in science….What I'm asked to do is to teach science or social studies to my children through literacy, which is kind of a big job….It means that when we read and when we write, it's usually about science or social studies.…I think it's a good idea because they're learning things…that they actually learn and they're interesting. Science is engaging and active.…I think it's much better than just dry grammar [or] workbook. (from interview in January, 2006)

Moreover, the print environment features in the classroom were linked to the same instructional theme. Displayed were the solar system mobiles hanging on the ceiling, commercial posters titled *Constellations* and *Solar System* which provided relevant key information with images, the teacher-made chart that summarized the facts about each planet, and a variety of books regarding the solar system and planets at the back of the classroom. Creating the print environment thematically related to the current instructional focus helped the students refer to available sources whenever needed for their writing by just visiting each place of the classroom where reference sources were found.

3) Integration of Writing and Reading

A great many opportunities for writing connected to reading were provided throughout the instruction observed. The reading-writing connection allowed the students to receive linguistic input from reading texts and generate the linguistic input in writing. In addition, being connected to various genres of reading selections enabled the students to experience both narrative writing and expository writing. The majority of reading materials used were children's literature.

The students had many opportunities for written retelling, in which they wrote about the book they had read or the teacher had read aloud, narrating the story in the same order as it unfolded in the book. The students' experience of expository writing was linked to informational trade books they had read. For example, when the students engaged in writing about facts about a planet, their writing was based on multiple books they had read, including a series of books regarding planets. These books were displayed on a side table for them to use as reference during writing. The teacher encouraged them to refer to these reading texts during writing if they did not remember more facts to write about. Moreover, she directed them to use as reference for writing the fact chart that included detailed facts about each planet, which was created in the previous lesson with her students.

4) Process-oriented Writing

The fundamental concept of process writing approaches, that writing is recursive and not linear and needs multiple drafts of writing to construct a good final writing, seemed to be the basis of Elizabeth's writing practices. She employed the process writing method for the majority of instruction (i.e., eight out of nine lessons observed). The students had opportunities for being involved in multiple stages of process writing, either all of the stages or partial stages. They were engaged in all of the writing processes—prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing—once, when they dealt with the topic of a game from their own country. Most of the time, they were involved in partial stages of the writing processes—either prewriting and drafting stages or prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing stages.

Prior to the drafting stage of writing, the teacher always had the students go through some kind of prewriting tasks such as vocabulary scaffolding, completing worksheets, or graphic organizers in an attempt to reinforce the use of key words and organize their thoughts or ideas. As a prewriting task, brainstorming words that can be used for the next drafting stage of writing plays a crucial role of vocabulary scaffolding, which may in turn enable writers to be free from the burden of thinking about what words to use to some extent and instead focus more on conveying their intended meaning.

For example, the teacher presented opportunities for exploring words before the students were asked to write about the story *Tortoise Tricks Leopard* she had read aloud to them. She first used some word cards containing key words. As she showed each word card, she confirmed whether they had understood the meaning of the word by having them say its meaning. Then she had them answer where the word belonged to among three categories of *nouns*, *verbs*, or *adjectives*, which were displayed on the overhead. Then she wrote down the word under the proper column. After completed with the word cards, she invited them to come up with more words by asking questions that could lead them to recall words in the story (e.g., *What is some action that happened in the story?, What happened to tortoise when he rode on the back of Leopard?, What happened to squirrel at the end of the story?,* etc.). Table 2 depicts the product of the completed vocabulary scaffolding written on the overhead.

TABLE 2
Vocabulary Scaffolding for Writing About *Tortoise Tricks Leopard*

Nouns: people, places, things	Verbs: action words	Adjectives: describing words
Liberia	trick	clever
trickster	lie	dishonest
tortoise-turtle	mad	proud
leopard	sad	foolish
gray squirrel	slipped	old
blanket-saddle	laughed	slow
rope-reins	cried	fast
branch	giggled	angry
friends	pout	kind

Along with the vocabulary scaffolding, the use of worksheets served as a tool for prewriting, allowing the students to brainstorm ideas and make outlines of a topic of writing. The teacher usually prepared a worksheet containing a list of writing prompts related to a certain topic for them to write about. The answers for these given prompts became the main sources of writing for the next drafting task. Thus, she provided feedback on their work of the worksheet when more details or ideas were in need and had them revise and develop more so that what they had completed in the worksheet could be an effective framework for their writing.

The teacher employed a complete series of writing tasks in the light of the process-oriented writing approach, including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. The topic of these writing tasks was about a game from the students' own country. First, the teacher distributed a prewriting worksheet for homework, which was to discuss with their parents about a game they selected. Their parents completed this worksheet. The next day, the teacher had the students engage in another worksheet as a prewriting task based on the information that their parents provided. Through this worksheet, the students had the opportunities for brainstorming and outlining ideas about the game of their choice by answering the given writing prompts in the worksheet, such as *What do you need?, Where can you play?, How do you play?,* and *Why is this game so much fun?* (see Appendix C for the worksheet about a game).

Then they went for the drafting stage based on the brainstormed ideas in their worksheet and incorporated some drawing into their writing (see Appendix D for writing a draft about a game). The next day, the students were asked to polish their writing according to the teacher's comments on the yellow sticky notes posted on their writing paper, for example, *Keep writing at details, Add details and recopy*, etc. Then they recopied their revised writing to make it neat for the display on the wall outside of the classroom in celebration for the upcoming parents-teacher conference day (see Appendix E for the edited writing about a game).

5) Scaffolding

The teacher's modeling seems to play a crucial role of scaffolding in learning to write. Elizabeth often provided detailed explanation on the processes of writing tasks assigned. For example, whenever each worksheet was assigned, she explained about each prompt given on the worksheet, having discussions with her class about what each prompt directed them to complete. She encouraged them to brainstorm their ideas or experiences related to each prompt together with the class, or she provided her own examples as responses to the prompts.

For another example, as Elizabeth introduced the four-square writing activity to her students, she helped their understanding of how to go about this writing activity by modeling its involved writing processes as a whole group. For practice, she encouraged the

students to give a topic for the middle rectangular box, the details or ideas for three boxes, and a feeling sentence as the conclusion for the last box. This modeling process was repeated four times with different topics, such as recess, airplane, pets, and games. The four-square writing activity, which serves as a prewriting task, directs students to fill in four squares and a rectangle. The four squares are for three juicy details and a feeling conclusion; the rectangle in the middle is for the topic of the writing. The use of the four-square graphic organizer helped students be graphically aware of the elements of a good paragraph (see Appendix F for the model of the four-square writing activity).

In addition, individual conferencing was provided frequently throughout the observed instructions for those who needed additional help with certain writing tasks the teacher assigned. For example, when the students were asked to write the story of the book read aloud titled *Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me*, Elizabeth reread the book for a student before he started writing. Also, she provided individual help for a student, telling him more facts from a book for his writing about facts. Other cases of individual conferencing included her guidance on the writing processes, having had discussions with the students about what they could write and helped with writing conventions (e.g., capitalization and punctuation) and spelling matters.

The teacher's belief that vocabulary is a huge foundation for writing led to Elizabeth putting special emphasis on scaffolding vocabulary before the actual writing phase. Some key words from reading texts were reviewed in an attempt to verify students' understanding of the meaning of these words. Or, together with the class, Elizabeth had them brainstorm a list of words that would be used for their following writing tasks.

In addition, she suggested that preparing reference materials could serve as a scaffolding tool of helping them ultimately become independent writers. The teacher-made spelling lists and word lists which were posted on each student's table were efficient learning tools that they can readily use, so that they can be just reminded of a certain word or its spelling when they cannot remember how to spell a word.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study provided valuable opportunity for taking a close look at the current picture of how two experienced ESL teachers taught writing for ELLs in ESL contexts. With differences across grade levels, they employed for their writing instruction a range of instructional methods, including explicit instruction about writing, integration of writing and reading, content-based ESL instruction, process-oriented writing, and various forms of scaffolding. This section will be devoted to synthesizing the findings of each teacher in terms of how they delivered their writing instructional practices, describing several limitations of the study, and suggesting for future research.

1. Instructional Methods

1) Explicit Instruction about Writing

In spite of the significant need of teaching *about* writing, there had been seldom systematic writing instruction observed in the two teachers' classroom practices. The second-grade ESL teacher, Grace, mainly taught writing letters or how to properly write different kinds of letters on three-line ruled paper. The third-grade ESL teacher, Elizabeth, provided writing instruction in how to write a good paragraph in a coherent manner by having her students engage in four-square writing tasks. However, writing instruction was observed infrequently. There had been a lack of explicit writing instruction for teaching about writing. There was no writing instruction to teach more essential writing skills and strategies.

2) Integration of Writing and Reading

In the two classrooms, reading and writing were interwoven. It was clear that reading served as an integral part of the writing practices. The teachers made use of integration of reading and writing activities. As reading materials, the teachers used children's books of various topics and genres, including fiction and nonfiction. Students were engaged in writing to retell what they had read or their teacher had read aloud or display factual knowledge gleaned from books through various types of writing such as journal writing or worksheets. In the third-grade ESL classroom, rather than writing about a book, writing was also connected to multiple books as reference for the content of writing, having the students interact with multiple texts in search for proper information for the topic of writing. The third-grade ESL teacher frequently incorporated the connection of reading and writing in her writing instructional practices. The second-grade ESL teacher did not integrate reading and writing frequently due to her heavier reliance on more structured writing tasks. However, there were always writing tasks whenever reading events occurred.

Moreover, the teachers integrated a variety of reading and writing tasks into other subjects, especially science, in this study. Writing was connected to content-area reading materials and used to check their understanding of content in the subject. During the period of data collection, the main instruction unit was about the solar system and planets, which was incorporated into language instruction in the third-grade ESL classroom. In addition, science content such as fish or reptiles was used for reading and writing events in the second-grade ESL instruction.

3) Process-oriented Writing

The second-grade ESL teacher seldom incorporated process approaches into her writing

instructional practices. On the other hand, many opportunities for process-oriented writing were provided for the third-grade ELLs. They had engaged in either partial stages of prewriting and drafting or all stages of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. The teacher viewed writing as the recursive nature of composing rather than a fixed, linear process.

In particular, the stage of prewriting played a crucial role of scaffolding ELLs' writing processes. Most prewriting tasks employed by the third-grade ESL teacher involved completing worksheets that contained a list of writing prompts related to the topic of writing. This writing prompts effectively helped students review some of key words and brainstorm ideas. Another prewriting task that the teacher frequently used was to brainstorm key words that could be used in their writing. Elizabeth usually led the whole class to think of words on a certain topic of writing and wrote down the brainstormed words on the board as reference when they wrote.

In addition, Elizabeth provided individual feedback on prewriting and writing tasks in light of content, organization, or sentence-level issues of grammar, spelling, and mechanics, mainly when her students' writing contained major spelling errors or a lack of supporting ideas. When the students revised and recopied their writing based on the teacher's comments, they were able to improve the quality of their writing.

4) Scaffolding

All of the teachers in the study often incorporated various forms of scaffolding into their writing instructional practices. For *modeled writing* shown in the gradual release responsibility model (see Figure 1), they gave detailed explanation on the processes of a certain writing task, had the students practice each process, or asked them questions to confirm their understanding of the writing processes. Moreover, they usually presented a writing sample as a model of writing, whether it was the teacher's own writing or other students' writing products.

Next, *guided practice* can be embodied through shared and guided writing. The writing tasks that encourage sharing or social interaction among L2 writers during the processes of writing were seldom found in all of the teachers' instruction, because the majority of writing tasks were conducted individually. For guided writing, the teachers made the frequent use of vocabulary scaffolding and brainstorming ideas. Some of key words were reviewed in order to verify students' understanding of the meaning of these words. The teachers also had them brainstorm ideas, personal experiences, background knowledge, or key words that could be used in the following writing tasks.

In addition, for guided writing, repetition served as a crucial role of scaffolding by the two ESL teachers. They had their students shift from word-level to sentence-level writing while they dealt with either the identical words or content of writing. Or, they were engaged in multiple writing tasks of varying difficulty with the same content (e.g., cloze

writing, worksheet writing in which they wrote sentence-level answers for the given writing prompts, and free journal writing).

The appropriate use of instructional groupings employed by the ESL teachers was also beneficial in helping ELLs who needed more guidance than others. In particular, the teachers made use of ability grouping or individual conferencing for those who were less-proficient. They formed small groups of students and assigned them with writing tasks at their levels of proficiency. The students were able to receive the teacher's attention or feedback on a one-to-one basis at the appropriate level of their writing ability.

Creating print-rich environment features a crucial role of scaffolding in fostering students' processes of writing. For example, a variety of books and commercial posters that were connected to the topic of writing served as good references for their writing, given that such materials can provide them with ideas to write about. Moreover, preparing for reference materials such as spelling or word lists that they may refer to during the process of writing served as a scaffolding tool as well.

2. Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations of this study. First, the limited time period of collecting data is a clear limitation. Although the researcher had spread classroom observations over different days of the week, the study lasted only a short period of time, approximately 5 months. Instructional characteristics may vary at different times of the year.

In addition, because the study was conducted at only one school, the findings of the study may include school-specific features. Individual school may have varied curriculum in terms of teaching a second language for ELLs. Likewise, the nature of writing instructional methods delivered by two teachers at this school may be case-specific in a sense that different teachers at a different school may employ different types of instructional methods.

Because this study was designed to be only descriptive, it does not have an intervention component. However, it provides a strong foundation for suggesting the following future research.

3. Suggestions for Future Research

One of the current recommendations is to connect reading and writing. Beyond simply providing opportunities for writing connected to text, it would be crucial to discover efficient ways to connect writing to reading for fostering the development of writing from reading experience. For example, designing a writing task that helps identify significant aspects of language forms, writing conventions, or textual features of writing would be beneficial for L2 writers to develop writing competence. If such a writing task effectively had students pay attention to a certain aspect of learning (e.g., adjectives, punctuation, or

elaboration) from reading, they could know explicitly what they could learn from the texts they read and apply what they learned in their writing.

Another prevailing instructional method is the process-oriented writing approach. Adaptations could be made to this approach to be more effective for ELLs' development of writing ability. The prewriting stage can be reinforced to provide them with adequate and more thorough scaffolding prior to the drafting stage of writing. What could be expanded in using prewriting tasks may be the inclusion of a structured prewriting task beyond word-level that has them practice useful expressions, phrases, or written discourses. Then, they could apply what they have practiced to the next writing task. By doing so, they could lessen the burden of their limited language proficiency and focus more on the meaning construction process.

The engagement of multiple prewriting tasks that scaffold both language forms and meaning construction could promote their drafting process, ultimately fostering their development of both writing competence and writing performance. Carefully designed prewriting tasks would lead them to have the opportunity to go over what they would be needed in the drafting stage in advance, whether it may be words and language structures to use, generation or organization of ideas, elaboration with supporting ideas, and so on.

Considering the finding that scaffolding plays a crucial role of fostering the development of writing proficiency, further research may be needed to explore other ways to scaffold ELLs' growth as writers. Based on the concept of the gradual responsibility model, it would be worthwhile to investigate how effectively writing tasks can be designed for guided practice for those who are at varying levels of writing ability. Certain writing tasks could be designed to provide higher degree of scaffolding for ELLs with limited English proficiency; in contrast, writing tasks with less degree of scaffolding could be used for ELLs with relatively better English proficiency. Because it would be important to have them engage in an adequate writing task that entails proper scaffolding at their level of writing ability, further research could investigate which types of writing tasks could correspond well to the varied level of ELLs' writing ability.

Understanding the nature of writing instructional methods used in classrooms in an ESL context may provide potential ideas or suggestions on effective ways to teach writing for ELLs in an EFL context, probably along with adequate modification to meet the needs of ELLs in an EFL context. What is needed next may be further classroom-based studies to investigate whether these instructional methods observed from ESL classrooms can be effectively applied for teaching writing for ELLs in an EFL context.

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APPENDIX A
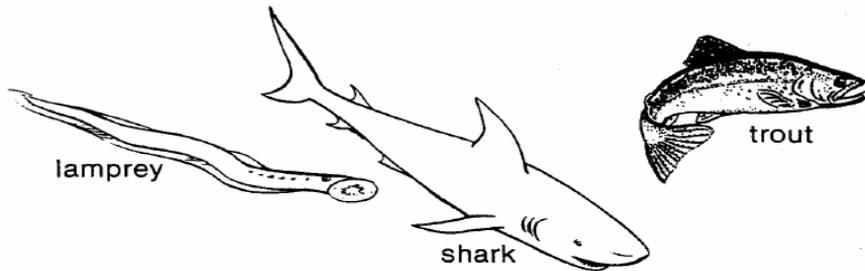Reading Passage About Fish (Lesson Plan by Grace)

Fish Live Only in Water

Fish live only in water. Some fish live in salt water. Some fish live in fresh water. All fish live in water.

Fish are covered with scales. They do not have lungs to breathe. They still use air. Fish breathe through *gills* on the sides of their bodies.

Fish swim with their fins and tails. Some fish rest on the bottom of the water.

There are three groups of fish. The biggest group are vertebrates. They have backbones. Another group of fish have different backbones. Their skeletons are made of *cartilage.* Cartilage is not as hard as bone. Our noses are made of cartilage. A *shark* is one of these fish. Both these fish have teeth for catching food. The last group of fish do not have teeth. They eat by sucking on other fish. A *lamprey* is one of these fish.

lamprey

trout

shark

APPENDIX B
Worksheets About Fish (Lesson Plan by Grace)

Fish

Fish live only in _Water_. Some fish live in _salt_ water. Some fish live in _fresh_ water. All fish live in water.

Fish are covered with _Scales_. They do not have lungs to _breathe_. They still use air. Fish breathe through _gills_ on the sides of their bodies.

Fish _swim_ with their fins and _tail_. Some fish rest on the bottom of the water.

There are three groups of fish. The biggest group are _ventebrates_. They have backbones. Another group of fish have different backbones. Their skeletons are made of _cartilage_. Cartilage is not as hard as bone. Our noses are made of cartilage. A shark is one of these fish. Both of these fish have teeth for catching food. The last group of fish do not have _teeth_. They eat by _sucking_ on other fish. A lamprey is one of these fish.

1. Where do fish live? Some fish live in salt water or fresh water.

2. What covers a fish's body? Fish bodies are covered with scals.

3. Do fish breathe with lungs? Explain. No. Fish breathe with gills.

4. What do fish swim with? Fish swim with their tails and fins.

5. What are the three groups of fish? The three groups are Lamprey shark and trout.

APPENDIX C
Worksheet About a Game

Name

Country Kenya

Game Kora

What do you need?
    7 rocks / stones

Where can you play?
    outside on the balcony

How do you play?
1. Toss stones in the air
2. Catch the stone before it falls and pick up one from the ground.
3. If you miss you are out.
4. If you pick up all of them you win.

Why is this game so much fun?

APPENDIX D
Draft About a Game

Name
Country   Kenya
Name of Game Kora
What do you need 7 rocks/stones
Where can you play it Outside on the balcony , with a friend.
How do you play
1.   Toss Stones in the air.
2.   Catch the Stone before it falls and
3   Pick up one from the ground.

Fun   [I'm good at the game. – really?]
    If you pick up all of them you
Win.

• recopy into Pictures
  sentences
• add why you
  like the game – or
  tell us that your mom
  was good at it

APPENDIX E
Edited Writing About a Game

My Name is
My Country is kenya.
The name of the game is kora.
You need Seven rocks.
you can play the game Outside.
There could be two people That can play the
game. Toss Stones in the air. Catch the Stone
before it falls and pick up one from the
ground. If you miss you are out. If you pick
up all of the rocks you win.

My mom licked the game
because She played it a lot,

APPENDIX F
Model of Four-Square Writing Activity

Name _____

Directions: Write three sentences that prove the topic. Then write a feeling sentence. You may draw pictures to go with your sentences.

Feeling Sentence:

Applicable levels: elementary/secondary
Key words: second/foreign language writing, instructional methods, English language learners

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