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Oral Language in the Prewriting Stage in Early Childhood: A Mixed Methods Study

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ORAL LANGUAGE IN THE PREWRITING STAGE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the difference oral language experiences during the prewriting stage of writing make in a student's quality of writing, enjoyment of writing, and writing behaviors in kindergarten, first, and second grades. Convergent mixed methods design was used for this study. Triangulation of data was completed using three data collection methods: observations, student interviews, and writing samples produced by four kindergarten students, four first grade students, and four second grade students. Each participant engaged in a pretest and posttest for four weeks. The writing samples were scored, and repeated measure design was implemented using a two-sided paired t-test in SPSS. The quality of writing produced from the sessions was statistically significant. Grounded theory was applied, and a constant comparative method was used to identify categories. The substantive theory that developed from categories was that the use of oral language during the prewriting stage of writing increased positive writing behaviors, is reported to make writing easier for young children, and increased the use of egocentric speech. This theory has implications for writing instruction within the early childhood classroom and creates the potential for an increase in the quality of students' writing. The research implications include narration and egocentric speech during prewriting, and its influence on the emergent writer.

Keywords: oral language, writing in early childhood, prewriting, writing stages, egocentric speech

DEDICATION

Saying my story first makes writing easier because "it gives me some time to think about it before I write my story. When I say it, I have to think about it, and then I'm ready to write it."

—Second-grade student

I would like to dedicate this work to my loving husband Brett Reach and my two beautiful sons Logan and Aaron Reach. You have been so supportive through this journey. I am so thankful to have you all in my life. This is for us, and the life we share together.

I give thanks to God for all the answered prayers and love He has shown me through it all. I know he has a plan and purpose for this chapter of my life.

Dr. Lynn Kirkland has been an inspiration for me for almost twenty years, and I was honored when she agreed to be a part of my committee. She is one reason I feel empowered as an educator to make a difference in the lives of children and fellow educators. I have always hung on her every word. Her passion for education is truly contagious.

Mrs. Mary O'Laire was my childcare teacher in high school who told me, "Rebekah, you are so good with children." She encouraged me to be a teacher, gave me the forms to fill out to receive a scholarship, and helped me to realize I could go to college and dream bigger dreams.

My family, friends, employers, and colleagues have been so encouraging and given me strength to continue even when it was tough. I have heard many times during my coursework, “You got this!”

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I would like to thank the University of Alabama at Birmingham. I received my bachelors, master's, and now working toward my Ph.D. at UAB. I have always felt the faculty and staff put the students and learning first. The classes have always stretched my thinking and pushed me to see the world through new a new lens. Go Blazers!

I would like to thank all the participants, families, summer school, and school system who made this research possible. I appreciate your partnership and support in making a dream a reality.

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Writing is one of the most important skills that students develop as part of their formal education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). However, many students find writing to be a challenge, and many teachers struggle to assist students as they develop as writers. Some barriers to writing within the early childhood classroom setting may include students' diverse ability levels, lack of a safe classroom environment for risk taking during early attempts at writing, expectations for teachers to teach spelling and phonics drills in isolation, and the class time needed for children to experiment with writing within their own constructs.

Chall and Jacobs (1983) found strong correlations between language and writing. To be a successful writer, one must hold a "greater facility with language" (p. 625). Murray (1972) stated prewriting and planning consume "about 85% of the writer's time" (Murray, 1972, p. 4). The current state of writing within elementary and secondary classrooms was investigated through a meta-analysis that found the writing practices in many classrooms are insufficient. The writing produced in these classrooms were less than a paragraph in length, spelling and convention focused, and writing which included short answers to prompts (Graham, 2019). This study examined the role of oral language within the prewriting or planning stage of writing within the kindergarten, first, and

second grade classroom. As young students dive into the writing process, they need to use every resource to support their individual writing needs.

Children begin language development from birth when exposed to social environments (Otto, 2018) and come to school with varying language abilities. Dickinson and Tabors (2002) expressed the importance of oral language to literacy. They stated, "Oral language is the foundation of literacy" (Dickinson & Tabors, 2002, p.10). Inner speech begins to develop in preschool years and continues to develop by age seven and eight (Vygotsky & Kozulin [Ed.], 1986; Winsler et al., 2009). If a child has not yet fully developed inner speech, beginning writing without orally expressing thought may impede the writing process. For example, the average age of students in kindergarten is five and six while the average age of first grade students is six and seven. Second grade students typically range from ages seven to eight. Many students in second grade do not turn eight until the last few months of school or the summer after second grade and may still be engaging in egocentric speech. Myhill and Jones (2009) conducted a larger exploratory study with early childhood, children ages five to seven, and found that children use different types of talk before writing. Oral rehearsal before writing caused the child to slow down their language and would sound more like text. Egocentric speech and oral rehearsal serve different purposes for the child. Oral rehearsal or narration is a natural next step and can be developed through narration experiences and routines within a K-2 classroom. Emergent writers may have difficulty organizing their thoughts during writing if they are not given opportunities to share their thoughts orally throughout the writing process, specifically during prewriting. Teaching and implementing routines for

successful prewriting in early childhood is built on the use of oral language and assists in creating the foundation that is needed for literacy.

Writing behaviors and a child's feelings about writing can influence their writing. Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) conducted longitudinal studies with young children and found that literacy begins before children enter school. Young children went through a "regular progression" of writing with or without formal writing instruction (p. 249). The progression had very little to do with the instructional method or teacher. However, the teacher's role did impact writing behaviors and students' feelings about writing. Teaching students only how to write words in isolation without other times to explore writing restricted "children's creative possibilities" needed for children to feel free to take risks and later in the school year caused students to resist writing and speak negatively about themselves as writers (p. 242). The classroom environment during writing should allow children to take risks in writing and to feel comfortable experimenting with language and their current understandings of writing (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982). This study includes behaviors of children during the writing process as well as their feelings about their writing.

Current writing expectations for students in kindergarten, first, and second grade (K-2) are written in Alabama's Course of Study for ELA (2021). The standards are written to create common expectations for each grade level. Standards increase in complexity as students progress through the grades. Skilled teachers teach standards through differentiated practices and meet the needs of their current students. Writing standards for kindergarten students read, "With prompting and support, compose writing for varied purposes and audiences, across different genres" (p. 32). Additionally, students

must “improve pictorial and written presentations, as needed, by planning, revising, editing, and using suggestions from peers and adults” (p. 32).

First grade writing standards include, “With prompting and support, write a narrative that recounts two or more appropriately sequenced events using transitions, incorporating relevant details, and providing a sense of closure” (p. 41). Additionally, “Develop and edit first drafts using appropriate spacing between letters, words, and sentences and left-to-right and top-to-bottom progression” (p. 42). Second grade writing standards include, “Write a personal or fictional narrative using a logical sequence of events, including details to describe actions, thoughts and feelings, and providing a sense of closure” (p. 53).

Writing narratives and implementing the writing process are required in Alabama Public Schools. If our schools expect K-2 students to become writers and if many young students developmentally “think aloud,” the classroom environment should allow children to do so. Including oral language planning during the prewriting stage should become best practice.

Research continues to be conducted to connect oral language and writing in early childhood. Dyson (1983) reported that there had not been any research conducted specifically about talk and the writing process to date. Until that time, research was primarily focused on conventions. Since 1983, more research centered around oral language and the writing process has emerged. Many of those studies researched students talk with peers during writing experiences (Jones, 2003; Long & Bulgarella, 1985). In chapter 12 of the *Handbook of Writing Research,* Shanahan (2006) reviewed research about relationships between oral language and writing. Much of the research surrounds

students in special education. He concludes that not enough research has been collected, and the research to date is not enough to support the ideology that an improvement in oral language would improve writing. Vanderburg (2006) completed a review of the literature and states that there is a need for research which develops guides for children as they develop their "own writing inner voice" (p. 391). More recently, some studies have investigated oral language and writing connections in the general education classroom (Kent et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2015; Kim & Schatschneider, 2017). These studies found correlations between oral language and writing in K-2.

There is a small body of current research to learn more about the writing process in classrooms for grades K-2 (Graham, 2019; Rowe et al., 2021). More specifically, there is very little research available about the prewriting stage in K-2. Horn and Giacobbe (2007) encouraged the use of oral storytelling with emergent writers. Two purposes identified within their research were that oral language opportunities help students develop the craft of writing before being asked to focus on conventions and acknowledges "talk as having an essential place at the core of writing" (p. 16). This research attempts to add to the current research about oral language during the writing process and explicitly develop practical classroom routines to use during the prewriting stage in K-2 classrooms.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate narration during the prewriting stage of writing, and the difference it can make in a student's quality of writing, enjoyment of writing, and writing behaviors in kindergarten, first, and second grade classrooms. It is

necessary for this research to be a mixed methods design. Quality writing without enjoyment for writing ignores a child's social and emotional wellbeing. Enjoyment of writing without quality of writing does not support the child as they meet expectations from the school and state. The interviews in this study allow the child's voice to be heard and feelings about writing to be discovered. Observations of writing behaviors enhance the study by creating a record of what the child is physically doing while writing. Collecting, scoring, and analyzing writing samples provide artifacts to show the influence of narration during the prewriting stage.

The inclusion of oral language practices in writing may directly affect the details students are able to recall, clarify, draw, and write. By including this step in early childhood classrooms, students may be able to express more than they are able to currently write and acquire language to support future writing, as well as build language needed for their current writing and drawing. This research aims to add to the current research in the area of oral language during prewriting in early childhood.

Research Questions

Mixed Methods Question

The primary research question for this mixed methods study was the following: How does having kindergarten, first, and second grade students narrate their story aloud before writing change the quality of their writing, writing behaviors, and the students' feelings about writing?

Quantitative Question

Is there a significant difference between students' quality of writing in K-2 when given the opportunity to narrate their story orally before writing?

Qualitative Question

How do kindergarten, first, and second grade students' enjoyment of writing and writing behaviors change after being offered time to narrate their story aloud during the prewriting stage?

Significance of the Study

The research presented in this study has the potential to benefit the writing of students in kindergarten, first, and second grades, as well as establishing positive writing behaviors. Early childhood educators can use the research to reflect on their practice of writing instruction, creating routines and classroom norms that include oral language during the prewriting or planning stage of writing and throughout the writing process. Administrators and school officials would benefit from this research to assist them as they select resources and professional development opportunities for early childhood educators that will encourage best practices in writing. Universities of higher education can use this study and other studies mentioned in the literature review to teach the next generation of teachers the important role of oral language to young children as they become writers. This study will benefit the growing body of research in the areas of oral language, egocentric speech, and writing in early childhood education.

Research Limitations

This study does not separate oral language into phonological, semantic, syntactic, morphemic, and pragmatic (Otto, 2018). Oral language is made up of these parts but, for the purposes of this research, oral language is viewed as talk that is audible to the child and to others.

The sample size is a limitation of the study. A total of 12 participants were selected for this study, with four students from each grade level K-2. The results can be used to inform writing instruction in early childhood but are not representative of all children in K-2.

The location of the study is one limitation to be considered. The study was conducted in a summer literacy program with children who had been identified as currently performing below grade level in reading. The study does not require the use of this type of setting and could be duplicated in various early childhood settings. The researcher was an active participant in the research and works within the school system where the research was conducted as a second-grade classroom teacher. However, she did not teach during the summer literacy program and did not have any participants who had been her former students. Based on eighteen years of experience in early childhood classrooms, the researcher strongly believes children can and do write when given opportunities to do so. It may look different from child to child, but the expectation is to record all types of writing which includes talking, drawing, and writing. All are perceived to be valid in the writing process.

Definition of Terms

This section provides definitions of terms used in this research.

oral language*:* Talk that is audible.

egocentric speech: The language produced by children before they develop socialized talk, which is more logical (Vygotsky & Kozulin [Ed.], 1986). They are the thoughts of the child.

writing: For this study, "writing is the activity of expressing ideas, opinions and views in print: writing for communication or composing" (Gerde et al., 2012, p. 351).

narrative writing: Story writing that follows a series of events.

personal narrative: Narrative writing that is a true story about a specific day or time in one's life.

narration: The act of saying a story aloud.

writing stages: The stages writers often use when writing. For this research, they are as follows: (a) prewriting, (b) writing, (c) revising, (d) editing, and (e) publishing.

prewriting: "Everything that takes place before the first draft" (Murray, 2003, p. 4).

early childhood: Children between the ages of birth to eight years old. The research presented here is specifically children ages five to eight or kindergarten, first, and second grades.

K-2: Kindergarten, first, and second grade students.

Organization of the Study

Chapter one of this dissertation is the introduction for the research. Chapter two is a literature review describing previous research on the topic of oral language and writing.

Chapter three outlines the details of the research including the methodology and design procedures. Chapter four outlines the findings of the study. Chapter five discusses the findings of the study and suggests applications to research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review looks at past and present research as it applies to oral language and writing. Theories of language development are reviewed in this section. Writing in early childhood is central to the literature review, and best practices in writing and current practices in writing are included. Research on the writing stages is reviewed including the history of the writing stages, writing stages in research, and prewriting. Oral language paired with writing research is the focus of this literature review as it precedes this current research.

Theoretical Framework

The central focus for this study is the development of a writer's inner voice through construction of thought and development of language. There are several theories which are embedded within this research. Constructivist theory is the base of the theories used for this study, specifically Piaget's (1955) study of the development of monologue within egocentric speech. Vygotsky's research is crucial for the study because he believed egocentric speech slowly turns to inner speech or thought (Vygotsky & Kozulin [Ed.], 1986). A writer's inner voice is developed through inner speech, and a young child's thoughts begin with egocentric speech.

A social constructivist lens is also used because participants will be asked to share their thoughts through language with the researcher (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). The use of language during the writing process can be used to clarify, organize, and socialize the thoughts of the child, which has implications to strengthen egocentric speech and later the inner thoughts of the person. Metacognition theory is also applied to the study because asking the child to say their story before writing creates opportunities for the child to become aware of their own thinking (Flavell et al., 1993).

Egocentric Speech to Inner Speech

Two primary researchers who have influenced the field of language development are Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. Egocentric speech is divided into three categories: repetition (such a babbling in infants), monologue, and duel or collective monologue. This study examined monologue and duel or collective monologue. Monologue is defined as the child talking "to himself as though he were thinking aloud" (Piaget, 1955, p. 32). The child is not speaking directly to anyone, a response from the other person is not needed. Duel or collective monologue is the form of egocentric speech that is connected to someone other than the child. The presence of this person "serves only as a stimulus" (p. 33). The child is not thinking about the other person's point of view or if they even understand what is said. In one of Piaget's (1955) studies on language in early childhood, two six-year-old children use egocentric speech through the form of duel or collective monologue during a drawing activity. The children engage in monologues simultaneously but without much attention to each other's talk. Piaget concluded that the monologue was not used to enhance social skills. It was "used to accompany, to reinforce, or to

supplement" their thoughts (p. 39). He believed this phenomenon can be observed by listening to see if the child is directing the speech to someone. However, he did not deny that social elements exist. He believed it to be impossible to separate the language from the action because they react to each other and have been reacting to each other from the onset of language (Piaget, 1955).

In response to Piaget's work, Vygotsky (1986) replicated several of Piaget's studies. He included several tasks that were slightly challenging for the children. The egocentric speech for each child during the task almost doubled. The difficulty of the task is an important factor for egocentric speech. When he made observations of older children completing a task they found challenging, they would pause, think quietly, and then solve the task. Piaget believed that monologue disappears when children move to the adult stage (Piaget, 1955). Vygotsky (1986) did not believe that egocentric speech disappears with age. He believes that the egocentric speech becomes "soundless inner speech" as children get older (p. 30). Inner speech is what most would identify as thought (Vygotsky & Kozulin [Ed.], 1986). Young students need models created for young writers to "reduce the cognitive load" (Vanderburg, 2006, p. 390). Writing can be a complex task for K-2 students, which holds the potential to increase egocentric speech.

Vanderburg (2006) reviewed research surrounding Vygotsky's theories. He believes that educators must help students develop a "writer's inner voice," and research is needed to define the role of inner speech throughout the writing process (p. 375). Vygotsky (1986) suggested that egocentric speech precedes inner speech. Due to this hypothesis, K-2 educators should become more aware of the role of egocentric speech during writing. A teacher has the potential to identify the writing voice of a child and

scaffold the language (Vanderburg, 2006) as they use egocentric speech. Peers may also provide a similar outcome, but the scaffolds are less intentional.

Piaget stated that children who are most likely around the age of seven and younger are "incapable of keeping to himself the thoughts which enter his mind" (Piaget, 1955, p. 59). An understanding of this concept by early childhood educators has the potential to enhance teacher observations of students. By listening to students as they monologue or engage in egocentric speech, educators can hear what a child is thinking and use the information to understand the cognitive functions of the child. By teaching routines to increase oral language before writing, children are not asked to quiet or halt their thinking but instead asked to use what is already natural and aligned with language development. Children may feel more comfortable taking risks in a classroom that encourages them to build on what they can already do successfully. Using this knowledge as a tool may help our youngest students accomplish the writing tasks required of them.

Writing in Early Childhood

Wagner (2008) challenged educators and policy makers to rethink the way schools are preparing students for college. In his writing, he listed solutions. One solution to the problem is helping students develop effective communication using oral language and writing.

Clay (2013) wrote about the writing process in early childhood. Before formal schooling begins, many children have already begun to explore writing. After beginning school, they learn more about the conventions of writing. Some aspects are easier to learn than others. Three of the components that should make up writing in the classroom

mentioned by Clay (2013) are that writing involves "messages expressed in language," "visual learning of letter features and letter forms," and "listening to his own speech" (p. 20).

Best Practices in Writing

Graves (1995) is a prominent researcher in the area of writing for young children. He made suggestions for teachers developed from expert educators in the field of writing. Many of the suggestions include having children talk and draw to assist their writing, allow ample time for writing each day, and to help students see conventions of writing as tools. If students speak different languages, he suggests allowing them to write in their first language if they would like and using peer mentorship during writing (Graves, 1995). Daily routine writing opens the door for children to think about writing even when they are not at school, and it allows children opportunities to reflect on their writing (Graves, 1980).

Manning (2006) discussed writing practices that should and should not be used with children. Following the writing stages is suggested: "rehearse, draft, revise content, engage in conferences with others, edit for mechanics, and publish" (p. 68). Some practices that should not be used but can still be found in classrooms today focus on the product instead of the process, have teachers editing students work without verbal feedback, creating writing that is always prompted, and requiring set lengths or formulas for writing (Manning, 2006). Calkins (1987) highlighted the importance of conferencing with students about their writing. She stated it is the "heart of the writing workshop" (p. 53). During a writing conference, teachers can "help the child consider what has been

written and think of ways to expand or improve" their writing (Manning et al., 1987, p. 38). Collecting samples of student's work and adding them to a portfolio can show student's growth over time. "Saving student's writing is not sufficient" (Allington & Cunningham, 1996, p. 132). Teachers must observe and make notes about the child's writing development (Allington & Cunningham, 1996).

Best practices in writing should be grounded in evidence found in research. The following study reviewed the research on writing and selected best practices for teachers of writing. It is not specific to early childhood, but many of the practices begin in early childhood. Spending daily time writing, 30 minutes or more, and writing for meaningful purposes is best practice. In order to spend daily time writing, a positive classroom writing environment should be in place. The classroom should exhibit writing routines, positive feedback, student engagement, times for sharing and writing with others, and self-regulation. The teacher is an active participant and facilitates the learning. The teacher should be knowledgeable about what needs to be directly taught to students such as spelling, typing, handwriting, sentence construction, using the writing stages, and teaching students the different writing genres (Graham & Harris, 2016).

It is the purpose of this research to focus on students K-2. Best practices for pre-school and kindergarten classrooms were reviewed and best practices are provided. Due to the different needs of students found in an early childhood classroom, some first and second grade students may benefit from some of these practices as well. Twelve best practices were listed in this study, only the practices that have not been mentioned previously are listed here. The best practices for writing in a preschool or kindergarten setting are as follows: accept the writing of the child (including invented spelling),

engage in shared writing (including modeling writing and having students help with the writing), scaffold writing, connect writing with families, use digital tools, have students read or read to students what they write, and use writing in classroom learning centers (Gerde et al., 2012).

Current Practices in Writing

Graham (2019) went on to investigate how writing is currently taught in schools within contemporary classrooms at the elementary and secondary level. He examined 28 studies on the topic. Unfortunately, he found that in most classrooms writing instruction is insufficient. However, there were some classrooms with strong writing instruction. The writing tasks that were found most frequently were short, a paragraph or less, or writing without composing, such as filling in worksheets. More time was spent on spelling and conventions than on taking students through the writing stages (Graham, 2019).

One recent study observed actions and conversations expert teachers had with children during writing in a preschool setting with children ages two to six. The study aimed to show practices teachers implement to support student writing. Teachers conversated, supported, and guided the children's writing. The research was extensive and can be used as a guide for early childhood practitioners (Rowe et al., 2021). It seems many preschool settings are using best practices in writing, but many elementary classrooms are using few if any best practices in writing. More research is needed to examine this topic further.

Writing Stages

History of the Writing Stages

This section creates a chronological view of how the writing stages began to enter early childhood classrooms. The history listed here is found in a collection of 43 essays about composition gathered and edited by Vallanueva (2003). Jerome Bruner is a psychologist who was interested in cognitive functions, language, and the field of education. He was a guest speaker at the National Academy of Sciences conference in 1959 named Woods Hole. Bruner led academia to begin to view the process of learning. At the Darmouth Conference in 1966, others joined together to begin to look at the process of writing. Donald Murray was one of these researchers. At this conference, they challenged researchers to begin to study writing itself, not just the products produced (Vallanueva, 2003).

Donald Murray presented his groundbreaking paper, *Process over Product*, in 1972 (Vallanueva, 2003). He began his paper by explaining what process we should be teaching.

> What is the process we should teach? It is the process of discovery through language. It is the process of exploration of what we know and what we feel about what we know through language. It is the process of using language to learn about our world, to evaluate what we learn about our world, to communicate what we learn about our world. (Murray, 1972, p. 4)

Murray (1972) went on to define three stages of writing: prewriting, writing, and rewriting. The process may look different for different writers, but almost everyone who is writing uses these three stages. Thirty years later, the National Commission on Writing published a document that impressed the importance of writing in all grade levels in

public elementary schools. For young children, they recommended writing curriculum that includes “drawing, talking, word play, spelling, pictures, and writing stories” (National Commission on Writing, 2003, p. 34). Young children do not create multiple drafts the way that more mature writers do (Klein, 1985). Therefore, the focus in early childhood should be to develop the prewriting and writing stages. However, the other stages of writing should be discussed, represented, modeled, and guided. When teaching the writing stages, teachers should describe each stage and its purpose, model the stage for the students, and allow time for guided practice as students become more autonomous with each stage (Graham & Harris, 2016).

Writing Stages in Research

The writing stages need to be explicitly taught. Calkins and Ehrenworth (2016) stated that the writing process is a “learned skill” and includes a process of deciding how to write. The “how” of the writing stages contains a process of “collecting and organizing, drafting, revising, and editing” (Calkins, 2016, p. 7). During writer’s workshop in an early childhood classroom, students need to be given time to write as well as time to investigate the writing process, which is focused on purposeful, meaningful writing which aids children’s language development (Hill et al., 2020). When students were taught strategies for implementing the writing stages, the quality of their writing went up 35% (Graham & Harris, 2016). Flower and Hays (1981) warned against following a linear model of writing and recognizes that planning may take place throughout the writing process as well as revision taking place during writing and after writing. The stages of writing are more fluid (Prior, 1998).

Graham and Sandmel (2011) conducted a meta-analysis on 24 studies of first through twelfth grade classrooms. Classrooms that used a process writing approach showed .34 more improvement in the quality of writing than the control groups. Classrooms that used a process approach included practices such as "cycles of planning," writing, and "evaluating, editing, revising" (Graham & Sandmel, 2011, p. 396).

Prewriting

This study focuses on the prewriting part of the writing process. "Prewriting is everything that takes place before the first draft" (Murray, 1972, p. 4). There are many elements to prewriting that can be identified and taught. "Prewriting usually takes about 85% of the writer's time" (Murray, 1972, p. 4). Rohman (1965) defines prewriting as when a writer is actively discovering not only the words but the pattern of words.

Before a child has a pencil or crayon in hand, prewriting has already begun. The teaching of prewriting should begin in early childhood. Some elements are too advanced for young children but need to be present in writing instruction over the years. Prewriting consists of choosing a topic, thinking of the audience, making choices about the genre style that would best communicate the topic, research, using one's imagination, taking notes, organizing thoughts, thinking of a title (Murray, 1972), and using your life experiences to write about what you know. Early childhood educators can begin by focusing on play and talking and listening to different types of writing (Klein, 1985).

One recent study in the Netherlands observed upper elementary teachers and students to find elements of the writing process. They did see representation of prewriting, but it was primarily whole group and teacher led (Rietdijk et al., 2018). There

have been very few studies that specifically focus on the prewriting stage in early childhood. There seems to be a consensus in the literature that talking is an important part of early childhood education. This research aims to extend the research on the topic of productive talk during prewriting. Time should be spent explicitly teaching each part of the writing process. If 85% of the writing process is prewriting, it justifies more classroom time being spent on assisting students in learning how to develop their thoughts for prewriting. Prewriting is "crucial to the writing process" and "seldom gets the attention it deserves" (Rohman, 1965, p. 106).

Oral Language During Writing in Early Childhood

Goodman (1990) conducted investigational and theoretical research and views oral language as having a "fundamental mediating role in the early stages of written language acquisition" (p. 42). Smith (2003) also stated that research shows "oral language is directly related to literacy" (p. 5). When children begin formal schooling, oral language is typically more advanced than writing. Shanahan et al. (2006) reported that oral language is the foundation where writing can begin. Oral language plays a larger role during the beginning stages of writing but slowly takes a less dominant role. They also contend that there is not a level of oral language that should be met before giving students opportunities to write (Shanahan et al., 2006). However, oral language does not necessarily precede writing (Goodman, 1990). Writing and oral language "interact from the very beginning" (Goodman, 1990, p. 42). This section reviews the literature on oral language during writing within kindergarten, first, and second grade classrooms.

Oral Language & Phonological Awareness

Some studies have found a relationship between oral language and conventions of writing. In one study, 36 primary teachers report using oral language in their classroom but mostly focus writing time with fine motor skills and concepts of print (Peterson et al., 2016). In a different study, 60 kindergarteners were selected randomly from 10 different classrooms. Oral language was found to predict phonological awareness during their first year of school (Mackenzie & Hemmings, 2014). Having strong phonological awareness aids students in writing the words they want to write to represent their thinking during writing. In a study in Brazil, 236 children participated in a longitudinal study from ages six to nine (França et al., 2004). A phonological test was used to distinguish oral language skills at the age of six. Oral language, as is pertains to phonological awareness, was found to predict spelling abilities at the age of nine (França et al., 2004).

Oral Language, Socialization, & Creative Writing

The social element to writing makes writing more enjoyable for children. Many of the technical parts of writing are learned from others as well as gaining motivation to improve one's writing for others to read (Long & Bulgarella, 1985). Dyson (1981, 1983) observed and recorded kindergarteners as they worked together in a writing center where the children selected their own topics. She would interact with the children only if she needed to clarify their writing. She noticed that oral language was used throughout their writing experiences and identified five types of language: representational, directive, heuristic, personal, and interactional. The oral language was used to give the participant's writing meaning. She also states that "eventually talk is viewed as the substance of

written language" (Dyson, 1981, 1983). Jones (2003) had 18 first grade students use a computer program to write narratives together. The social interactions were recorded between the children. Literature language was used between the children "such as suggestions, questions, agreements, and negotiations" (Jones, 2003, p. 176). This is an example of why children should have opportunities to coauthor texts and the need to expose children to storybook reading. Young students often communicate their story with drawings or art (Bromley & Turner, 2019; Ripstein, 2018). When young children write and make markings they perceive as writing, oral language is often found paired with the writing.

Writing conferences are one way to provide feedback to students. Writing conferences can take place before, during, or after a child has engaged in the writing process. Whaley (2002) listened to a student's story, provided immediate feedback to clarify the child's thinking, and dictated the story for the child. The child uses oral language to share their story and engages with the teacher as she/he writes their story. Hall (2014) shared different methods teachers can use to have students share their writing with others such as reading it to a partner, to the class, to the teacher, to their parents etc. This takes place at the end of the writing process and is extremely valuable to bring additional meaning to their writing and build language. Creating a safe and accepting classroom environment where young children can share their writing with others adds value and importance to their writing.

Oral Language and Narrative Writing

Purcell-Gates (1988) conducted a study with 20 kindergarten students and 20 second grade students. The children that had been read to before starting school had better usage of lexical and syntactical language as they used oral language to tell narrative stories to others. This study highlights the importance of reading to children before they begin school, and the effect it may have on their understanding of the way narrative stories should sound. Children who have had experiences with written text show understanding that oral and written text do not sound the same.

The following three studies most resemble my hypothesis for this study as presented. The first study asks students to say their story before writing to reveal if this practice will have a significant impact on the quality of their writing. Seven first graders were placed in three groups. Two of the groups received an oral language intervention three days a week for two weeks. Writing was not part of the intervention but talking about writing was the intervention implemented through a literacy program. The intervention impacted participant's quality of writing as well as writing behaviors when they were writing later in the school day (Spencer & Petersen, 2018).

The study was replicated with six kindergarten students (Kirby et al., 2021). The focus of the study was on text generation after oral narrative instruction. Only narrative structure and language was scored, not conventions. With only a small number of oral lessons provided for narrative writing, student's narrative writing improved and did not go down weeks after the intervention was given to students (Kirby et al., 2021). Talking about writing was enough to improve student's writing.

Myhill and Jones (2009) sampled a larger population (n = 172) of five- to seven-year-old children. The study was exploratory and found a differentiation between different types of talk before writing. Children used oral language before writing to generate ideas and to orally rehearse what they would write. When orally rehearsing, the children's speech would slow down and would sound more like someone reading aloud. The empirical data suggests that having students say their writing aloud provides time for the child to change and shape their ideas before conventional writing takes place.

Oral Language and Writing Correlation

This section reviews six more recent studies that correlate oral language with writing in K-2. They are organized in chronological order. The first study examined two groups of students longitudinally for five years. One group was first to fifth grade, and one group was third to seventh grade. They concluded that writing overlaps with reading and expressive and receptive language. Handwriting was one element of writing or "language by hand" that did not overlap (Berninger et al., 2006).

There is growing interest in neuropsychological functions during the writing process. There were 205 first grade students who participated in the study that follows. The study looked at short- and long-term memory, attention, language-related, spelling, and fine-motor skills as it applies to neuropsychological functions in writing (Hooper et al., 2010). The findings for the study found a moderate to strong relationship between language-related, attention, and spelling to written expression in first and second grades. They conclude that language and attention could possibly be used as early predictors of writing and spelling (Hooper et al., 2010).

Structural equation modeling was used in one study to examine the relationships between oral language, reading, spelling, and letter writing fluency in writing. There were 242 kindergarten student participants for this study. All variables were positively related when reading was accounted for. Reading was not related to writing once the other three variables were removed. The preliminary findings from this exploratory research suggest oral language, spelling, and handwriting are important for beginning writers (Kim et al., 2011). Researchers from this group investigated the topic further in succeeding research.

Kent et al. (2013) examined 265 kindergarten and first grade students. They found that oral language in kindergarten was correlated with the quality of writing produced in first grade. Kim et al. (2015) studied oral language, attention, reading, and transcription in kindergarten, and its affect in writing in third grade. They found reading and oral language had positive correlations together and independently to narrative writing in third grade.

Kim and Schatschneider (2017) used data from 193 first grade children and found 67% variance of the quality of writing. Oral language, discourse level, had the highest effect with .46. Quality of writing will be measured in this study as well and will add to the current research.

In all these studies, oral language was found to impact writing in K-2. There is a need for more research to discover the effects of oral language during the writing stages, specifically the prewriting stage. Oral language in the classroom can be taught explicitly or implicitly (Kirkland & Patterson, 2005). This study leans toward the explicit use of oral language during writing in K-2 but does not minimize the importance of the implicit use of oral language within a K-2 classroom setting. Purcell-Gates (2001) contends that

oral language should only be used under a "written language proficiency prospective" (p. 8). She believes literacy researchers should discuss oral language only as it applies to written language. She states, "Emergent literacy is the development of the ability to read and write written texts, and written texts are constituted by written language. Thus, it makes no sense to take the language out of the emergent part of literacy" (p. 8). Writing is made up of so many different types of genres. Exposure to these genres will take time, years even. Personal narrative writing is a good place to start with young children. Little genre exposure is needed for this style of writing because it sounds most like everyday language and directly relates to a child's personal experiences.

Summary

This chapter discussed theoretical frameworks that guided the study and reviewed literature related to oral language and writing in early childhood. Egocentric speech (Piaget, 1955) is an everyday part of the early childhood classroom. The speech or talk of the child has been a topic of investigation over the years. There have been many studies conducted on the topic of writing in early childhood. The research surrounds best practices in writing, conventions, handwriting, and spelling. Less research is available about the writing process and very little research is available about the prewriting stage in K-2.

Oral language and writing research can be divided into oral language combined with phonological awareness, socialization, creative writing, and narrative writing. There is a growing body of research that connect oral language directly with improvements in writing. Research is needed to show the correlation between oral language during the

prewriting stage of writing and quality of writing in early childhood. Research is also needed to provide insight into observable writing behaviors of children and listen to the voice of children as they share how they feel about their own writing. The next chapter will address the research methodology and design.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Research Design: Mixed Methods

The purpose of the study was to research narration during prewriting in K-2 by observing participant's writing behaviors, interviewing participants about their feelings about their writing, and collecting pretests and posttests writing samples to compare quality of writing with or without the oral language intervention. Mixed methods research was selected for this study and combines qualitative and quantitative approaches equally to create a deeper understanding of the topic and answer the research questions (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). The mixed methods research question investigated through this study was: How does having kindergarten, first, and second grade students narrate their story aloud before writing change the quality of their writing, writing behaviors, and the students' feelings about writing? The quantitative question was: Is there a significant difference between students' quality of writing in K-2 when given the opportunity to narrate their story orally before writing? The qualitative strand was examining: How do kindergarten, first, and second grade students' enjoyment of writing and writing behaviors change after being offered time to narrate their story aloud during the prewriting stage?

The qualitative strand is essential to the study. Observations of writing behaviors were made to explore if the learner's writing behaviors changed when encouraged to

narrate their writing aloud before writing. Brief interviews exploring the thoughts of the child about their own writing provides valuable information to enhance the study. The quantitative strand is necessary to determine the difference between the quality of students' writing with and without the opportunity to use narration during the prewriting stage of writing.

A convergent design was used to compare the quantitative and qualitative results with intentions to answer the research questions and validate or invalidate one strand of research with the adjacent strand (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). When merging the qualitative and quantitative strands, results will reveal if both strands produce positive or negative effects from the oral language intervention on participant's writing behavior, feelings about writing, and the quality of writing produced. It is possible for one branch of the data to have positive effects (such as student's positive writing behaviors increasing) but have negative effects in another area (such as quality of writing or student's feelings about writing). The convergent design is needed within this study to create a more wholistic view of the phenomenon.

Philosophical Assumptions

Philosophical assumptions influence research due to the researcher's current worldview. A constructivist worldview is central to this mixed methods study. The goal of this type of research is to discover the individual views of the participants and to interpret those views (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Axiology is the values which are emphasized throughout the research process (Tashakkori et al., 2021). By using mixed methods, the voice and perspective of the participants are valued. Participants will share

experiences from their life. They will use talking, writing, and drawing to represent those experiences.

Ontology is the researcher's perspective and belief about reality (Tashakkori et al., 2021). Mixed method was chosen for this research because the researcher views both methods as valid and important to create a wider lens to view the data. The researcher views learning through a constructivist paradigm and desire to understand the thinking of each participant through actions such as writing behaviors and writing samples and language such as open-ended interview responses and narrations made by the child (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). In this study, I revealed the thoughts or constructs of the child through talking, drawing, and writing. I agree with Piaget's idea that it is impossible to separate the action from the person since they have been together from the onset of language (Piaget, 1955). This belief causes me to also subscribe to a social constructivist lens because it is impossible to separate the child from the environment (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). The researcher agrees with Ferreiro's (1978) hypothesis created from her constructivist beliefs that "to understand any particular writing system, the child has to engage in an active construction process of a cognitive nature" (p. 27).

The social interactions in this study were social interactions between the researcher and participant. More constructs are possible because of this interaction. The researcher strongly believes that language is necessary for children to become writers, and young children need to orally express their language. Writing for early childhood students can be taxing at times due to the many different skills they must use to transfer their thoughts into writing. Part of this study includes questioning which encourages the participant to include details orally that they had not included prior to the questioning.

Research Site

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was acquired before any data collection began. The data collection took place in a free, optional summer literacy program which meets for one month out of the summer at a local elementary school. The summer school offers reading support for students completing kindergarten, first, second, and third grades. A gatekeeper letter was sent and approved by the school district. The director of the summer school was contacted prior to the first day of summer school and suggested a space within the school for the data collection as well as collaboration between the researcher and the teachers at the summer school program. The researcher is a second-grade teacher within the school district. The participants in the study did not include any of the researcher's former students and had not been introduced prior to the study. Permission forms were collected from all interested participants in K-2, but participants were not selected if they attended the elementary school where the researcher is employed.

Description of Participants

The study gathered data on 12 participants from early childhood elementary grade levels K-2. All 12 participants participated in both strands of research. The study participants included four students bridging between kindergarten and first grade, four students bridging between first and second grade, and four students bridging between second and third grade. The participants had been identified by the schools within the district as needing extra support for reading and were offered the summer literacy program. However, the aim of this research is not targeted for children achieving below

grade level in reading. It is designed for all K-2 students. Attendance was optional, but students who signed up for the program were encouraged to attend each day. The participants were selected from this group of students based on grade level (four from each grade) and from those who returned the informed consent document. An informed consent document was sent home with all students in K-2. Participants were also selected to create a sample size that is diverse by race, gender, and ethnicity based on availability of participants. Five participants were female, and seven participants were male. Participants were diverse and included participants that are black or African American (five participants), Hispanic (four participants), and white or Caucasian (three participants).

Convergent Design Procedures

There are four important steps within a convergent mixed methods design: separate yet simultaneous collection of both qualitative data and quantitative data, analysis of both strands of data separately, merging the two data sets, and interpreting the merged data. The quantitative data and qualitative data were gathered simultaneously (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). The data collection was completed in two 15-to-30-minute sessions, Session I and II each week. Session I included the pretest (participant's personal narrative writing sample), observations of writing behaviors, and a brief post interview. During Session II, the intervention was implemented, which is a narration of the participant's personal narrative story during prewriting, posttest was given (participant's personal narrative writing sample), observations of writing behaviors was recorded, and a post interview was conducted which included two additional questions.

Session I: Pretest

Each child was met individually and was asked to write a personal narrative story about their life using pictures and words. The participant was given the writing paper and a pencil. The directions were as follows: “Write a true story about your life with the pencil. Then, draw a picture to match your story with the colored pencils.” If a participant was unable to complete this task, further directions were given. “Write about a time when you felt excited/scared/sad.” If they were unable to complete this task, they were encouraged to draw first and then write. “Draw a picture to show a true story about your life and then write as much as you can using letters or words.” Efforts were made to help the child be as comfortable as possible without giving assistance to the words or picture. While they were writing, observations were made about the student’s writing behaviors: hesitancy, enthusiasm, frustration levels, confidence/lack of confidence, facial gestures, body language, and engagement. When the participant was finished, they were asked the following two open-ended interview questions:

- How do you feel about your writing today?
- Can you tell me why you feel that way?

Session II: Posttest

Participants were met individually and were asked to write a personal narrative story about their life using pictures and words. Before they began writing, they were asked to say their story aloud. “Can you tell me a true story about your life?” As they shared their story, they were asked questions to assist them in adding additional information such as “What happened next?” or “Can you tell me more?” They were also

asked to clarify their thinking when necessary. If a participant was unable to complete this task, further directions were given. “Tell me about a time when you felt excited/scared/sad.”

After they completed saying their story aloud, the directions were as follows: “Write your story with the pencil. Then, draw a picture to match your story with the colored pencils.” Efforts were made to help the child be as comfortable as possible without giving assistance to the words or picture. While the child was writing, observations were made about the student’s writing behaviors: hesitancy, enthusiasm, frustration levels, confidence/lack of confidence, facial gestures, body language, and engagement. After the child was finished, the participant was asked the following open-ended interview questions:

1. How do you feel about your writing today?
2. Can you tell me why you feel that way?
3. Do you feel that it was easier to write today when you said your story first?
4. Why do you think it was easier/harder?

Field Period

All participants received both the controlled Session I and the experimental intervention in Session II. The sessions were repeated four times for each participant, two sessions per week, over the four-week data collection period totaling 96 possible individual sessions. One participant was not available for one session, so data was collected from 95 total sessions. The participants remained the same throughout. Figure 1 illustrates the procedures for the convergent design used in this study. An audio recording of each

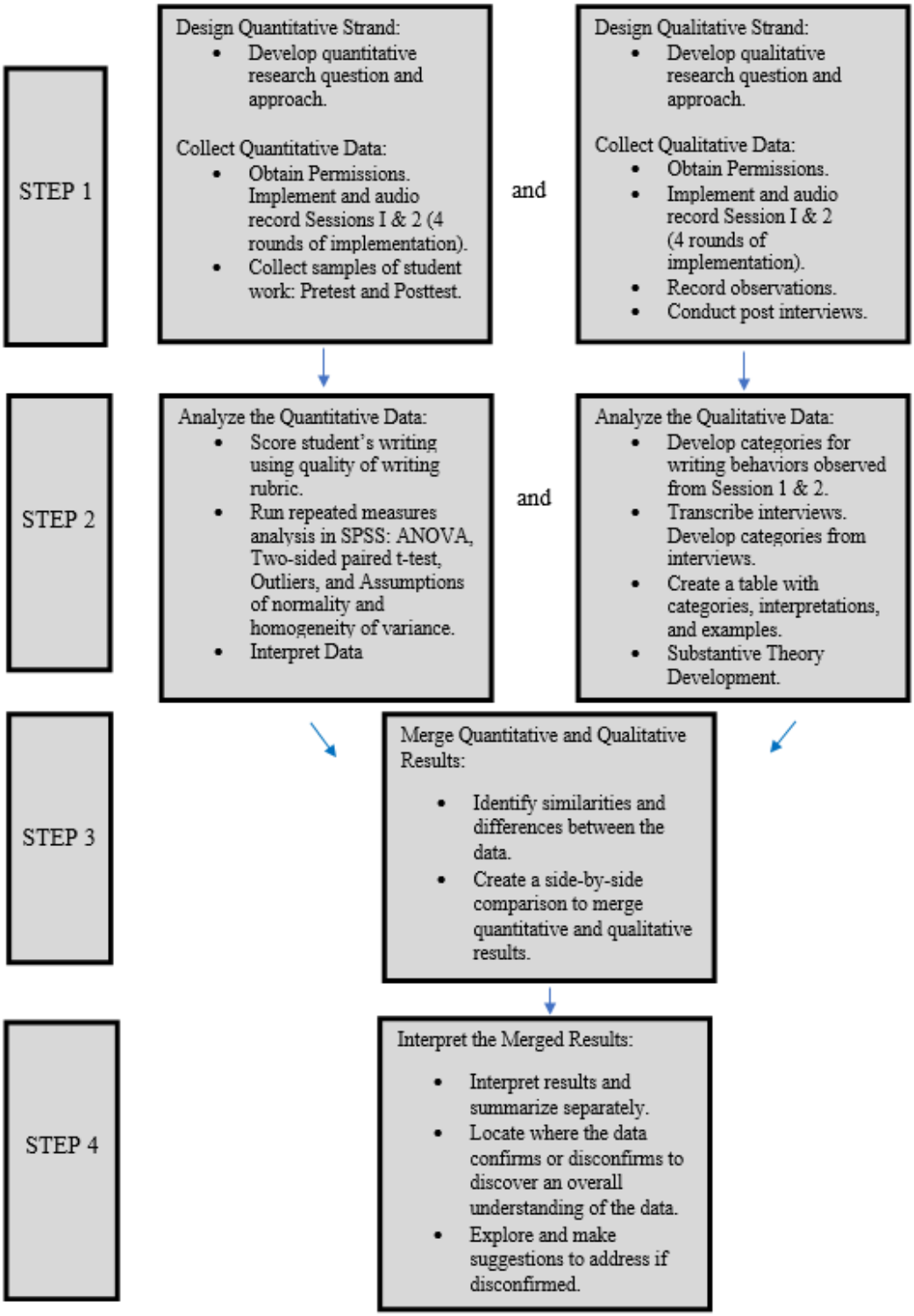
session was collected, and the interviews were transcribed. Details of data collection, analysis, merging both strands of data, and interpreting the results are included within this section.

Qualitative Strand

The qualitative inquiries for this study used a grounded theory methodology. Grounded theory is when a theory is developed directly from the data collected and attempts to build a theory around phenomenon that are found within a society, such as writing within a classroom (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). “Grounded theory is particularly useful for addressing questions about process.” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 32). It is not a grand theory, but a theory surrounding a “facet of professional practice” (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 142). The oral language intervention tested in this study has the potential to influence professional practice of the way prewriting is taught within K-2 classrooms.

Figure 1

Convergent Design Procedures



Note: Adapted from Creswell and Plano Clark (2018).

Qualitative Data Collection

Permissions from the IRB, school system, and guardians were collected before the data collection process began. Each session was audio recorded. The data collected within this strand was through observations of participant's writing behaviors and interview responses.

The observations were recorded in a researcher's log and included any visible body movements or facial expressions as well as talk mouthed, whispered, or stated during the session. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Session I interview questions were the following: (1) How do you feel about your writing today? and (2) Can you tell me why you feel that way? Session II interview questions were the following: (1) How do you feel about your writing today? (2) Can you tell me why you feel that way? (3) Do you feel that it was easier to write today when you said your story first? (4) Why do you think it was easier/harder? Sessions I and II were implemented with each participant individually and repeated each week for four weeks.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Field notes and transcriptions were coded using open, axial, and selective coding within grounded theory methodology (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Open coding was first used as field notes were reviewed and interviews were transcribed. Notations were made next to the data that seemed relevant to the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The data was compared and analyzed for categories using axial coding using a constant comparative method of data analysis (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). New codes based on observation notes and

interview responses were compared with codes already recorded prior to the session. A "master list" of codes was slowly developed by recording the codes together (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 206). The constant comparative method is used within grounded theory to compare data, develop categories based on specific properties, and synthesize until "highly conceptual categories" or core categories were developed (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 143).

Theoretical saturation is used within grounded theory methodology and is met when no new categories or properties are found within the research (Strauss et al., 1998). Theoretical saturation was met by weekly analysis of the data collected from the interviews and observations when already discovered codes continued to be found and no new codes emerged.

Validity of Qualitative Methods

The threat to validity within the qualitative strand of research questions the researcher's interpretation of the results. One strategy used in this study to address this threat is the use of triangulation (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Triangulation collects data from multiple data points: participant interviews, researcher observations, and student work samples.

Another strategy is the process of peer review (Merriam & Associates, 2002). This study is being completed through doctorate studies through a university. The methods of the study are being reviewed by the methodologist on the doctoral committee.

It is recommended to spend enough time with the qualitative data to "ensure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon" (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 26).

Saturation within the data decreases this threat to validity. Saturation was achieved in both observation and interviews. The children's writing behaviors became predictable, and participant's response to interview questions were used to find core categories of most frequent responses.

Quantitative Strand

A repeated measure design was used in this study. Repeated measure designs find "differences between two conditions" (Field, 2013, p. 17). The quantitative strand using data collected through student work samples to determine if there is a significant difference between the quality of student's writing with or without the oral language intervention. Session I included the pretest which was the participant's personal narrative story without the oral language intervention. Session II incorporated the posttest which included the oral language intervention. The variables in Session II were the same as Session I except for the implementation of the intervention. The outcome of the intervention was quantified by scoring the participant's writing and drawing. The scoring instrument and scoring guidelines are included in the following section. The hypothesis formed for this strand is that encouraging early childhood students to narrate their story before writing will have a significant impact on the quality of their writing. The null hypothesis is that no significant difference will be found.

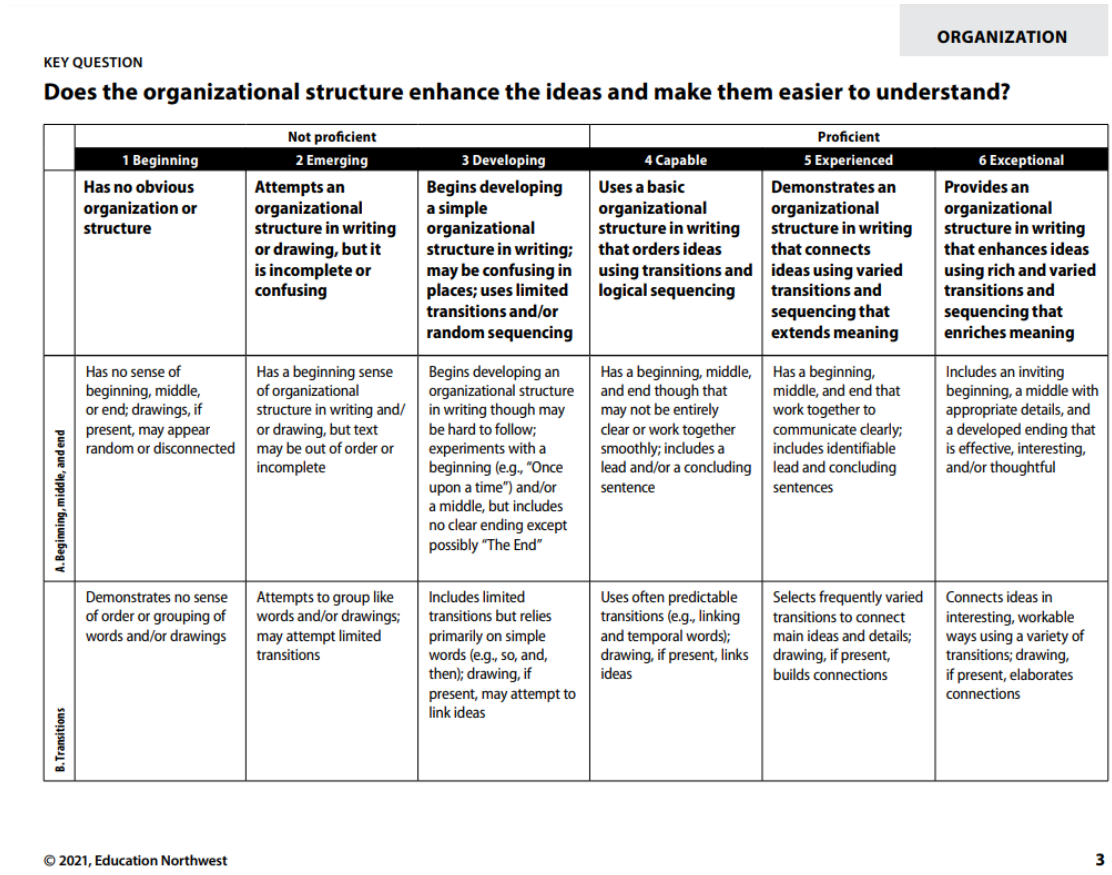
Scoring Instrument

A quality of writing rubric was used to analyze and quantify students' writing. The rubric used for this study is the 6+1 Trait® Model of Instruction & Assessment

quality of writing rubric for K-2 (Education Northwest, 2021). The rubric was designed to support teachers as they assist students during the writing process. The rubric has been field tested and is research-based (Collier-Fredenburg, 2018; Culham, 2005; Education Northwest, 2021; Moskal & Leydens, 2000). Culham (2005) provided detailed directions about scoring the rubric through case study analysis as well as longitudinal studies with children in primary grades. The K-2 rubric was recently updated by Education Northwest (2021). The rubric divides quality of writing into seven areas on a scale from one to six. Each writing sample was examined and given a score for each area. The areas assessed are as follows: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation. An example of one area of the rubric is found in Figure II. The complete rubric is included in Appendix H.

Figure 2

Example of Quality of Writing Rubric



ORGANIZATION

KEY QUESTION

Does the organizational structure enhance the ideas and make them easier to understand?

	Not proficient			Proficient		
	1 Beginning	2 Emerging	3 Developing	4 Capable	5 Experienced	6 Exceptional
	Has no obvious organization or structure	**Attempts an organizational structure in writing or drawing, but it is incomplete or confusing**	**Begins developing a simple organizational structure in writing; may be confusing in places; uses limited transitions and/or random sequencing**	**Uses a basic organizational structure in writing that orders ideas using transitions and logical sequencing**	**Demonstrates an organizational structure in writing that connects ideas using varied transitions and sequencing that extends meaning**	**Provides an organizational structure in writing that enhances ideas using rich and varied transitions and sequencing that enriches meaning**
A. Beginning, middle, and end	Has no sense of beginning, middle, or end; drawings, if present, may appear random or disconnected	Has a beginning sense of organizational structure in writing and/or drawing, but text may be out of order or incomplete	Begins developing an organizational structure in writing though may be hard to follow; experiments with a beginning (e.g., "Once upon a time") and/or a middle, but includes no clear ending except possibly "The End"	Has a beginning, middle, and end though that may not be entirely clear or work together smoothly; includes a lead and/or a concluding sentence	Has a beginning, middle, and end that work together to communicate clearly; includes identifiable lead and concluding sentences	Includes an inviting beginning, a middle with appropriate details, and a developed ending that is effective, interesting, and/or thoughtful
B. Transitions	Demonstrates no sense of order or grouping of words and/or drawings	Attempts to group like words and/or drawings; may attempt limited transitions	Includes limited transitions but relies primarily on simple words (e.g., so, and, then); drawing, if present, may attempt to link ideas	Uses often predictable transitions (e.g., linking and temporal words); drawing, if present, links ideas	Selects frequently varied transitions to connect main ideas and details; drawing, if present, builds connections	Connects ideas in interesting, workable ways using a variety of transitions; drawing, if present, elaborates connections

Quantitative Data Collection

Permission from the IRB, school system in charge of the summer literacy program, and permission from the guardians of the participants was sought prior to data collection. The personal narrative writing samples produced by each participant was collected for 95 out of the 96 sessions. One participant was unavailable for one post session. 95 writing samples were used in the study. Pre- and post-work samples were gathered and labeled each session to maintain confidentiality. Names were not present on the writing samples unless written by the child within the story. Each writing sample was first labeled either Session I or Session II and week 1, 2, 3, or 4. Each participant was

given a letter to represent their grade level. Kindergarten participants were labeled as K. First grade participants were assigned the letter F, and second grade an S. Additionally, each participant was given a number within each grade level. There were four participants within each grade level randomly assigned 1, 2, 3, or 4. Table I provides the details of the labels.

Table 1

Participant Identifiers

Participant Identifier	Kindergarten Participants: K1, K2, K3, K4 First Grade Participants: F1, F2, F3, F4 Second Grade Participants: S1, S2, S3, S4
Session	Session I or Session II
Week	Week 1, 2, 3, or 4

Quantitative Data Analysis

Writing samples were analyzed and scored using the 6+1 Trait® Model of Instruction & Assessment quality of writing rubric for K-2 (Education Northwest, 2018). The pretest and posttest scores were averaged for each participant (n=12) over the life of the study to give a mean pre and posttest score for each participant. These mean pre and posttest scores were entered into SPSS.

A two-sided paired sample t-test was used to compare the means of the pretest and posttest to determine statistical significance within a repeated measure design. The null hypothesis is that there is not a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores. The alternate hypothesis is that there is a significant difference between scores. The dependent variable was the mean scores, and the independent variable was the

pretest and posttest. The assumptions of the paired value t-test are discussed in the following section.

Validity of Quantitative Methods

Outliers are values that differ greatly from other data points (Field, 2013). Due to the small sample size, outliers have the potential to skew the data. An extreme value table is provided, Table 2. The values are close in number and did not reveal any outliers.

Table 2

Outliers

Extreme Values

			Case Number	Value
Mean Score Difference	Highest	1	12	4.50
		2	6	4.00
		3	2	3.75
		4	9	2.25
		5	3	1.50[a]
	Lowest	1	11	.25
		2	7	.50
		3	1	1.17
		4	8	1.25
		5	5	1.25[b]

a. Only a partial list of cases with the value 1.50 are shown in the table of upper extremes.
b. Only a partial list of cases with the value 1.25 are shown in the table of lower extremes.

Assumptions of normality were accounted for within SPSS. The Shapiro-Wilk test of normality "compares the scores in the sample to a normally distributed set of

scores with the same mean and standard deviation" (Field, 2013, p. 185). Table 3 includes the test for normality and shows a significance of $p > .05$ for both the pre and posttest. The sample is most likely normally distributed. A quantile-quantile (Q-Q) plot is provided for the pre and post tests and revealed the data points were normally distributed and were close to the diagonal line (Field, 2013). If the dots deviate from the line, it could provide evidence that the test did not achieve normality, Figure 3 and 4. We can assume normality for this study.

Table 3

Test of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Mean Pretest Score	.178	12	.200*	.914	12	.238
Mean Posttest Score	.135	12	.200*	.934	12	.429

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Figure 3

Pretest QQ Plot

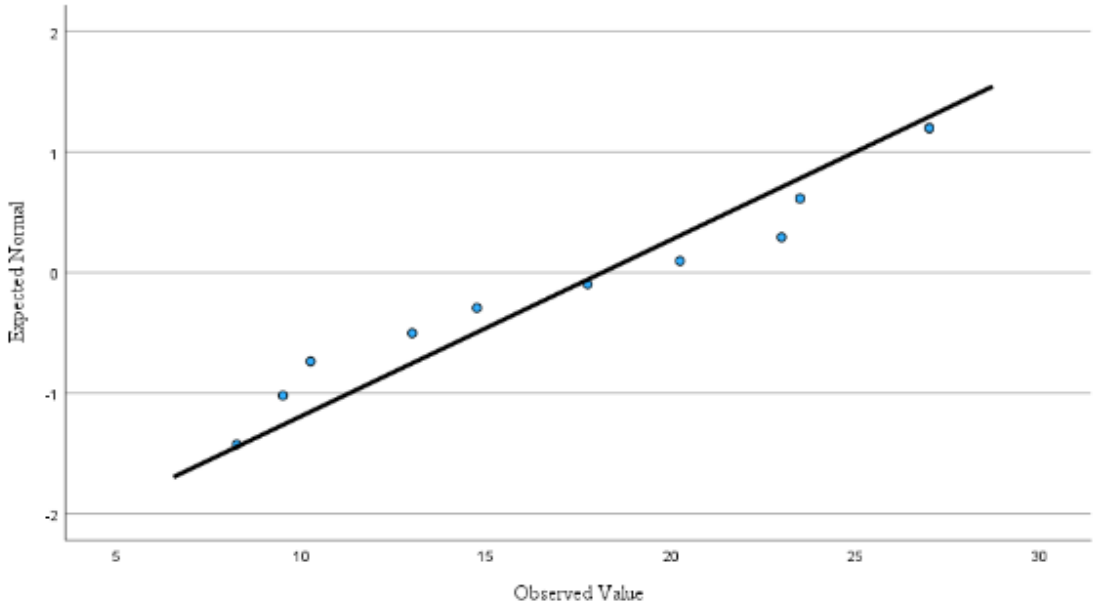
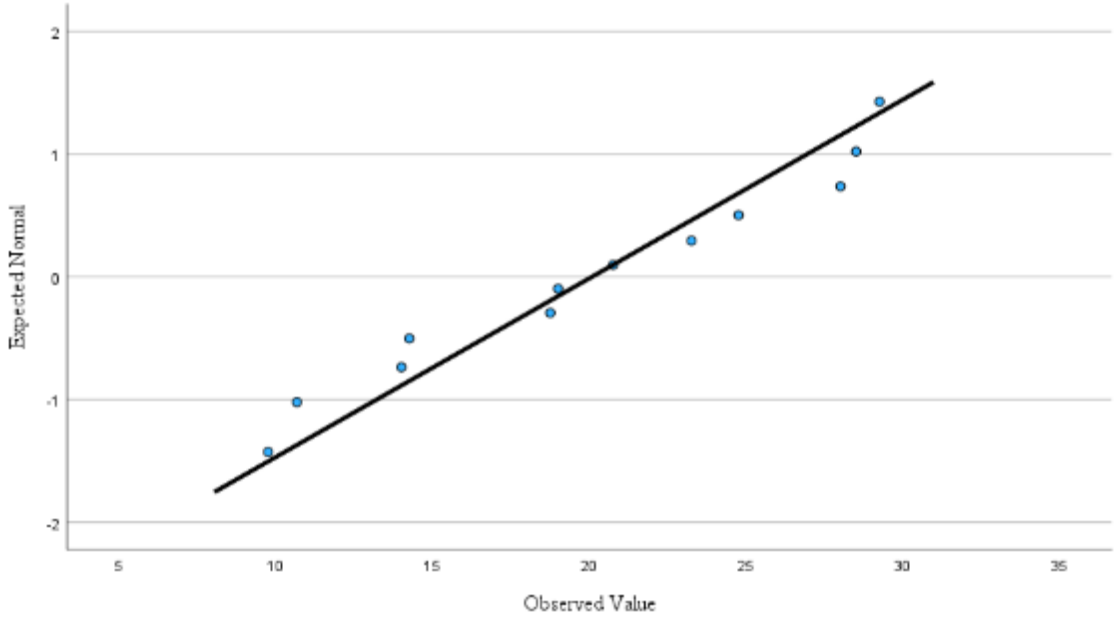


Figure 4

Posttest QQ Plot



Potential threats to validity within the quantitative strand are history, maturation, selection, study attrition, testing, and instrumentation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). History is a threat to this study because the study requires the use of a pretest and posttest given each week for four weeks. The threat of history is addressed by following consistent data collection procedures and offering the same experience to all participants (setting, materials, interview questions, and intervention).

Maturation is a threat due to repeating the pretest and posttest each week for four weeks. Maturation is possible but most likely minimal due to the time frame and age of the participants. The participants are in grades K-2 and most likely will minimally mature within a four-week period. Selection is a threat to validity and was addressed by providing all students in K-2 within the summer school with an informational letter and guardian permission form. However, students who attend the school where I currently teach or former students of mine, were not selected for the study in attempts to avoid unnecessary bias.

Study attrition is a threat to quantitative methods. Only one participant was unavailable for one session out of 12. 95 out of 96 possible sessions with participants was achieved. Testing could be a threat to validity but was addressed by leaving the writing for the students open ended. They were encouraged to write different stories about their life each session. However, a small number of participants did repeat or return to ideas that were very familiar to them. This is a true threat to validity within this line of research. Instrumentation threats are addressed by using the same instrumentation in the pre and posttests.

Reliability of Quantitative Methods

A measure is viewed as reliable if it "consistently reflects the construct that it is measuring" (Field, 2013, p. 706). Reliability can be achieved when the scores from the participants are consistent over time and when the instrument used to measure is a "quality instrument" (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). The instrument chosen, the quality of writing rubric, for the quantitative strand has been field tested and is based in qualitative research to date and can be considered a quality instrument (Education Northwest, 2018; Culham, 2005). Reliability was achieved by repeating the same pre and posttest with the same participants once a week for four weeks. Cronbach's test of reliability was implemented within SPSS on the pretest and posttest, Table 4, and is considered the "most common measure of reliability" (Field, 2013, p. 708). The alpha resulted in .989 and is considered very high (more than .70) and internally reliable.

Table 4

Cronbach's Test of Reliability

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.989	2

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	12	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	12	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Merging and Interpreting Qualitative and Quantitative Data

Merging the qualitative and quantitative data provided a deeper understanding of the data and assisted in answering the mixed methods research question (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). Similarities and differences were identified and shared using a side-by-side comparison (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The merged data was summarized and analyzed to find out if the quantitative results confirmed or disconfirmed the qualitative results by looking at positive and negative correlations based on the oral language intervention. Suggestions are made if results were disconfirmed.

Validity of Mixed Methods

Creswell and Plano-Clark (2018) identify four threats to validity in convergent design mixed methods research. Three out of the four validity threats were eliminated in this study. One threat to validity in this design that was eliminated was creating unequal sampling sizes. The research was validated by both quantitative and qualitative strands by including the same sampling size and the same participants throughout the length of the study.

Another threat to validity was reporting results separately. Merging and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative strands together through a side-by-side comparison chart reduced this threat. It was possible for the quantitative results to show a positive effect on the quality of the participant's writing, and the qualitative results to show a negative effect on the participant's writing behaviors or feelings about writing. It was also plausible that participants could show positive writing behaviors and report positive feelings about writing, but quantitative data results in little to no significance in the

quality of writing. If the results of the mixed methods are disconfirmed and the researcher fails to report this information, this is considered a threat to validity. Any elements that are not confirmed will be identified and reported, and suggestions will be made.

The strongest threat to validity in this study was what was measured in the quantitative strand was not the same as what was being measured in the qualitative strand (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). The quantitative strand measured the participants quality of writing using the 6+1 Trait® Model of Instruction & Assessment quality of writing rubric for K-2 (Education Northwest, 2018). The rubric was "field tested, research-based, teacher friendly and designed for easier use across text types" (Education Northwest, 2021). The qualitative strand measured the participants writing behaviors and feelings toward writing using observations and individual interviews. However, both strands attempt to answer the research question which addresses the effects of narration during prewriting for students in grades K-2.

Research Permission and Ethical Considerations

IRB documentation was submitted and approved before data collection began, Appendix A. Permission was given from the gatekeeper who overlooks studies completed within the school system, Appendix B. All children in K-2 attending the summer school were provided a recruitment letter and informed consent. All participants in the study are minors and required informed consent from their legal guardian, Appendix C-F. The recruitment letter and informed consent was translated into Spanish by a professional translation service named Rapid Translate, Appendix D and F. The company is affiliated with the American Translators Association. These documents were translated to assist

with communication with families who speak Spanish as their first or primary language and to provide a detailed explanation of the study to all families of participants.

Participants first names are only known by the principal investigator and were recorded on a clipboard with the child's room number. The summer school has concluded, and the children can no longer be located. The permission forms and all writing samples and field notes are stored within the researcher's personal office in a locked filing cabinet. Student identifiers were used on the student writing samples, and names were only included if the child decided to include their name in their writing. Confidentiality is prioritized in efforts to protect the participants within the study.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is a participant observer within this study. The researcher interacted with each participant individually. The researcher is currently a second-grade teacher and has taught in a public kindergarten through fifth grade elementary school for eighteen years. All 18 years have been in early childhood grade levels. Of the 18 years, 13 were in a general education kindergarten classroom. The research took place in a summer literacy program within the school system in which the researcher is currently a classroom teacher. The researcher is extremely comfortable facilitating writing experiences with children, including writer's workshop and assisting children as they progress through the writing stages.

The researcher is unable to separate her bias from a metacognitive lens (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). The researcher believes creating avenues for students to develop metacognition is one of the most important jobs for educators. Conferencing with

teachers and peers helps students to become more aware of their own thoughts. As students share their stories orally with others, they might refine their thoughts in attempts to make their language understandable to others as they share their story.

Strengths and Challenges of Convergent Mixed Methods Design

One strength of convergent mixed methods design is that both the quantitative and quantitative data collection can occur within the same session with each participant. This can aid in the merging of the data because it was collected within the same timeframe. Another strength to this design is the strength of both strands working together to deepen the study and provide what one strand could not provide alone. Using the same sample and sample size for both strands can support the merging process but can also be viewed as a weakness to convergent design because one strand may be more limited than it would have been otherwise (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018).

Summary

This chapter described the research design and procedures used in this study. Convergent mixed method design was used for this study. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected simultaneously and merged to interpret results (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). The qualitative strand is embedded in grounded theory methodology and uses a constant comparative method of data analysis using categories created from observations of student writing behaviors, and participant responses to interview questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The development of a substantive theory is plausible through grounded theory methodology.

The quantitative strand uses a collection of writing samples from the participants and a quality of writing rubric to quantify the quality of writing and drawing produced. The scores were entered in SPSS database and repeated measures was utilized through a two-sided paired sample t-test. Pretests and posttests were compared between sessions to discover statistical significance. The next chapter presents the findings of the study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the difference oral language experiences during the prewriting stage of writing make in a student's quality of writing, enjoyment of writing, and writing behaviors in grades kindergarten, first, and second. This chapter presents the findings of the qualitative portion of the study, results of the quantitative output, and the merged findings.

Qualitative findings reveal if the oral language intervention increases enjoyment of writing and positive writing behaviors using student interviews and observations of writing behaviors. The quantitative findings compare scores from students' writing samples in Session I and Session II in efforts to find statistical significance. A convergent mixed methods design was used to merge the two strands to compare and validate quantitative and qualitative results (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018).

Summary of Participants

Twelve participants from grades K-2 participated in this study. Four students from each grade level were included. There were seven participants who were male, and five participants who were female. Five participants were black or African American, four participants were Hispanic, and three participants were white or Caucasian. Table 5 provides a summary of the children who participated in this study.

Table 5

Participant Demographics

Participant Identifier	Grade level	Race
K1	Kindergarten	Hispanic
K2	Kindergarten	White
K3	Kindergarten	Black
K4	Kindergarten	Hispanic
F1	First	Hispanic
F2	First	Black
F3	First	Black
F4	First	White
S1	Second	Black
S2	Second	Black
S3	Second	Hispanic
S4	Second	White

Qualitative Findings

Grounded theory methodology was applied to this strand of inquiry (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A substantive theory emerged from the data. Student interviews were conducted at the end of each session and field notes were recorded based on observations of writing behaviors, 95 out of 96 possible sessions. One kindergarten participant was unavailable for 1 out of their 12 total sessions. The purpose of the participant interviews was to hear the thoughts and feelings of the child. Observations of participant's writing behaviors provided valuable information and created depth to the study by providing categories and core categories of behaviors seen more frequently (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 142).

Participant Interviews

There were four interview questions used in this study. Session I and Session II included two interview questions which were the same. In Session II, the participants were asked two additional questions. The interview findings reveal the participant's feelings about their writing in both sessions and directly address the qualitative research question. It attempts to show their feelings about the implementation of the oral language experimental intervention, narrating before writing, and whether they believed it to be helpful to their writing or not.

Session I & II: Interview Question One

The first question asked in the interview was, "How do you feel about your writing today?" Session I and Session II produced similar results. For almost all the sessions in this study, the participants expressed that they felt positively about their writing. The most common answer was "good." Other responses were "great," "happy," "confident," "pretty easy," "awesome," or "super good." There were very few negative responses to the interview question.

Session I & II: Interview Question Two

The second interview question asked in all sessions was, "Why do you feel that way?" Session I and Session II found similar categories except for the addition of one subcategory. The largest category, mentioned most often, was strong connection with their writing topic. One first grader wrote a story about going to Spain (possibly Tour of the World in Epcot). When asked why they said they felt good about their writing, they

said, “I like going to trips.” A second-grade participant wrote a story about playing hide and seek with their cousin. They said they felt good about their writing. When asked why they felt that way, they said, “I like playing with my cousin.” One kindergarten participant reported after writing about playing on the playground, “It was fun. The ride on the playground.” A first grader said, “I like hanging out with mommy and daddy.” Strong connections with their topic were overwhelmingly the most common responses to this interview question and created a core category for the study.

The next category developed by the interview responses to “Why do you feel that way?” was satisfaction with their finished work or product. A kindergarten participant said, “I like how I did.” Another kindergarten participant said, “I like all of it!” A kindergarten participant also said, “because I just made it.” A response from first grade participants was “all of it.” A second-grade participant said, “I am proud of myself.”

Feelings of success was a core category that was subdivided into three subcategories. The first subcategory is feelings of success with drawing only. Participants responded with comments such as, “I like the sun [I drew]. It is perfect.” and “I like drawing, and I’m good at it.” and “I just like it, the picture.” The second subcategory was feelings of success with the words and the pictures. One first grade student said, “I thought I did good on the words and pictures.” A kindergarten participant said, “I like to write and draw.” One second grader said, “Every time I write and draw the pictures, it looks really great and good to me.”

The oral language intervention in Session II influenced the last subcategory for feelings of success. Participants expressed their writing was good because of the writing alone, not mentioning their picture. Kindergarten participants responded by saying

statements such as "'Cause I wrote it," "because I'm writing it," and "[I'm] liking it, the writing." A first-grade participant said, "a lot of writing," and another said, "My words are good." Second grade participants were quoted saying, "I writed well," and "I feel like my writing is like an author."

Other reasons were mentioned in the interviews as well such as working hard, handwriting, amount of writing, and enjoyment for the task. However, these reasons were not found to be consistent enough to develop a category or subcategory. Categories and interpretations of categories can be found in Table 6.

Table 6

Participant Interview Categories: Pretest

Categories	Interpretation of Categories	Direct Quote from a Participant
Strong Connection with the Topic	The child expressed that their writing is good because they like the topic of the story.	My writing is good because… "I like going to trips." -first grade student
Satisfaction with their finished work or product	The child feels proud of the work produced.	"I like all of it!" -kindergarten student
Feelings of success Subcategory: drawing skills	The child feels the picture alone made their writing good.	"I think I did good on my drawing and the colors." -first grade student
Feelings of success Subcategory: Writing and drawing skills	The child feels the text and the illustration are both good.	"Every time I write and draw the pictures it looks really great and good to me." -second grade student

Session II: Interview Question Three

The third interview question was, "Do you feel that it was easier to write today when you said your story first?" Almost all participants reported that saying their story before writing made writing easier each session.

Session II: Interview Question Four

Participants were then asked, "Why do you think it was easier/harder?" Only one core category emerged. The title for the core category is "Aids with recall and reflection." This is interpreted by the researcher as meaning that narrating their story before writing, the implementation of the intervention, helped the participant to remember or recall the memory. One kindergarten student was able to verbalize, "I don't how to write it. Then, [I] say it. I can write." One first-grade participant responded by saying, "I can get a visual in my head of what I can write and what I can draw." Another first grader said, "It helped me memorize some of the words and think about my picture."

Second-grade participants were able to answer this question more directly than the younger participants. Second graders responded by saying, "It gives me some time to think about it before I write my story. When I say it, I have to think about it, and then I'm ready to write it." Another second-grade participant said, "When I say it first, it gives me some time to think." Other responses from second grade participants are as follows: "I already thought of the story. Then, I can just think of it again and then write it." "When I say it first, it gives me some time to think." "I can know what I will write about it." "I knew how to write it if I talked about it more." "I can say the story [so] I can remember the story. [If] I don't say it first, I will not remember what I did." There were other single

responses that did not create a category such as, “It goes faster.” “You does it right.” “So, people will already know what you will write, so it won’t be a surprise.”

Table 7

Participant Interview Categories: Posttest

Categories	Interpretation of Categories	Quotes from the Participants
Feelings of success Subcategory: Writing skills	The text written by the child is the reason they feel their writing is good.	My writing is good because… “I wrote it.” (Kindergarten student) “I feel like my writing is like an author.” (Second grade student)
Aids with Recall and Reflection	Saying the story orally before writing helped the participants to remember details about the topic.	*Kindergarten student:* “I don’t know how to write it. Then, [I] say it. I can write.” *First grade students:* “I can get a visual in my head of what I can write and what I draw.” “It helped me memorize some of the words and think about my picture.” *Second grade students:* “It gives me some time to think about it before I write my story. When I say it, I have to think about it and then I’m ready to write it.” “I already thought of the story. Then, I can just think of it again and then write it.” “When I say it first, it gives me some time to think.”

		"I can know what I will write about it." "I knew how to write it if I talked about it more." "I can say the story (so) I can remember the story. (If) I don't say it first, I will not remember what I did."

Observations of Writing Behaviors

Observation of participant's behaviors throughout the writing process was recorded in all sessions, a total of 95 sessions. Observation notes were analyzed and coded throughout the study to develop categories. Observations were compared from Session I and Session II to discover if the oral language intervention during the prewriting stage impacts participant's writing behaviors.

Participant's engagement in writing was the core category with the most observations recorded in both sessions. The participant was engaged in writing if they were focused on the task with little to no stops and had body language that showed full engagement with their writing such as leaning in or over their writing. Another category which developed was that most participants were minimally hesitant before or during writing and were confident in their writing or willing to try their best. Participants were mainly relaxed in posture and with facial expressions and showed little to no signs of frustration. The exception to this observation was on the participants very first session on week one. Some participants were observed to be less relaxed and more serious.

About a quarter of the K-2 participants were observed in both sessions reading and rereading their writing, revising, and/or editing without any prompting to do so.

Egocentric speech was observed in both sessions. Some participants talked to themselves throughout the process out loud while others whispered, mumbled, or mouthed their thoughts. The speech was not directed at anyone but only used for their own purposes.

The difference between the observations from Session I and Session II were that participants were observed in the positive writing behaviors more often in Session II than in Session I. The categories did not change but increased in frequency. Children were engaged in their writing, writing with minimal hesitancy, showing confidence, and feeling relaxed during the writing process. The number of participants who were observed using egocentric speech (speaking aloud, whispering, mumbling, or mouthing thoughts) increased in Session II.

Qualitative Summary

Grounded theory methodology was applied to the qualitative strand of research. The qualitative strand of research used categories developed through observations and interviews. The substantive theory developed from the categories and core categories is that the use oral narration during the prewriting stage for children in K-2 causes children to feel good about the text they have written, makes writing easier by aiding recall and reflection of memories, and increases positive writing behaviors and egocentric speech.

Quantitative Findings

This section discusses the results from the quantitative data collection. It includes the results from the paired sample t-test as well as examples of participant's writing samples. Each participant's writing samples were analyzed and scored using the 6+1

Trait® Model of Instruction & Assessment quality of writing rubric for K-2, Appendix H. A total of 95 writing samples were analyzed and scored. In total, 48 work samples of the participant's writing and drawing were collected and scored from Session I, and 47 total work samples were collected and scored from Session II. One student was not available for the last session on the last week. The total score for each pre- and posttest is the sum from each writing trait on the rubric: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation (Education Northwest, 2018). One optional section of the rubric under organization labeled title was not used during scoring. The participants were not asked to title their work, so this optional part of the rubric was not used in the study. All other writing and drawing were scored within the rubric.

Writing samples were analyzed and scored for each of the following writing traits on the rubric: (a) ideas, (b) organization, (c) voice, (d) word choice, (e) sentence fluency, (f) conventions, and (g) presentation. The scores were entered into SPSS and a repeated measures design was used to investigate the difference between the pretest in Session I and the posttest in Session II (Field, 2013). The results of the double-sided paired sample t-test are found in the next section. Tables 8-13 list the scores for each participant from the writing samples, pretest and posttest, for each week by grade level.

Table 8

Pretest Scores: Kindergarten Participants

Student Code	Week	Ideas	Organization	Voice	Word Choice	Sentence Fluency	Conventions	Presentation	Total Score
K1	**1**	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	9
K1	**2**	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	9
K1	**3**	3	2	2	1	1	2	1	12
K1	**4**	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
								Mean Score of Participant K1 for Pretests = **9.5**	
K2	**1**	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
K2	**2**	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	8
K2	**3**	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	13
K2	**4**	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	13
								Mean Score of Participant K2 for Pretests = **10.25**	
K3	**1**	3	1	2	1	1	1	2	11
K3	**2**	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
K3	**3**	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
K3	**4**	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	8
								Mean Score of Participant K3 for Pretests = **8.25**	
K4	**1**	2	1	1	2	2	2	3	13
K4	**2**	3	1	2	2	1	1	3	13
K4	**3**	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	13
K4	**4**	2	1	1	2	2	2	3	13
								Mean Score of Participant K4 for Pretests = **13**	

Table 9

Pretest Scores: First Grade Participants

Student Code	Week	Ideas	Organization	Voice	Word Choice	Sentence Fluency	Conventions	Presentation	Total Score
F1	**1**	3	1	3	3	4	3	4	21
F1	**2**	3	3	4	4	4	3	5	26
F1	**3**	3	2	3	3	4	3	4	22
F1	**4**	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	25
								Mean Score of Participant F1 for Pretests =	**23.5**
F2	**1**	2	1	1	3	2	3	1	13
F2	**2**	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	15
F2	**3**	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	15
F2	**4**	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	16
								Mean Score of Participant F2 for Pretests =	**14.75**
F3	**1**	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	26
F3	**2**	4	2	4	3	4	3	4	24
F3	**3**	2	2	1	3	2	2	2	14
F3	**4**	2	2	1	3	3	3	3	17
								Mean Score of Participant F3 for Pretests =	**20.25**
F4	**1**	4	1	1	2	2	2	4	16
F4	**2**	3	3	1	4	3	3	3	20
F4	**3**	3	2	1	3	3	3	3	18
F4	**4**	3	2	1	3	3	2	3	17
								Mean Score of Participant F4 for Pretests =	**17.75**

Table 10

Pretest Scores: Second Grade Participants

Student Code	Week	Ideas	Organization	Voice	Word Choice	Sentence Fluency	Conventions	Presentation	Total Score
S1	**1**	5	3	3	3	4	3	5	26
S1	**2**	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	30
S1	**3**	4	3	3	4	3	3	4	24
S1	**4**	4	4	4	3	4	4	5	28
								Mean Score of Participant S1 for Pretests = **27**	
S2	**1**	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	26
S2	**2**	4	4	5	4	4	3	5	29
S2	**3**	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	26
S2	**4**	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	27
								Mean Score of Participant S2 for Pretests = **27**	
S3	**1**	3	3	2	3	3	4	4	22
S3	**2**	3	3	3	3	4	4	5	25
S3	**3**	3	3	2	3	3	4	4	22
S3	**4**	3	3	2	3	4	4	4	23
								Mean Score of Participant S3 for Pretests = **23**	
S4	**1**	4	3	3	3	4	3	4	24
S4	**2**	4	3	4	4	3	3	4	25
S4	**3**	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	22
S4	**4**	4	3	1	4	4	3	4	23
								Mean Score of Participant S4 for Pretests = **23.5**	

Table 11

Posttest Scores: Kindergarten Participants

Student Code	Week	Ideas	Organi-zation	Voice	Word Choice	Sentence Fluency	Conventions	Presentation	Total Score
K1	**1**	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	9
K1	**2**	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	11
K1	**3**	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	12
K1	**4**								Participant Unavailable
								Mean Score of Participant K1 for Posttests =	**10.67**
K2	**1**	2	1	2	2	1	2	3	13
K2	**2**	3	1	2	2	2	2	1	13
K2	**3**	2	1	3	2	2	2	3	15
K2	**4**	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	15
								Mean Score of Participant K2 for Posttests =	**14**
K3	**1**	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	9
K3	**2**	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
K3	**3**	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	11
K3	**4**	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	11
								Mean Score of Participant K3 for Posttests =	**9.75**
K4	**1**	3	1	2	2	2	2	2	14
K4	**2**	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	14
K4	**3**	2	1	2	3	2	2	3	15
K4	**4**	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	14
								Mean Score of Participant K4 for Posttests =	**14.25**

Table 12

Posttest Scores: First Grade Participants

Student Code	Week	Ideas	Organization	Voice	Word Choice	Sentence Fluency	Conventions	Presentation	Total Score
F1	**1**	4	2	3	4	3	3	3	22
F1	**2**	4	3	3	4	3	3	5	25
F1	**3**	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	25
F1	**4**	4	4	3	4	4	3	5	27
								Mean Score of Participant F1 for Posttests =	**24.75**
F2	**1**	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	16
F2	**2**	3	3	2	3	3	2	2	18
F2	**3**	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	20
F2	**4**	4	3	1	4	3	3	3	21
								Mean Score of Participant F2 for Posttests =	**18.75**
F3	**1**	5	4	4	4	4	3	3	27
F3	**2**	4	2	1	4	2	3	2	18
F3	**3**	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	16
F3	**4**	4	3	1	4	4	3	3	22
								Mean Score of Participant F3 for Posttests =	**20.75**
F4	**1**	4	2	2	4	2	1	3	18
F4	**2**	3	3	1	3	3	3	4	20
F4	**3**	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	19
F4	**4**	3	2	1	4	3	3	3	19
								Mean Score of Participant F4 for Posttests =	**19**

Table 13

Posttest Scores: Second Grade Participants

Student Code	Week	Ideas	Organization	Voice	Word Choice	Sentence Fluency	Conventions	Presentation	Total Score
S1	**1**	4	4	3	3	4	4	6	28
S1	**2**	5	5	5	4	4	3	5	31
S1	**3**	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	27
S1	**4**	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	31
								Mean Score of Participant S1 for Posttests = **29.25**	
S2	**1**	5	3	3	4	4	3	5	27
S2	**2**	4	4	4	4	4	3	5	28
S2	**3**	4	5	5	4	4	3	5	30
S2	**4**	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	29
								Mean Score of Participant S2 for Posttests = **28.5**	
S3	**1**	3	2	2	4	3	3	5	22
S3	**2**	3	3	1	3	3	3	4	20
S3	**3**	4	4	2	4	4	3	4	25
S3	**4**	4	5	2	4	4	3	4	26
								Mean Score of Participant S3 for Posttests = **23.25**	
S4	**1**	4	3	4	3	3	3	4	24
S4	**2**	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	30
S4	**3**	4	3	4	4	3	4	5	27
S4	**4**	5	5	3	4	5	4	5	31
								Mean Score of Participant S4 for Posttests = **28**	

Paired Sample T-Test

Each participant's pretest mean and posttest mean scores were entered into SPSS, and a repeated measures design was used to investigate the difference between the pretest in Session I and the posttest in Session II through the use a of two-sided paired t-test (Field, 2013). The paired samples test, Table 14, resulted in a significance value of p = .001. We can reject the null hypothesis that there is not a difference between the pretest and posttest scores and accept the alternate hypothesis that there is a significant difference between the scores. The mean pretest score is 18.15, and the mean posttest score 20.08, Table 15. There is a positive difference between the pre- and posttest means of 1.93 showing a higher mean for the posttest score, which included the oral language intervention. Descriptives are included within this section, Table 18.

Table 14

Two-Sided Paired Sample T-Test

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Significance	
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Mean_Pretest_Score - Mean_Posttest_Score	-1.93083	1.39826	.40364	-2.81925	-1.04242	-4.784	11	<.001	<.001

Table 15

Paired Sample Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Mean Pretest Score	18.1458	12	6.84442	1.97581
	Mean Posttest Score	20.0767	12	6.87000	1.98320

Table 16

Paired Samples Correlations

				Significance	
		N	Correlation	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Mean Pretest Score & Mean Posttest Score	12	.979	<.001	<.001

Table 17

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Mean Pretest Score	12	100.0%	0	0.0%	12	100.0%
Mean Posttest Score	12	100.0%	0	0.0%	12	100.0%

Table 18

Descriptives

			Statistic	Std. Error
Mean Pretest Score	Mean		18.1458	1.97581
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	13.7971	
		Upper Bound	22.4946	
	5% Trimmed Mean		18.2037	
	Median		19.0000	
	Variance		46.846	
	Std. Deviation		6.84442	
	Minimum		8.25	
	Maximum		27.00	

	Range		18.75	
	Interquartile Range		12.56	
	Skewness		-.158	.637
	Kurtosis		-1.563	1.232
Mean Posttest Score	Mean		20.0767	1.98320
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	15.7117	
		Upper Bound	24.4417	
	5% Trimmed Mean		20.1407	
	Median		19.8750	
	Variance		47.197	
	Std. Deviation		6.87000	
	Minimum		9.75	
	Maximum		29.25	
	Range		19.50	
	Interquartile Range		13.13	
	Skewness		-.120	.637
	Kurtosis		-1.320	1.232

Writing Sample Comparisons

Writing samples are included to exhibit the difference in the levels of writing based on the scoring instrument. Writing from each grade level is provided to compare the writing produced during Sessions I, pretests, and writing collected in Session II, posttests. All writing samples for this comparison are from writing samples collected in week two of the study, Table #. The total score given for the writing is also included.

The kindergarten pretest and posttest writing sample comparison in Table # shows a difference between the illustration and text. The illustration of the writing sample that included the oral language narration during prewriting was more detailed and portrays a personal narrative story. The illustration for the pretest is only a person standing on a

blank page. The posttest also included more marks or attempts at letters than the pretest. The first-grade writing sample comparison in Table 19 had similar results as the kindergarten comparison, more detailed illustrations as well as more text. The text included more of the story than the pretest story. The second-grade pretest sample had an illustration that did not match the words of the story. The posttest illustration matched the story and enhanced the story with labels and a Christmas tree. The text of the story was written more fluidly than then the pretest.

A sample of student work samples are provided for each proficiency level on the rubric except for exceptional. Exceptional was the highest level on the rubric. There were not any participants in this study who scored within this level. Levels 1-5 are included in Figures 5-9: beginning, emerging, developing, capable, experienced, and exceptional.

Table 19

Week 2 Writing and Drawing Comparison

Grade Level	Session I Pretest	Session I Rubric Score	Session II Posttest	Session II Rubric Score
Kinder-garten		7		8

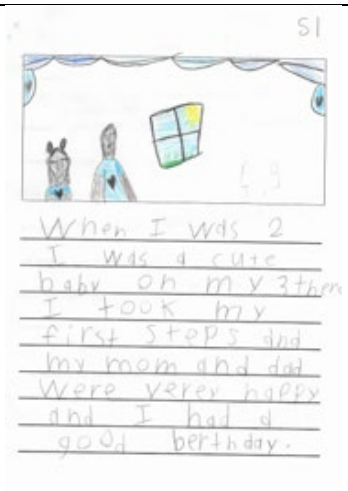
First Grade		15		18
Second Grade		30		31

Figure 5

Beginning Writing Sample

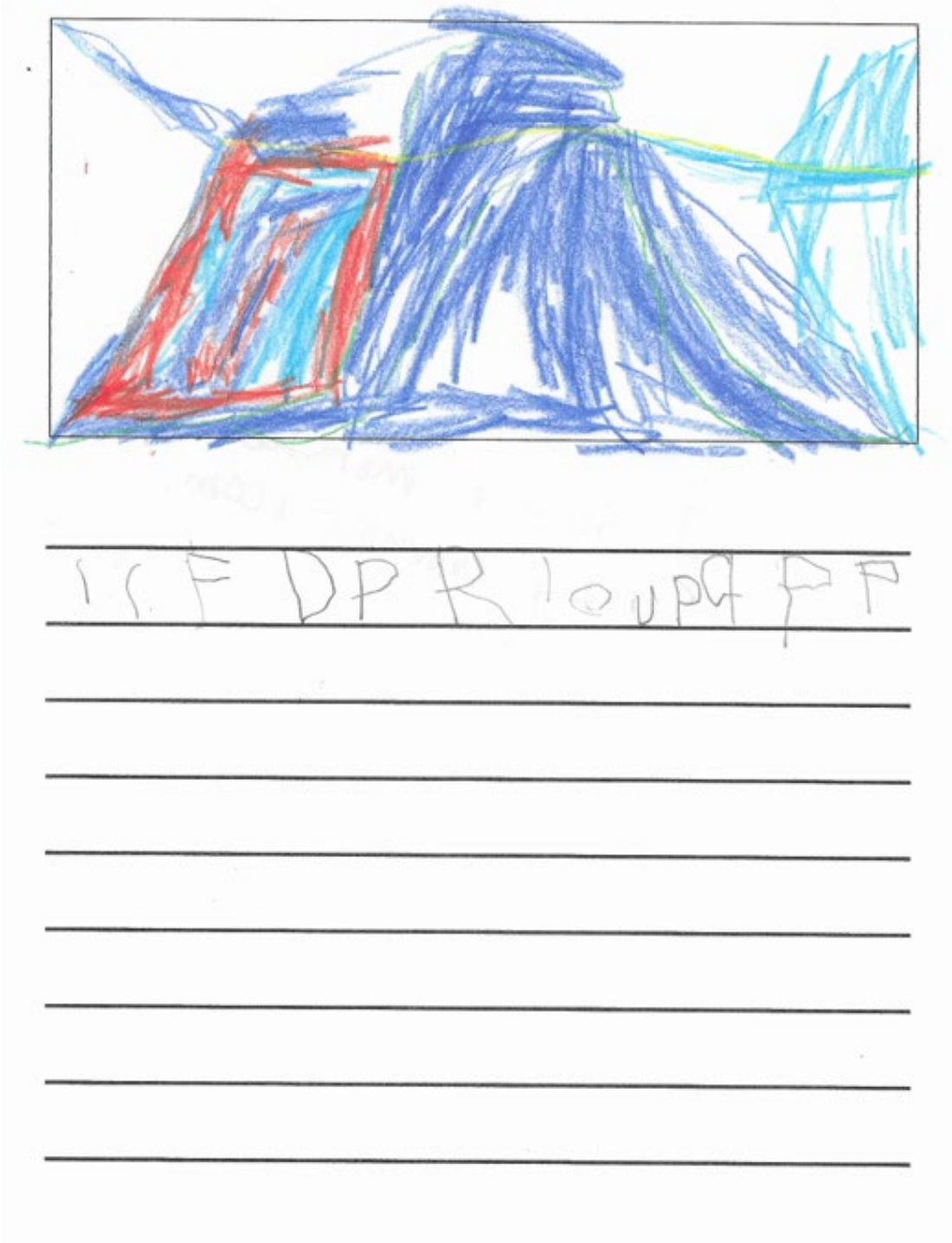


Figure 6

Emerging Writing Sample

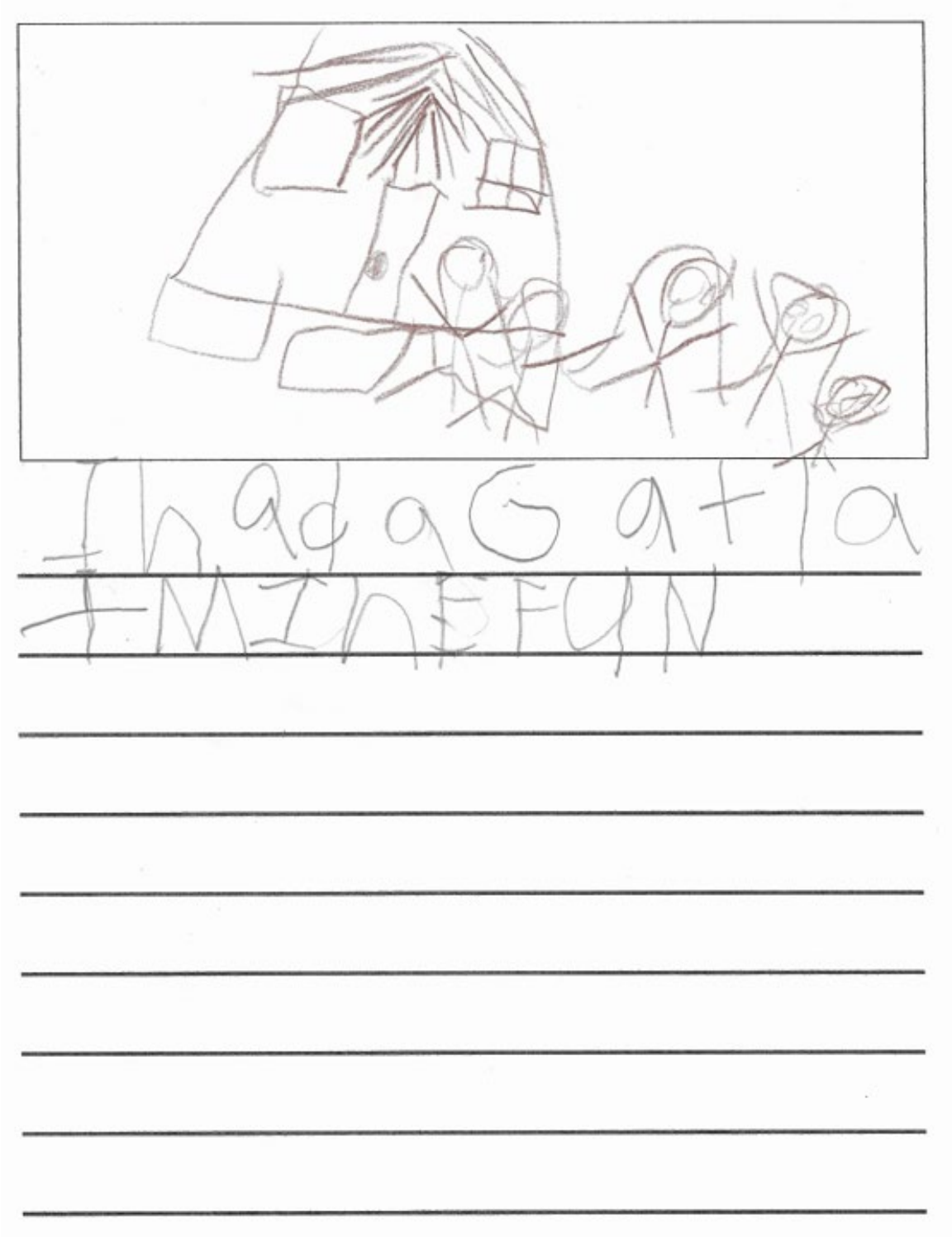


Figure 7

Developing Writing Sample

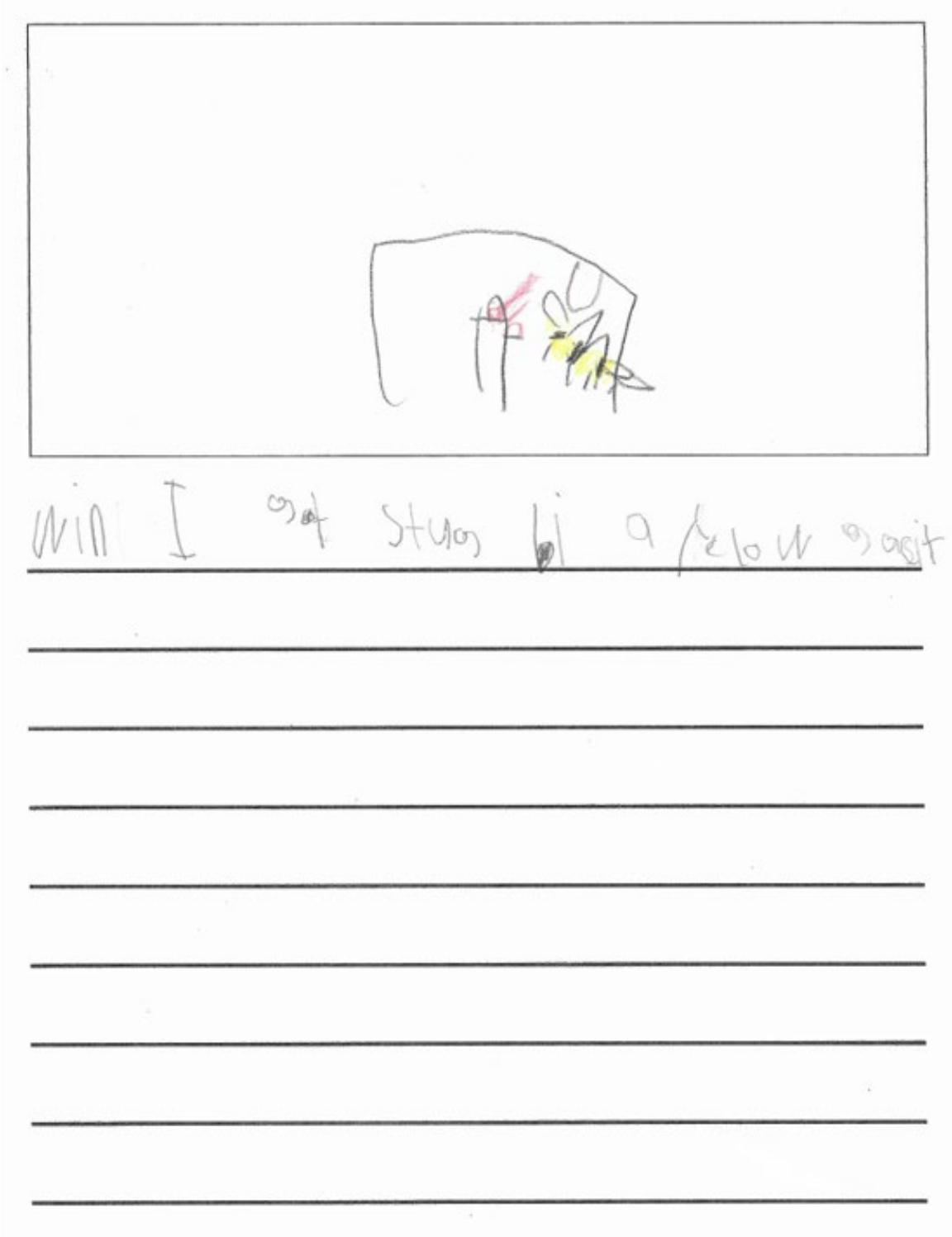


Figure 8

Capable Writing Sample

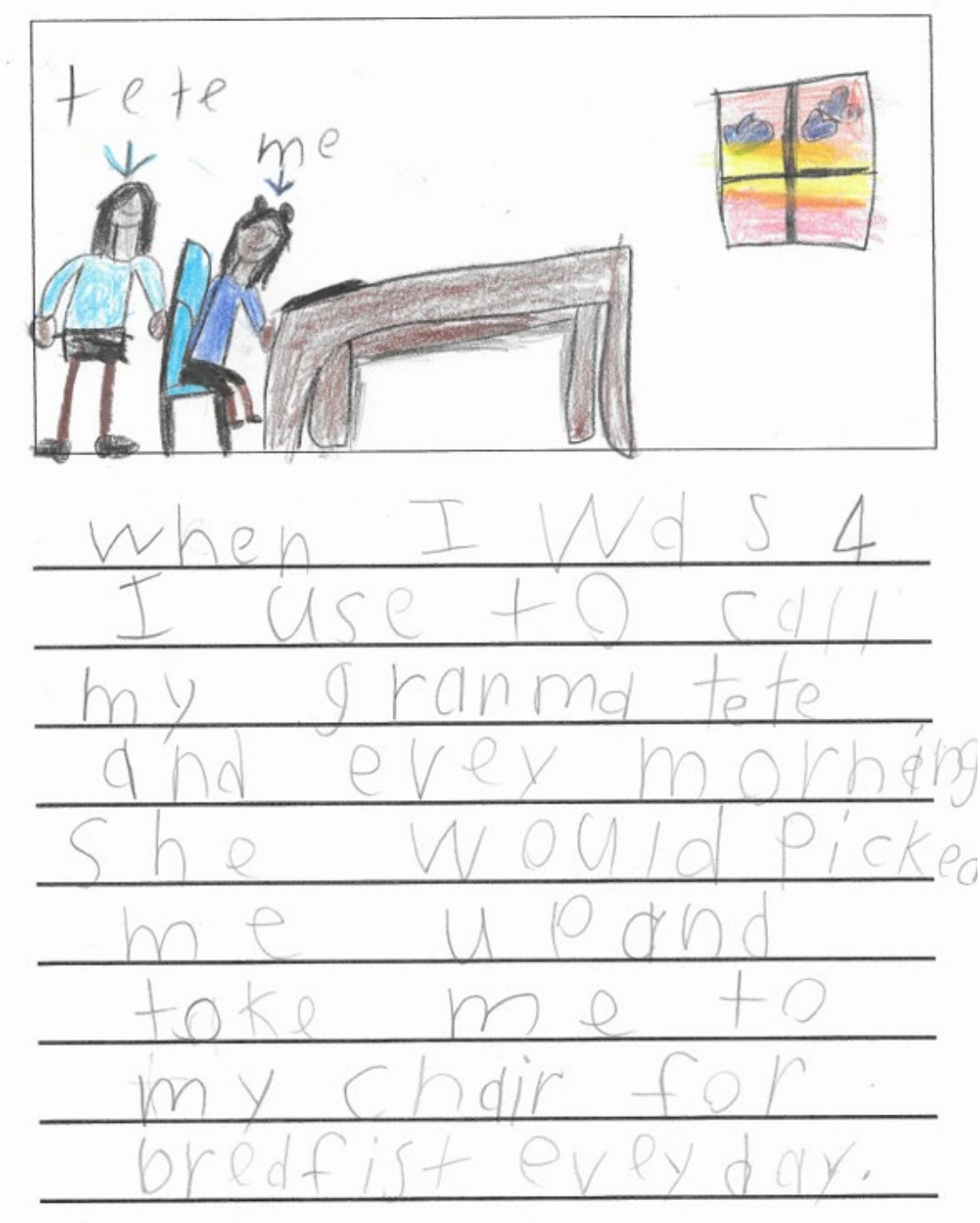
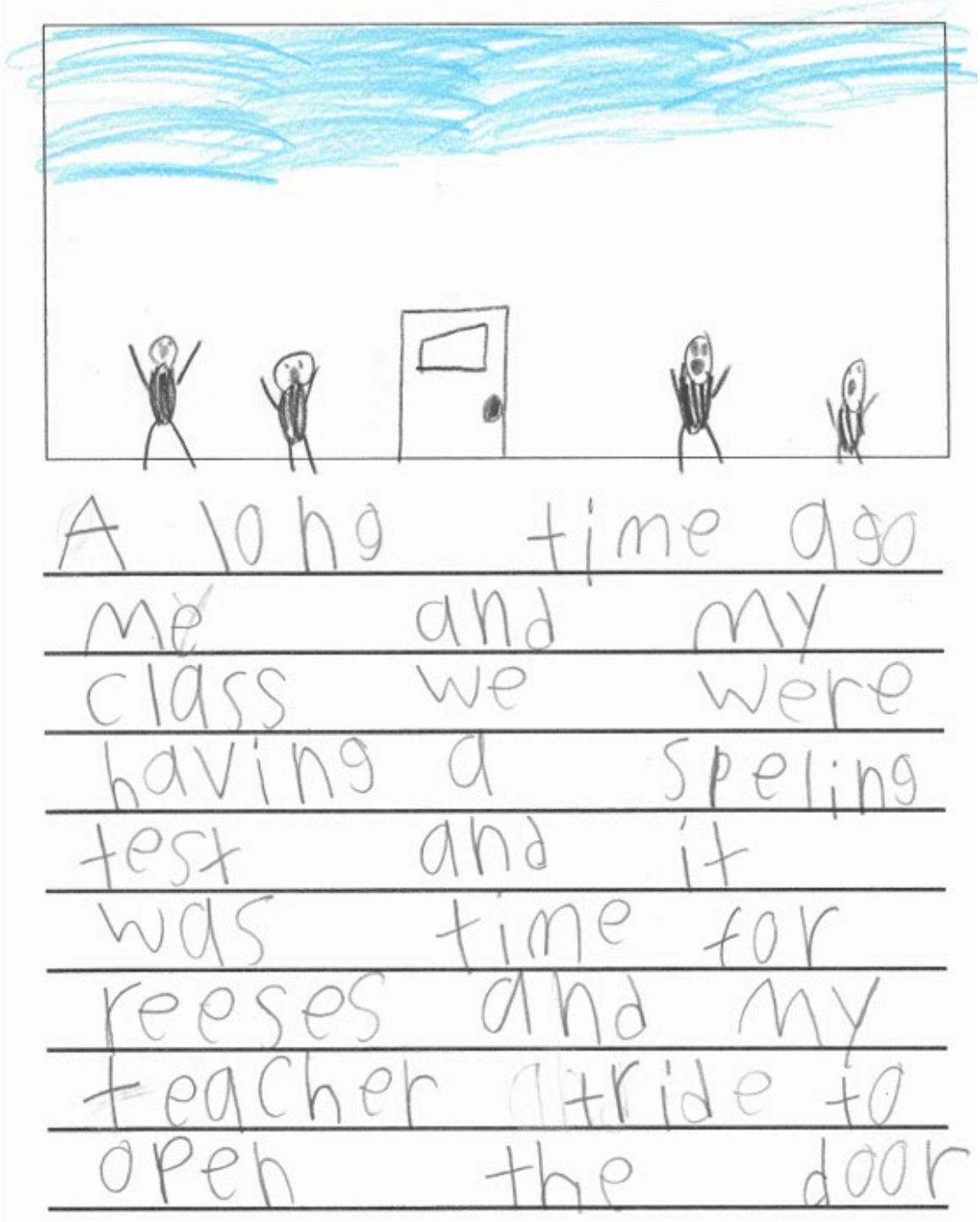


Figure 9

Experienced Writing Sample



it wood not
open and my
teacher asked a
nother stoodent
but it still
wood not open
so my teacher
had to call
the ofess and
the ofess to
ask some one
to fix the
door.

Quantitative Summary

The hypothesis accepted for this strand of research is that there is a statistically significant ($p = .001$) difference between the pretest and posttest means. A double-sided paired t-test was used within a repeated measure design (Field, 2013). The posttest mean was 1.93 higher than the pretest means indicating participants scored higher in Session II when the oral language intervention was implemented.

Writing samples comparisons also present a difference between the quality of participant's illustrations and length or fluidity of text. Student writing samples are included to represent each level of writing represented in the rubric. The quantitative research question can be addressed by this strand the research. When K-2 students are given opportunities to narrate their story during the prewriting stage of writing, the quality of their writing improves.

Mixed Methods Results

Triangulation was used to in this convergent mixed methods study (Tashakkori et al., 2021). Data was collected through interviews, observations, and work samples. The results of both quantitative and qualitative strands are represented by this side-by-side comparison, Table 20, and work together to confirm the use of oral language narration during the prewriting stage of writing is positive and beneficial to students in K-2 (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The qualitative findings support the substantive theory being suggested within grounded theory methodology (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The substantive theory developed through this strand is that allowing children time to orally plan their writing

during the prewriting stage of writing positively impacts their writing behavior and enjoyment of writing. The quantitative findings support the hypothesis that the oral language intervention increased the quality of writing produced by the participants. Both quantitative and qualitative findings support the use of an oral language narration intervention during the prewriting stage of writing in the K-2 classroom. Neither strand of research disconfirms these findings. The substantive theory in the qualitative strand, and the statistically significant hypothesis in the quantitative strand both point to the positive effects and strength of the intervention.

Table 20

Side-by-Side Comparison

Strand of Data	Session I: Pretest	Session II: Posttest	Positive or Negative Effects of the Intervention
Quantitative: Quality of Writing Rubric Scores Double-Sided Paired T-Test	Average Mean of 18.3617	Average Mean of 20.2766	Positive effects detected by an increase of the mean from pretest to posttest.
Quantitative: Comparison of Participant Writing Samples	Less detailed illustrations and writing	More detailed illustrations and writing	Positive effects examined and found in participant writing samples.
Qualitative: Interview Results	Core Category: Strong Connection with the Topic Core Category: Feelings of Success (Subcategory)	Core Category: Feelings of Success (Subcategory) Writing Skills Core Category: Aids with Recall and Reflection	Positive feelings about writing in pretest and posttest. An additional subcategory identified during the posttest. A new core

	Drawing Skills (Subcategory) Writing and Drawing Skills Category: Satisfaction with their finished work or product		category discovered during the posttest from participant's feelings about the oral language narration intervention.
Qualitative Data: Writing Observation Results	Core Category: Engagement in drawing and writing Category: Minimal Hesitancy before and during writing/Confidence in writing Category: Relaxed Posture and facial expressions/little to no signs of frustration Category: Revising/Editing Category: Egocentric Speech	Core Category: Increased Engagement in drawing and writing Category: Increased Minimal Hesitancy before and during writing/Confidence in writing Category: Increased Relaxed Posture and facial expressions/little to no signs of frustration Category: Increased Revising/Editing Increased Egocentric Speech	Positive writing behaviors increased during Session II, posttest.

Conclusion

The purpose of this mixed methods study is to investigate the difference oral language experiences during the prewriting stage of writing make in a student's quality of writing, enjoyment of writing, and writing behaviors in grades K-2. There were several

results found within the qualitative strand of research. When interviewed, almost all participants in all sessions said they felt like their writing was good. Participants reported that telling their story before writing made writing easier because it helped them to recall memories of the event before they began writing. One of the other qualitative findings from the interviews were that the participants reported feeling good about the text they had written. Without the oral language intervention, they only reported feeling good about the topic, picture, and words with the picture. The addition of students feeling good about words or text alone supports the theory being developed that oral language during prewriting improves enjoyment of writing in K-2.

Participants were observed in all sessions and positive writing behaviors increased when participants were encouraged to share their story orally before writing. Positive writing behaviors such as student engagement, minimal hesitancy when writing or confidence to try their best, and being relaxed with little to no signs of frustration increased during Session II. These observations support the substantive theory that children in grades K-2 positive writing behaviors increase when given opportunities to say their story orally during the prewriting stage of writing. Many K-2 participants were also observed using egocentric speech. This speech was only used for their own purpose and was not directed at another person. When encouraged to plan orally before writing, participants egocentric speech increased. Egocentric speech can later develop into "soundless inner speech" or a "writing inner voice" and is a building block for developing writers (Vanderburg, 2006, p. 391; Vygotsky & Kozulin [Ed.], 1986, p. 30).

The quantitative findings support the hypothesis that allowing students in K-2 to say their story before writing their story will have a significant impact on the quality of

their writing. A repeated measure design was used by the implementation of an oral language intervention in session II using a pretest and posttest (Field, 2013). The participants writing was scored from all sessions using the 6+1 Trait® Model of Instruction & Assessment quality of writing rubric for K-2, Appendix H (Education Northwest, 2021). Inferential statistical analysis was utilized through a double-sided paired t-test to compare the group means and found the means to be statistically significant p=.001.

This mixed methods study used triangulation to gather information through interviews, observations, and participant writing samples. The qualitative methods and the quantitative methods results are confirmed by each other and support the findings that oral language narration during the prewriting stage increase quality of writing, positive writing behaviors, and influence children's feelings about the ease of writing during the prewriting stage in grades K-2. These findings directly answer the research questions for this study.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH APPLICATIONS

Research Questions

Mixed Methods Question

The primary research question for this mixed methods study is: How does having kindergarten, first, and second grade students narrate their story aloud before writing change the quality of their writing, writing behaviors, and the student's feelings about writing?

Quantitative Methods Question

Is there a significant difference between student's quality of writing in K-2 when given the opportunity to narrate their story orally before writing?

Qualitative Methods Question

How do kindergarten, first, and second grade students' enjoyment of writing and writing behaviors change after being offered time to narrate their story aloud during the prewriting stage?

Summary of the Findings

The findings of both the quantitative and qualitative strand are confirmed and strengthened by each other in this convergent mixed method design by showing positive effects of the oral language narration intervention provided during the prewriting stage in Session II each week (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). Triangulation was used to gather three points of data: participant interviews, observations, and writing samples (Tashakkori et al., 2021). The qualitative strand investigated the thoughts and actions of the child, specifically the child's feelings about their writing and their actions throughout the writing process. The quantitative strand was also needed to examine students' writing for quality. These topics were investigated in this study because they each are important to create writers who feel good about writing, present positive writing behaviors, and produce quality writing. The use of both strands of data highlights the importance for K-2 classrooms to utilize oral language during the prewriting process.

The qualitative strand implemented grounded theory methodology. The data was collected through participant interviews and observations of participants throughout the sessions and open, axial, and selective coding was used to identify categories and core categories (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Through grounded theory methodology, a substantive theory developed. The use of oral language narration during the prewriting stage in K-2 increases positive writing behaviors and has the potential to cause children to feel good about the words or letters they have written, increases egocentric speech, and makes writing easier by helping students to recall memories.

The qualitative core categories identified through participant interview transcripts were the participants strong connection with their topic and feelings of success caused them to feel good about their writing. Session I, without the intervention, included subcategories of feelings of success which included feeling successful with their picture they had drawn or feeling successful with their writing and drawing. Many participants also expressed satisfaction with their finished product. In Session II, with the intervention, an additional subcategory under the core category of feelings of success emerged. Participants expressed that their writing or text alone was good and was why they felt good about their writing. The additional two interview questions asked in Session II reveal one core category that was overwhelming expressed by many participants. When asked if the participant thought saying the story before writing it made writing easier, almost all participants said yes. When asked why they felt that way, the emergent writers expressed how saying their story aloud first help them to remember or recall the events of the story and helped them to be ready to write.

Observations during writing sessions revealed that positive writing behaviors increased when encouraged to say their story before writing. The core category observed most frequently in all sessions within the study was student engagement with drawing and writing. The participants were fully engaged and willing to participate in the writing process. Other positive writing behaviors observed and categorized within a grounded theory methodology were showing confidence with minimal hesitancy, a relaxed demeanor, independently revising and editing, and engaging in egocentric speech.

The use of egocentric speech or speech not directed at anyone was used in both sessions but increased to almost half of the sessions when participants said their story

before writing. Egocentric speech was observed through participant's talk, whispers, mumbling, and the mouthing of thoughts.

The quantitative strand used repeated measure analysis with n=12 using a double-sided paired t-test to compare pretest means with posttest means. The null hypothesis is that there is no statistical significance between the pretest and posttest. We can reject the null hypothesis and can accept statistical significance ($p = .001$) between the pretest and posttest means (Field, 2013). The quality of participants writing increased when given the opportunity to participant in the oral language narration of their story during the prewriting stage of writing.

Writing sample comparisons were included in this strand to provide additional findings that may aid future research. Examples of the difference in writing and drawing from the pretest and posttest are included within the study. The findings from these comparisons richen the quantitative strand to show what the number represents and how it visibly has more detailed pictures and more writing or more fluid writing. Student writing samples are also included to represent each level of writing represented in the rubric: beginning, emerging, developing, capable, and experienced.

Discussion of the Findings

Participants and Sessions

Participants were available for 95 out of the 96 sessions. Only one participant was not available on Session II of the fourth week. If a child missed a session or was not at literacy camp on the designated day, the researcher made it up on the day of their return. Thirty minutes was allotted for each session, but time was adjusted based on the time the

child needed. When they were finished, we ended the session. Most sessions were around 15-30 minutes. One or two sessions went a little over thirty minutes. Younger participants typically used less time than second grade participants.

A challenge faced in data collection was the conversation that takes place in order to help a child feel comfortable before a session begins. It is necessary to be very conscientious to not inadvertently provide ideas for writing by asking common questions like, “Did you have a good weekend? What did you do?” or talking about their family, friends, or things they enjoy. The research should try to keep it very simple like saying, “How are you doing today?” and helping them to be comfortable by smiling and kind facial gestures.

Qualitative Discussion

Participant Interview Discussion

One portion of the qualitative strand was collected through brief interviews at the end of each session. The interviews were implemented with intentions of revealing the thoughts and feelings of the child. Categories and core categories were coded and analyzed through these findings and are individually discussed in this section.

Strong Connection With the Topic

Strong connection with the topic was identified as a core category. The fact that almost all K-2 students participating in the study expressed that they feel good about their writing with or without the oral language intervention is heartwarming as well as can assist educators as they approach writing with young children. With no encouragement

during the sessions, they still felt good about their writing. When asked why they felt good about their writing, several categories emerged. The categories identified most often was topic selection. Many children felt good about their writing because of the topic alone. This brings an awareness to topic selection in the early childhood classroom and the potential impact it can have on how a student feels about their writing.

Feelings of success. Feelings of success was identified as the other core category for the qualitative strand of research. Some children felt the picture they drew was enough to make their writing good. Young children need the opportunity to draw during the writing process because the drawing alone can support feelings of success in writing. Young children are often able to express their story through a picture well before they are able to support their story with words. Participants also felt good about their writing because of a combination of writing and drawing. I believe young children often feel successful if they feel they have tried their best and produced the best work they are able to construct at that time.

In Session II, a subcategory developed where participants felt their writing was good because of the writing itself and not mentioning the picture. The participants narrated their story orally before writing in Session II. The intervention helped them prepare for the writing, gather their thoughts, and clarify what they wanted to write. They were proud that the words said most of their story, and the picture became less needed. They were more intentional with what they were wanting to write after saying it aloud. Wagner (2008) suggested for all schools to focus on language and writing to better prepare students for college. Language is a natural place to start with young children.

This finding supports the use of oral language planning before writing in the K-2 classroom helping students feel more positively about the text alone they have generated.

Aids with recall and reflection. The two additional interview questions that were asked after the oral language intervention and posttest, provided a new core category to the study. Almost all students said that saying their story first made writing easier. The researcher believes this category is one of the most powerful parts of this research study to the field of education because it allows the voice of the child to be heard and why they believe the intervention made it easier. The core categories which emerged from this interview question was that it made writing easier because the oral telling of the story aided the child in recalling the details of the memory. Even though they did not say that it helped them to clarify, organize, and articulate their thoughts into words, it is evident that their writing became more purposeful and detailed. One kindergarten participant said, "I don't know how to write it. Then, say it. I can write." The results section provides many quotes from the participants to show their thoughts about why narrating their story before writing makes writing easier and more manageable for the emergent writer (Horn & Giacobbe, 2007).

Satisfaction with their finished work or product. Some participant's response to the interview questions were more broad or vague. If they expressed that they were proud of their story, or they loved their work but could not expand as to what or why they loved it, they were coded as finish product. In the researcher's eighteen years of experience in early childhood classrooms, asking kindergarten students why they think something is

often a challenging question for them. The child may not be developmentally able to express the why. This is one reason the researcher felt it was important to include one closed short answer question and one open-ended question. The open-ended questions are preferred and should be attempted, but at minimum, the voice of the child was able to be heard with their opinion on the matter, even if they were unable to express why they felt that way.

Writing observation categories. Observations of students' writing behaviors were recorded and analyzed for categories. The observations were conducted to explore the actions of the child and to record observable behaviors such as body language, facial expressions, and talking. Categories and core categories were coded and analyzed through these findings are individually discussed in this section.

There were not any different writing behaviors between Session I and Session II, but in Session II, the positive writing behaviors were more frequent and used by more participants. Saturation was met because very few observations outside of the categories emerged. The observations of the participants became almost predictable. Due to the researcher's years of experience in early childhood, it could be possible that some behaviors that seemed irrelevant to the study were unintentionally ignored or excluded. Some behaviors are seen frequently in an early childhood setting and could be common for young children such as shifts from sitting to standing. It may be possible that the researcher may have unknowingly left off observable behaviors that another researcher may have seen because they were perceived to not be important to writing. Very few negative writing behaviors were observed. During the first session on the first week of

the research, most students were observed to be serious and not relaxed. I believe this is only due to the new situation and experience and because the research was trying to refrain from saying anything that might skew the data. After a few minutes together, they began to relax and get more comfortable. The repeated sessions in this study give a clearer picture of the student's true writing behaviors and if they are consistent over time. This result is important to this study and highlights the importance of building rapport with the child and allowing time for the young to feel comfortable with the study expectations. One or two times with a child is not enough to make inferences about the participants and exclude behavior that is seen before or after the session begins such as who is active or calm, talkative or reserved, instantly comfortable in new settings or who is slow to warm up.

Student engagement. Student engagement was observed most frequently in both sessions as was identified as a core category. Most participants were fully engaged in their writing and drawing. They seemed to enjoy the experience and were concentrating with little to no stops. Many were leaned in or over the paper. Writing almost seemed playful. They did not moan or groan when asked to write. They were willing and ready to do their best. I believe one reason for the full engagement is because the writing is open ended and self-selected. They get to choose the topic about something they remember and want to write about. Creating choice is one way to build student engagement.

The sessions were conducted one student at a time. There were not as many distractions because students completed the sessions individually. It is possible that student engagement might decrease if there are more children in the group to cause

distractions. When children lose track of what they were trying to say or write, they may experience longer pauses during writing and less focused student engagement. Those distractions could also cause them to lose track of where they are in their thought process during writing. One benefit to having children narrate their story orally before writing is that it helps them to begin writing right away before they get distracted by other thoughts. Getting started with writing can often be the most challenging part of writing for young children, and Murray (1972) stated that it can take up to "85% of the writer's time" (p. 4).

Confidence in writing. One category which emerged was participants minimal hesitancy and showing confidence in their writing and drawing. It may be that they are truly confident, or that they are focused and trying their best. Before the study, I thought that more students would have been hesitant or frustrated without saying their story first. They did not seem to be. The time at the beginning of Session I to get started on the story was a little longer but not enough difference to be notable.

The writing task was non-threatening and most likely felt familiar to them because it is an Alabama standard and most likely has been covered in some way in their K-2 classroom experiences. The study does not have many directions to follow and is open ended, so they are able work at their current literacy level. The writing in Session II was more intentional because they had said their story first, and they wanted the writing to match what they had said. This purposeful planning has the potential to push them a little past their current literacy level and create motivation to write. Evidence for this statement is found in the comparison work samples as well as the higher mean scores for posttests. They would pause more often to think or engage in egocentric speech. An

example of this is when a kindergarten participant said, “I don’t know how to spell pool, but I’m going to spell it different.”

Saying their story first gives them confidence because they were able to think of a topic and say the story. Even if the young child is not able to write everything they are able to say, they feel their story is more complete because they said the story aloud. It gives them an audience and purpose before the pencil hits the paper. It may be frustrating to a young child to not be able to communicate the story with others through a picture or words, so this intervention creates a safe place for children to communicate their stories.

Young children will often draw and then create a story to go with the drawing. I think there is value in all different types of writing, and children should be given guidance and support to explore different genres and be given ample time to free write without any perimeters. However, I see tremendous benefits to teaching children to plan and have purpose in their writing. Scaffolding oral language can help them become aware of what writers do to make writing a little easier and more purposeful. Using oral language support before, during, and after writing benefits the writer and helps them to develop a writer’s voice. Even for children who are not yet ready to write everything they have said can gain valuable language skills that can support future writing.

I do believe children should get to show their writing to others after writing, but the objective, which is also needed and important, serves more as a revision or editing practice, to create feelings of success in writing, or to give them an audience. I believe children need opportunities to talk throughout the writing process. Many children get to conference with a partner or teacher during or after their writing or share their finished writing with a partner or the class, but oral language during prewriting is often ignored.

The oral language during prewriting can assist with the writing itself and more importantly prepare them for learning to plan and clearly state their story before writing for the future. It supports language development in the early years and creates a purpose for writing. Allowing children to say their story before writing supports the language needed for current and future writing.

I was surprised that very few participants showed minimal signs of frustration. In my personal experience as a classroom teacher with children in kindergarten and second grade, I have observed children frustrated with writing. I think the difference between this type of writing experience versus a classroom writing experience is the direct comparison children may make when they compare themselves to the children who are drawing and writing near them. When everyone else seems to be busy at work, a child may feel upset about not knowing what do when everyone else around them seems to know what to do. If they feel they are not writing or drawing "good enough" it may decrease confidence and increase frustration. Children will also get frustrated if they are sitting too long trying to decide the topic or what to write. The oral language preplanning attempts to alleviate this frustration for our youngest writers.

Relaxed demeanor. The participants did not seem to be stressed and or show signs of being uncomfortable. Their facial expressions and body language were relaxed and focused or smiling and playful. It is possible that their relaxed demeanor showed prior experience with this type of task, writing personal narrative stories. It could also be because of my experience and natural rapport with children. They were a little more serious on Session I of week one because it was their first session with me. The repeated

sessions are an important to this study as to allow children to become more comfortable with the session. Once they experienced the first session, all sessions that followed were more comfortable and relaxed.

Participants may have been more relaxed as well because the study was conducted in a familiar setting, an elementary school. The participants were attending the summer literacy program because they had been identified by the school system as needing extra support in literacy and were offered the free summer literacy program. This study is designed for all K-2 students, but the summer literacy program was generous and willing to allow me to conduct my research. Due to the current lower literacy levels of the children at the camp, it is possible that the children are accustomed to leaving their peers to work with other adults, such as interventionists and Title I teachers, on their literacy skills. Working with me may feel comfortable because of their previous experiences during the school year of working with adults other than their classroom teacher.

The writing task is designed to be open ended, and children can draw and write as much as they are able. It gives them comfort to write about things they love such as family and favored activities such as swimming and going to the park. It can also provide avenues for them to write about important topics in their life. Participants wrote topics such as changes in their family, loss of a pet or loved one, and fights with siblings or friends. They wrote about what they already knew a lot about. This creates a relaxed writing environment.

Revising and editing. Many of the first and second graders independently read and reread their writing as they progressed through their writing piece to try to get it to

say what they wanted it to say. The kindergarten students were seldom observed erasing or rereading their writing with the intent to fix any mistakes or make the writing clearer for the reader. The kindergarten participants were attending the summer literacy program because they had been identified by the school system as currently being behind in reading. They may not be ready to fully read their own work yet or were still engaging in letter strings or early letter attempts.

The researcher did not prompt for any of these revisions or edits. Many participants were internally driven to fix their writing. It could be because they knew someone would be collecting and trying to read it. Participants would erase a word or sentence and correct throughout the process. It is typical for young students to be asked to revise and edit their work after they are finished with a first draft (Alabama's Course of Study for ELA, 2021). This observation category shows how emergent writers engage in revising and editing throughout the writing process.

Not all participants engaged in revision and editing behaviors but those who did, revised and edited consistently from session to session. It could be evidence of student engagement or prior experience, or a desire to make their writing the best it could be. It could also be that these children are more aware of the reader and want to make the writing and drawing easier for someone else to read. It could also be an observable sign that they are beginning to see the world from a perspective other than their own.

Egocentric speech. The participants did not begin saying their story aloud without being asked. This shows us that we need to encourage the use of oral language before writing, and it most likely is a learned skilled. However, the use of egocentric speech was

used naturally and without prompting. It presented itself as talking, mumbling, whispering, and mouthing thoughts not directed at anyone but only to serve the personal purposes of the child (Piaget, 1955). In Session I, some participants would only write low risk words such as memorized high frequency words and names. Egocentric speech was present in about a quarter of Session I. About half of the children in Session II used a form of egocentric speech when writing. I believe it increased in Session II because the writing was more purposeful, and they were working hard to make their words match what they had said and what they wanted their story or drawing to be. As mentioned in the literature review, Vygotsky (1986) further researched some of Piaget's work and found more challenging tasks almost doubled egocentric speech. I saw similar results in this study.

In the same study, Vygotsky (1986) observed older children pausing, thinking, and then solving when faced with a more challenging task. Piaget believed that monologue, which is a type of egocentric speech, disappears with age. Vygotsky (1986) conjectured that it did not disappear but instead became "soundless inner speech" (p. 30). I would agree with Vygotsky that the volume difference between talking to whispering to mumbling to mouthing thoughts shows how egocentric monologue might slowly move inside of a person. Vanderburg (2006) studied Vygotsky's research and proposed the importance of educators assisting students as they develop a "writer's inner voice" (p. 375). Writing can be a complex task for K-2 students, which holds the potential to increase egocentric speech. Vanderburg (2006) also encouraged educators to develop models for young writers to "reduce the cognitive load" (p. 390). Creating routines for

students to plan their story orally before writing can assist students as they plan, organize, and clarify their thoughts before being asked to write or draw them.

Educators need to become aware of what children do naturally and the role of egocentric speech to the writing process. In comparison, they need to understand the importance of allowing K-2 students to plan their stories orally in efforts to make the task more manageable and autonomous. The difference between what children do naturally and what needs to taught and scaffolded is a possibility for future research. Planning the story aloud before writing did create a more challenging and purposeful writing task for the child, but the benefits are shown through the quality of writing they produce and implications for future writing. One second grader in the study became more aware or metacognizant of the role of prewriting and how it made writing easier. “It gives me some time to think about it before I write my story. When I say it, I have to think about it, and then I’m ready to write it.”

Quantitative Discussion

Instrument: Quality of Writing Rubric for Early Childhood

The instrument used to score the participant’s writing was developed by Education Northwest (2018) and is titled the 6+1 Trait® Model of Instruction & Assessment quality of writing rubric for K-2 which scores students writing for ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation. The rubric used for this study can be found in Appendix H.

The rubric was selected because it was specifically designed with K-2 students in mind. It also provides an overall experience of student’s writing and was not weighted in

one area more than another creating an overall picture of the student's writing. Example: Conventions is not weighted more than ideas, and word choice is just as important as punctuation. The rubric includes the details of the picture and the level to which it connects with the words. The instrument scaled the illustrations made by the children.

The participant may have been strong in phonetic spelling but forgot to place periods in the story. These were under the same area titled conventions. It would have been helpful to separate those areas into two different areas. I decided to lean more toward phonetic spelling if I had to choose between the two. A limitation of the rubric is that it was based on the researcher's opinion of the writing samples. It is possible that the interpretation of the scores could be scored differently by someone else. To strengthen this research, you could have several different researchers scoring the rubrics and take a mean of those scores. This would lessen the chance that any bias affected the scores.

In an effort to support future research, I have included a representation of a work sample for each area rating on the writing rubric, Figures 5-9. The ranking is as follows: beginning (scores of mainly 1 in each area), emerging (scores of mainly 2 in each area), developing (scores of mainly 3 in each area), capable (scores of mainly 4 in each area), and experienced (scores of mainly 5 in each area). Participants did not typically receive the same score between areas. They may have been stronger in presentation than word choice or struggle with convention but excel in voice. However, they were typically near the same overall score. I did not have anyone who scored in the exceptional (scores of mainly 6 in each area) ranking and very few who scored in experienced. I believe this is due to the nature of this specific study because it took place in a summer literacy program with children who are currently reading below grade level. The results may look very

different if the study was conducted in a general education classroom during the school year. The participants were so cooperative and worked extremely hard to do their best. The instrument can be further validated through this research. The steady increase from grade level to grade level means suggests not only that writing improves with time and age, but also that the instrument is reliable.

Paired Sample T-Test

Each writing sample was thoroughly reviewed and scored using the quality of writing instrument, Appendix H. Repeated measures analysis was used through a paired sample t-test. The results revealed a difference between the means of the pretest and posttest and show statistical significance p =.001. The mean from pretest to posttest went up almost 2 points. This could mean that over time, students' quality of writing will slowly increase. If feedback could be given as well, the writing would most likely increase even more (Graham & Harris, 2016; Manning, 2006; Whaley, 2002). However, that is not the purpose of this study.

Some children decided to write about the same topic several times, but most participants chose different topics each time. One kindergarten participant wrote about her seeing a princess at Disney World more than one session. A second-grade student wrote about his dog for more than one session, but it was different experiences with his dog. It could be possible that every time that a child writes about the same topic there writing is strengthened, but this suggestion would need further research.

It is difficult to say if the quantitative results are only a result of the sessions alone. The participants were also in a summer literacy camp for four days a week for four

weeks where they were reading and writing each day. It is possible that the gains were seen due to these interventions. However, the sessions were purposefully spread out over the course of the four weeks as to try to give the K-2 participants time to somewhat forget what they had written about or learned in the previous sessions. During one of the interviews, I asked one first grade participant if they thought writing was easier today when they said their story first. He said, “I can’t remember what I did last time.” It wasn’t until week four that in Session I, a second-grade participant asked me, “Do you want me to say my story first?” Spacing out the sessions over four weeks was an effective method for children in grades K-2.

Student Writing Samples

Students were given two times to write per week for four weeks. They engaged in Session I and Session II each week. A writing sample was produced each session. In Session I, the writing did not include the oral language narration intervention. Session II did include the oral language intervention. Out of 96 possible sessions, writing samples were collected from 95 of the sessions. One participant was not available for Session II of the last week.

The work samples from Session II were collectively more purposefully drawn and written than the writing samples in Session I. Examples of this can be found in some of the writing samples made by the kindergarten participants. One kindergarten participant told his story in Session II, the participant realized that the story needed to have real words and was not satisfied with writing letter strings as he had the previous Session I. He found some environmental print in the room and wrote the word “pencil”

that he copied from the colored pencil box. Another example of this when another kindergarten student spaced out his letter strings as to represent words instead of letters. He also added the letter I to the beginning of the sentence before the letter string. A kindergarten girl was very comfortable writing the same words for several sessions, words that she had memorized. During Session II, she pushed herself to take a risk and try to write a word that she was unsure of how to spell. This was a big first step in her writing development. More than the quality of writing is improving with oral language planning during the prewriting stage. It is empowering young children to step out of their comfort zone and try to represent their thoughts with text and more accurate pictures that tell their story taking those first steps needed to begin to develop their writer's voice (Vanderburg, 2006).

Implications

Implications for Early Childhood Classroom Teachers

Early childhood classroom teachers can apply the findings of this study to their daily writing workshop. Creating routines that allow children to say what they will write before writing has the potential to increase the quality of their writing and increase positive writing behaviors. Spending time during the prewriting process in early childhood is valuable time spent. Topic selection was found to be the main reason children felt good about their writing. Educators can use this information to support young children by creating routines that support topic development. Some suggested routines are creating lists of general topics interesting to young children such as places they have been, people they know, and holidays etc. If students need additional support,

they can create personal lists branching from the main topics. An example of this is when a child uses the people I know topic and decides they could write one story about their cousin, one story about their mom, and one story about their brother. Routines like this have the potential to encourage autonomy in writing for children in K-2 and increase feelings of enjoyment in writing because the child chose the topic and is very familiar with the topic.

The study showed that most young children felt good about their writing without any encouragement or support, so teachers must be careful when conferencing with students to make sure they are confirming this feeling as well as giving them productive feedback. Students felt more confident, were more engaged in their writing, and felt relaxed without frustration when they were given opportunities to say their story during the prewriting stage of writing. This small intervention can influence the student's writing behaviors.

The quality of writing improved in this study in only four sessions with the intervention. Writing daily and giving children opportunities to plan orally before they write routinely has the potential to increase the quality of their writing even more than found here because young children thrive in consistency and routine (Graves, 1995). Saying the story aloud also can increase expressive language development and support future writing, writing they may not currently be able to write on their own.

Teachers need to be aware of the difference between talking for prewriting and egocentric speech. Talking for prewriting is a skill that needs to be taught and scaffolded. Egocentric speech is involuntary and natural for young children. Both types of talk are valuable for the young writer. Balancing talk in a classroom can be a challenge. Children

need a place where they can concentrate and write. They also need a place to say their story during preplanning and be allowed to use egocentric speech to guide their thoughts. Creating routines that allow children to say their story before writing is important. Designating a place in the classroom to be the "tell my story area" will help children to remember to say their story before writing. Children will leave their seat and go to this area when they need to tell their story before writing it. This will help the teacher to observe and guide as needed. This routine keeps the table spaces for the children who have already told their story and are ready to begin writing.

This study provided a window into the egocentric talk children produce during writing. Children will engage in egocentric speech involuntarily. Some of the talk is mumbled, whispered, mouthed, or full volume. Based on the findings of this study, all children will be using egocentric speech in the same way. Teachers need to be able to identify the difference between egocentric speech and other types of talking as well as inner speech and a writer's inner voice. If a child is asked to be quiet during writing workshop, their egocentric speech could be interrupted, and thinking could be inhibited. Before asking a child to stop talking during writing workshop, the teacher can observe to see if you can identify if the talk is egocentric (talk not directed to anyone) or if it is other types of talk. If their egocentric speech is still full volume, they may need a place to sit where it does not distract those around them. Lap desks and flexible seating could be used during writing workshop for this purpose. Asking them if they can whisper talk is another way to encourage the talk but quiet the room for other writers. However, the child would need the teacher to remind them of this when they are not already in the middle of their thinking.

The merged quantitative and qualitative strands of research support the use of an oral language intervention in K-2 classrooms. The substantive theory developed through this study is that encouraging a child in K-2 to narrate before writing during the preplanning stage of writing increases positive writing behaviors, causes writing to be viewed as easier by aiding in recall of memories, and increases egocentric speech. All results in the study were found to be positive and assisted participants as they further developed as writers.

Implications for School Administrators & School Officials

School administrators and school officials would benefit from reading the literature review in this study to reveal what has previously been researched in the area of language and writing in early childhood. As they become more aware of the importance of talking during writing, they should encourage productive talk and movement during writing within grades K-2.

Professional development opportunities may need to be offered to teachers of early childhood to allow them opportunities to learn how to lead students through the writing process and allow time to discuss and plan ways to implement routines that will assist students during the prewriting stage of writing. The quality of students' writing can improve when the intervention discussed in this study is implemented. Students can feel writing has gotten easier and writing time within the classroom can be more purposeful. The type of writing instruction implemented should allow for topic selection and time for students to take risks in their writing.

Implications for Universities of Higher Education

When universities of higher education are teaching the next generation of teachers about the writing process in early childhood, they should focus more attention on the purpose of prewriting, and the role it plays in the writing process in the K-2 classroom. Providing new teachers with simple routines they can put into place, such as having children share what they will write before they begin writing, is one way to increase language and influence the future writing of the child. Presenting ways to help students select a topic for writing would also be helpful for new teachers.

Egocentric speech is typically already covered in university coursework, but it might be helpful for preservice teachers to observe and record the behavior and understand the importance and purpose of the speech, specifically to the development of language and its implications for writing in the K-2 classroom.

Recommendations to Improve the Study

The quality of writing rubric was integral to the study because it provided a way for the student work samples to be quantified. Making a slight change to the rubric to remove the optional title section and to divide the convention portion into phonetic spelling and punctation would provide more accurate scores for writing because often the researcher had to decide which one to use because both were not present in the writing sample. To increase validity within the study, more than one researcher could score the writing samples and take the mean of those scores. This may remove any bias and create a more accurate picture of the quality of writing produced.

The study was implemented in a summer literacy program but was designed for all children in grades K-2. To improve the study, it could be implemented in a general education classroom in an elementary school or even several elementary schools. To minimize the impact of one participant, it is suggested that five students from each grade level be used for future studies, or to broaden the research to three classrooms: one kindergarten, one first grade, and one second grade.

An interview question needs to be added as an option to Session I. It can be difficult at times to decipher what a child has written. If the researcher cannot understand what the child has drawn or written at the end of the session, they can simply ask, "What did you write?" This will help the researcher identify the picture and if the child is letter stringing or writing some sounds. They should audio record the response or write it in their field notes.

Recommendations for Future Research

The implementation of oral language during the prewriting stage is more practical if students can use a peer as a writing partner instead of a teacher. One recommendation for a future study would be to teach a group of students' steps of how to be a good writing partner and to ask students to tell their writing partner their story before writing. Quality of writing can be compared. Future research could also include the parameters of the current study but conducted with more participants but only one grade level. It could include all the first graders at a school.

One finding that was interesting to this study was the observations of different volumes of egocentric speech. Future research could explore the role of egocentric

speech in children's writing and try to identify when it is used compared to other types of talk (Myhill & Jones, 2009).

The study could also be broken into strands and only one strand of the study be carried out. If the quantitative strand is carried out, it could be completed on more than one child at a time because only the writing sample would be used to collect data and observations and interview would not be used. However, the participant would still need to narrate their story to someone before writing. If the qualitative strand is used, only comparisons and discussions between writing samples would be made without using a rubric. It is possible that writing development guides could be used to label the writing stage the child is currently using.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM
Office of the Institutional Review Board for Human Use

470 Administra on Building
701 20th Street South
Birmingham, AL 35294-0104
205.934.3789 | Fax 205.934.1301 |
irb@uab.edu

APPROVAL LETTER

TO: Reach, Rebekah L

FROM: University of Alabama at Birmingham Ins tu onal Review Board
Federalwide Assurance # FWA00005960
IORG Registra on # IRB00000196 (IRB 01)
IORG Registra on # IRB00000726 (IRB 02)
IORG Registra on # IRB00012550 (IRB 03)

DATE: 03-Jun-2022

RE: IRB-300009340
IRB-300009340-002
Oral Language in the Prewri ng Stage in Early Childhood: A Mixed Methods Study

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The IRB reviewed and approved the Ini al Applica on submi ed on 03-Jun-2022 for the above referenced project. The review was conducted in accordance with UAB's Assurance of Compliance approved by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Type of Review: Exempt **Exempt**
Categories: 1
Determina on: Exempt
Approval Date: 03-Jun-2022
Approval Period: No Con nuing Review

Documents Included in Review:

- IRB EPORTFOLIO
- IRB PERSONNEL EFORM

APPENDIX B

GATEKEEPER LETTER AND CONSENT

Title of Research:	Oral Language in the Prewriting Stage in Early Childhood: A Mixed Methods Study
UAB IRB Protocol #:	300009340
Principal Investigator:	Rebekah Lee Reach
Sponsor:	UAB School of Education, Department of Curriculum & Instruction

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this study is to investigate the difference oral language experiences during the prewriting stage of writing make in a student's writing and writing behaviors in grades kindergarten, first, and second. There is very little research available about the prewriting stage in early childhood. This research attempts to add to the current research about oral language during the writing process, specifically developing practical classroom routines to use during the prewriting stage in kindergarten through second grade classrooms.

Explanation of Procedures

Four kindergarten, four first, and four second grade students will be asked to participate in this mixed methods study. The participants will be selected to create a sample size that is racially and ethnically diverse. The students will engage in writing activities individually over the course of four weeks. Each student will participate two times each week for thirty-minute sessions. The sessions may be more or less based on the engagement of the child. One session will include unstructured talking with drawing and writing. The other session will include purposeful talking with drawing and writing. Each session will include observations of students as they participate and a brief interview at the conclusion of each session. Audio recordings of the sessions will be collected throughout the research.

Risks and Discomforts

Participation in the research is voluntary and is not part of the students' academic requirements. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this study except for a possible breach of confidentiality.

Benefits

Participants may benefit from the writing sessions and potentially improve their writing skills. The research presented in this study has the potential to benefit kindergarten, first, and second grade student's quality of writing as well as establishing positive writing behaviors. Early childhood educators can use the research to reflect on their practice of writing instruction and create routines and classroom norms which include oral language during the prewriting or planning stage of writing and throughout the writing process. Administrators and school officials would benefit from this research to assist them as they select resources and professional development opportunities for early childhood educators that will encourage best practices in writing. Universities of higher education can use this study and other studies mentioned in the literature review to teach the next generation of teachers the important role of oral language to young children as they become writers. This study will benefit the growing body of research in the areas of oral language and writing for early childhood.

Confidentiality

Information obtained about participants will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. Anonymity will be obtained by using codes to represent the participants grade level and participant number. Information which may identify the participants may only be shared with persons or organizations for quality assurance and data analysis. It may also be shared with those responsible for ensuring compliance with laws and regulations related to research. They include:

- The UAB Institutional Review Board (IRB). An IRB is a group that reviews the study to protect the rights and welfare of research participants.
- The Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP)
- The information gathered may be published for scientific purposes. However, identities will remain confidential and will not be published, presented, reported, or discussed.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Participation in the study is your choice. There is no penalty if you decide not to participate in the study. You are free to withdraw from the research at any time. Your choice to leave the study will not affect your relationship with the institution.

Cost of Participation

There is no cost for participation in the study.

Payment for Participation in Research

You will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Questions

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research, please contact Rebekah Reach at 205-529-6915 or rholder@uab.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or concerns or complaints about the research, you may contact the UAB Office of the IRB (OIRB) at (205) 934-3789 or toll free at 1-855-860-3789. Regular hours for the OIRB are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CT, Monday through Friday. You may also email the UAB OIRB at irb@uab.edu.

Legal Rights

You are not waiving any of your legal rights by signing this informed consent document.

Signatures

Your signature below indicates that you have read (or been read) the information provided above and agree to participate in this study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.

Your signature below indicates that you have read (or been read) the information provided above and agree to the following:

- I voluntarily agree to help facilitate this study.
- I understand that even if I agree to help now, I can withdraw at any time without any consequences of any kind.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that in signing this, I am allowing the study to take place within [redacted] [redacted] Summer Literacy Camp.
- I understand that all data collected in this study is confidential and anonymous.
- I understand that I am free to contact the researcher or any of the other resources listed above to seek further clarification and information.

Signature of Gatekeepers

6/3/2022

[redacted] Schools Date

Signature of Researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

DocuSigned by:
Rebekah Reach
AFD179F9E0904B0...

6/3/2022

Rebekah Reach, Principal Investigator Date

APPENDIX C

RECRUITMENT LETTER IN ENGLISH

Date: May 2, 2022

Dear Student and Guardian,

My name is Rebekah Reach. I am a second-grade teacher within our school district. I am working toward my doctorate degree at UAB. I am conducting research with kindergarten to second grade students to investigate the impact of students saying their thoughts aloud before being asked to write as part of the prewriting process. I am asking for your permission to allow your child to participate in this research study. The purpose of this study is to examine a student's quality of writing, writing behaviors, and feelings about writing with and without saying their story before writing. If you allow your child to participate, I will meet with your child over the course of four weeks for eight 30-minute writing sessions. The sessions will also include a brief interview about writing.

Please read the attached informed consent document. If you agree to allow your child to participate in this study, please sign the form and return it to your child's teacher. If you have any questions, please feel free to call or email me.

Rebekah Reach
Doctoral Candidate
rholder@uab.edu

APPENDIX D

RECRUITMENT LETTER IN SPANISH

Fecha: 2 de Mayo de 2022

Estimado/a Estudiante y Tutor/a,

Me llamo Rebekah Reach. Soy maestra de segundo grado en nuestro distrito escolar. Estoy trabajando para obtener mi título de doctorado en la UAB. Estoy llevando a cabo una investigación con estudiantes de kindergarten a segundo grado para investigar el impacto de que los/las estudiantes digan sus pensamientos en voz alta antes de que se les pida que escriban como parte del proceso de preescritura. Le pido su permiso para permitir que su hijo/a participe en este estudio de investigación. El propósito de este estudio es examinar la calidad de la escritura de los/las estudiantes, sus conductas de escritura y sus sentimientos sobre la escritura con y sin contar su historia antes de escribirla. Si usted permite que su hijo/a participe, me reuniré con él/ella en el transcurso de cuatro semanas para realizar ocho sesiones de escritura de 30 minutos. Las sesiones también incluirán una breve entrevista sobre la escritura.

Por favor, lea el documento de consentimiento informado adjunto. Si está de acuerdo en que su hijo/a participe en este estudio, por favor, firme el formulario y devuélvalo al/a la maestro/a de su hijo/a. Si tiene alguna pregunta, no dude en llamarme o enviarme un correo electrónico.

Rebekah Reach
Candidata al Doctorado
rholder@uab.edu

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT IN ENGLISH

Title of Research: Oral Language in the Prewriting Stage in Early Childhood: A Mixed Methods Study

UAB IRB Protocol #: 300009340

Principal Investigator: Rebekah Lee Reach

Sponsor: UAB School of Education, Department of Curriculum & Instruction

General Information	Your child is being asked to participate in a research study. Participation is completely voluntary. Your child is not required to participate in the study. The procedures, risks, and benefits are fully described in the consent form included within this document.
Purpose	The purpose of this study is to investigate the difference oral language experiences during the prewriting stage of writing make in a student's writing and writing behaviors in grades kindergarten, first, and second. This research can help educators develop practical classroom routines to use to support students during the prewriting stage.
Duration & Visits	Your child will be asked to participate in a 30-minute writing session twice a week for four weeks, eight total sessions.
Overview of Procedures	Each session will include writing and drawing a personal narrative story about their life as well as a brief interview. Observations will be made of students' writing behaviors. Students will also be asked to say their story aloud for four out of the eight sessions. Each session will be audio recorded.
Risks	Participation in the research is voluntary and is not part of the students' academic requirements. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this study except a possibly breach of confidentiality.
Benefits	Your child may benefit from the writing sessions and potentially improve their writing skills. The research presented in this study has the potential to benefit kindergarten, first, and second grade students' quality of writing as well as establishing positive writing behaviors. Early childhood educators can use the research to reflect on their practice of writing instruction and create routines and classroom norms which include oral language during the prewriting or planning stage of writing and throughout the writing process. This study will benefit the growing body of research in the areas of oral language and writing for early childhood.

Alternatives	If you do not want for your child to participate in the study, your alternative is to not allow your child to participate.

Purpose of the Research Study
Your child is being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to investigate the difference oral language experiences during the prewriting stage of writing make in a student's writing and writing behaviors. Your child is being asked to participate because they are in grades kindergarten, first, or second grade. The study also aims to include students from various races, ethnicities, and backgrounds. Twelve participants will be used for this study, four students from each grade level (kindergarten, first, and second grades).

Study Participation & Procedures
Your child will be asked to participate in a 30-minute writing session twice a week for four weeks, eight total sessions. Each session will include writing and drawing a personal narrative story about their life as well as a brief interview. Observations will be made of students' writing behaviors. Students will also be asked to say their story aloud for four out of the eight sessions. Each session will be audio recorded.

Your child's private information collected will not be used or distributed for future research studies even if identifiers are removed without your written consent.

Risks and Discomforts
The only possible risk in this study is the possibility for a breach of confidentiality.

If other risks are found, you will be provided with more information.

Benefits
Your child may benefit from the writing sessions and potentially improve their writing skills. Educators of students in kindergarten, first, and second grades can use the research to reflect on their practice of writing instruction and create routines and classroom norms which include oral language during the prewriting or planning stage of writing. This study will benefit the growing body of research in the areas of oral language and writing for early childhood.

Alternatives
Your alternative is to not allow your child to participate in this study.

Confidentiality and Authorization to Use and Disclose Information for Research Purposes
Federal regulations give you certain rights related to your personal information. These include the right to know who will be able to the get your child's information and why they may be able to get it. The principal investigator must get your permission to use or give out any personal information that may identify your child.

What information may be used and/or given to others?
All identifiable information will be removed before sharing with others. Those that may have access to your child's identifiable information includes the principal investigator, the principal investigator's dissertation committee, and those responsible for translations. Additionally, your child's writing will be labeled using a code instead of your child's name unless written by the child. The information includes your child's writing, drawing, oral talking, observations, and interviews.

Who may use and give out information about your child?
Your child's personal information will only be shared by the principal investigator with the principal investigator's doctoral committee and contracted translators as needed.

Who might get information about your child?
Your child's personal information will be shared with the principal investigator. It may also be shared with the investigator's doctoral committee and contracted translators as needed.

Information about you may be given to:

- The UAB IRB and its staff
- The University of Alabama at Birmingham and the Jefferson County Department of Health, as necessary for their operations
- The Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP)
- Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) agencies
- Governmental agencies in other countries
- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
- Governmental agencies to whom certain diseases (reportable diseases) must be reported

Why will this information be used and/or given to others?
This information will be used to support this study. It will be used for the principal investigator's dissertation with guidance from the principal investigator's dissertation committee. Contracted translators may use this information as needed.

What if I decide not to give permission to use and give out my personal information?
By signing this consent form, you are giving permission to use and give out the information listed above for the purposes described above. If you do not give permission, your child will not be included in this research.

May I review or copy the information obtained from my child or created about my child? If you sign this consent, you will have the right to view and copy your child's information after the research is complete.

May I withdraw or cancel my permission?

Yes, you may withdraw or cancel your permission. The use of your child's information will be used until cancelation is received.

You may withdraw your permission to use and disclose information at any time. To withdraw your permission, please send written notice to the principal investigator. If you withdraw your permission, no new information will be collected after that date. Information that has already been collected may still be used and given to others. This would be done if it were necessary for the research to be reliable.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawl
Participation in the study is your choice. There is no penalty if you decide to not allow your child to participate in the study. You are free to withdraw from the research at any time. Your choice
to leave the study will not affect your relationship with the institution. Please contact the principal investigator if you wish to withdraw from the study.

You may be removed from the study without your consent if the sponsor ends the study, if the principal investigator believes it is not in your child's best interest to continue, or if you or your child are not following study rules.

Cost of Participation
There will be not cost for your child to participate in this study.

Payment for Participation
There is no compensation for participating in this study.

New Findings
You will be told by the principal investigator or the study staff if new information becomes available that might affect your choice to stay in the study.

Questions
If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research, please contact Rebekah Reach at 205-529-6915 or rholder@uab.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or concerns or complaints about the research, you may contact the UAB Office of the IRB (OIRB) at (205) 934-3789 or toll free at 1-855-860-3789. Regular hours for the OIRB are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CT, Monday through Friday. You may also email the UAB OIRB at irb@uab.edu.

Legal Rights
You are not waiving any of your legal rights by signing this consent document.

Signatures
Your signature below indicates that you have read (or been read) the information provided above and agree to allow your child to participate in this study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.

Signature of Participant or Legally Authorized Representative	Date
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	Date

APPENDIX F

INFORMED CONSENT IN SPANISH

CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO PARA PARTICIPAR EN UN ESTUDIO DE INVESTIGACIÓN

Título de la investigación: El lenguaje oral en la etapa de preescritura en la primera infancia: Un estudio de métodos mixtos

Protocolo de la UAB IRB #: 300009340

Investigador principal: Rebekah Lee Reach

Patrocinador: Escuela de Educación de la UAB, Departamento de Currículo e Instrucción

Información General	Se pide a su hijo/a que participe en un estudio de investigación. La participación es completamente voluntaria. Su hijo/a no está obligado/a a participar en el estudio. Los procedimientos, riesgos y beneficios se describen completamente en el formulario de consentimiento incluido en este documento.
Objetivo	El objetivo de este estudio es investigar la diferencia que las experiencias de lenguaje oral durante la etapa de preescritura de la escritura hacen en la escritura de un/una estudiante y en los comportamientos de escritura en los grados de kindergarten, primero y segundo. Esta investigación puede ayudar a los/las educadores/as a desarrollar rutinas prácticas en el aula para apoyar a los/las estudiantes durante la etapa de preescritura.
Duración y Visitas	Se pedirá a su hijo/a que participe en una sesión de escritura de 30 minutos dos veces por semana durante cuatro semanas, ocho sesiones en total.
Resumen de Procedimientos	Cada sesión incluirá escribir y dibujar una historia narrativa personal sobre sus vidas, así como una breve entrevista. Se observarán los comportamientos de escritura de los/las alumnos/as. También se pedirá a los/las estudiantes que digan su historia en voz alta en cuatro de las ocho sesiones. Cada sesión se grabará en audio.
Riesgos	La participación en la investigación es voluntaria y no forma parte de los requisitos académicos de los/las estudiantes. No se conocen riesgos ni complicaciones asociados a este estudio, salvo una posible violación de la confidencialidad.

Beneficios	Su hijo/a puede beneficiarse de las sesiones de escritura y mejorar potencialmente sus habilidades de escritura. La investigación presentada en este estudio tiene el potencial de beneficiar la calidad de la escritura de los/las estudiantes de kindergarten, primer y segundo grado, así como de establecer comportamientos positivos de escritura. Los/las maestros/as de la primera infancia pueden utilizar la investigación para reflexionar sobre su práctica de la enseñanza de la escritura y crear rutinas y normas de aula que incluyan el lenguaje oral durante la etapa de preescritura o planificación de la escritura y durante todo el proceso de escritura. Este estudio beneficiará al creciente cuerpo de investigación en las áreas de lenguaje oral y escritura para la primera infancia.
Alternativas	Si no desea que su hijo/a participe en el estudio, su alternativa es no permitirle participar.

Objetivo del Estudio de Investigación
Se pide a su hijo/a que participe en un estudio de investigación. El objetivo de este estudio es investigar la diferencia que las experiencias de lenguaje oral durante la etapa de preescritura de la escritura hacen en la escritura y los comportamientos de escritura de un/una estudiante. Se le pide a su hijo/a que participe porque está en los grados de kindergarten, primero o segundo. El estudio también pretende incluir a estudiantes de diversas razas, etnias y orígenes. Se utilizarán doce participantes para este estudio, cuatro estudiantes de cada grado (kindergarten, primer y segundo grado).

Participación en el Estudio y Procedimientos
Se pedirá a su hijo/a que participe en una sesión de escritura de 30 minutos dos veces por semana durante cuatro semanas, ocho sesiones en total. Cada sesión incluirá escribir y dibujar una historia narrativa personal sobre sus vidas, así como una breve entrevista. Se observarán los comportamientos de escritura de los/las estudiantes. También se pedirá a los/las estudiantes que digan su historia en voz alta durante cuatro de las ocho sesiones. Cada sesión se grabará en audio.

La información privada de su hijo/a recopilada no se utilizará ni se distribuirá para futuros estudios de investigación, incluso si se eliminan los identificadores sin su consentimiento por escrito.

Riesgos y Complicaciones
El único riesgo posible en este estudio es la posibilidad de que se viole la confidencialidad.

Si se encuentran otros riesgos, se le proporcionará más información.

Beneficios
Su hijo/a puede beneficiarse de las sesiones de escritura y mejorar potencialmente sus habilidades de escritura. Los/las maestros/as de alumnos/as de kindergarten, primer y segundo grado pueden utilizar la investigación para reflexionar sobre su práctica de la enseñanza de la escritura y crear rutinas y normas de aula que incluyan el lenguaje oral durante la etapa de preescritura o planificación de la escritura. Este estudio beneficiará al creciente cuerpo de investigación en las áreas de lenguaje oral y escritura para la primera infancia.

Alternativas
Su alternativa es no permitir que su hijo/a participe en este estudio.

Confidencialidad y Autorización para Utilizar y Divulgar Información con Fines de Investigación
La normativa federal le otorga a usted ciertos derechos relacionados con su información personal. Entre ellos está el derecho a saber quién podrá obtener la información de su hijo/a y por qué puede hacerlo. La investigadora principal tiene que obtener su permiso para utilizar o dar cualquier información personal que pueda identificar a su hijo/a.

¿Qué información puede ser utilizada y/o cedida a otros?
Toda la información identificable se eliminará antes de compartirla con otros. Las personas que pueden tener acceso a la información identificable de su hijo/a son la investigadora principal, el comité de tesis de la investigadora principal y los responsables de las traducciones. Además, los escritos de su hijo/a serán etiquetados utilizando un código en lugar del nombre de su hijo/a, a menos que sean escritos por él/ella. La información incluye los escritos, dibujos, conversaciones orales, observaciones y entrevistas de su hijo/a.
¿Quién puede utilizar y divulgar información sobre su hijo/a?
La información personal de su hijo/a sólo será compartida por la investigadora principal con el comité de doctorado de la investigadora principal y los traductores contratados, según sea necesario.

¿Quién puede obtener información sobre su hijo/a?
La información personal de su hijo/a se compartirá con la investigadora principal. También puede compartirse con el comité de doctorado de la investigadora y con los traductores contratados, según sea necesario.

La información sobre usted puede ser compartida con:
- El IRB de la UAB y su personal
- La Universidad de Alabama en Birmingham y el Departamento de Salud del Condado de Jefferson, según sea necesario para sus operaciones
- La Oficina para la Protección de la Investigación en Seres Humanos (OHRP)
- Agencias del Departamento de Salud y Servicios Humanos (DHHS)
- Organismos gubernamentales de otros países

- La Administración de Alimentos y Medicamentos de los Estados Unidos (FDA)
- Organismos gubernamentales a los que deben notificarse determinadas enfermedades (enfermedades de declaración obligatoria)

¿Por qué se utilizará esta información y/o se dará a otros?
Esta información se utilizará para apoyar este estudio. Se utilizará para la disertación de la investigadora principal con la orientación del comité de disertación de la investigadora principal. Los traductores contratados podrán utilizar esta información según sea necesario.
¿Qué ocurre si decido no dar permiso para utilizar y divulgar mis datos personales? Al firmar este formulario de consentimiento, usted está dando permiso para utilizar y dar la información mencionada anteriormente para los fines descritos. Si no da su permiso, su hijo/a no será incluido/a en esta investigación.

¿Puedo revisar o copiar la información obtenida de mi hijo/a o creada acerca de él/ella? Si firma este consentimiento, tendrá derecho a ver y copiar la información de su hijo/a una vez finalizada la investigación.

¿Puedo retirar o cancelar mi permiso?
Sí, puede retirar o cancelar su permiso. El uso de la información de su hijo/a se utilizará hasta que se reciba la cancelación.

Puede retirar su permiso para utilizar y divulgar información en cualquier momento. Para retirar su permiso, envíe una notificación por escrito a la investigadora principal. Si retira su permiso, no se recogerá ninguna información nueva después de esa fecha. La información que ya se haya recogido podrá seguir utilizándose y facilitándose a otros. Esto se haría si fuera necesario para que la investigación sea confiable.

Participación voluntaria y Retiro
La participación en el estudio es su elección. No hay ninguna penalización si decide no permitir que su hijo/a participe en el estudio. Usted es libre de retirarse de la investigación en cualquier momento. Su elección de abandonar el estudio no afectará a su relación con la institución. Póngase en contacto con la investigadora principal si desea retirarse del estudio.

Se le puede retirar del estudio sin su consentimiento si el patrocinador pone fin al estudio, si la investigadora principal considera que no es lo mejor para su hijo/a que continúe, o si usted o su hijo/a no siguen las normas del estudio.

Costos de Participación
La participación de su hijo en este estudio no tendrá ningún costo.

Pago por Participar
No hay ninguna compensación por participar en este estudio.

Nuevos Hallazgos
La investigadora principal o el personal del estudio le comunicarán si se dispone de nueva información que pueda afectar a su decisión de permanecer en el estudio.

Preguntas
Si tiene alguna pregunta, duda o queja sobre la investigación, póngase en contacto con Rebekah Reach en el 205-529-6915 o rholder@uab.edu. Si tiene preguntas sobre sus derechos como participante en la investigación, o preocupaciones o quejas sobre la investigación, puede ponerse en contacto con la Oficina de la IRB (OIRB) de la UAB llamando al (205) 934-3789 o al número gratuito 1-855-860-3789. El horario habitual de la OIRB es de 8:00 a.m. a 5:00 p.m. CT, de lunes a viernes. También puede enviar un correo electrónico a la OIRB de la UAB en irb@uab.edu.

Derechos Legales
Usted no renuncia a ninguno de sus derechos legales al firmar este documento de consentimiento.

Firmas
Su firma a continuación indica que ha leído (o le han leído) la información proporcionada anteriormente y que está de acuerdo en permitir que su hijo/a participe en este estudio. Recibirá una copia de este formulario de consentimiento firmado.

_____

Firma del/de la participante o del representante legalmente autorizado Fecha

_____

Firma de la persona que obtiene el consentimiento Fecha

APPENDIX G

STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

After participants were finished writing for the day, they were asked each interview question. Audio of the interviews were recorded, transcribed, and categories were developed.

Session I Interview Questions:

1. How do you feel about your writing today?

2. Can you tell me why you feel that way?

Session II Interview Questions:

1. How do you feel about your writing today?

2. Can you tell me why you feel that way?

3. Do you feel that it was easier to write today when you said your story first?

4. Why do you think it was easier/harder?

APPENDIX H

6 + 1 TRAIT WRITING RUBRICS: GRADES K-2

KEY QUESTION

Does the writing engage the reader with fresh information or perspective on a focused topic?

	Not proficient			Proficient		
	1 Beginning	2 Emerging	3 Developing	4 Capable	5 Experienced	6 Exceptional
	Does not communicate an idea through writing, drawing, or dictation	**Attempts to share a vague idea but lacks support through writing or drawing, or support is not connected**	**Shares an idea in writing in a general way (e.g., word string, sentence), but support is lacking or very weak**	**Presents a simple, clear main idea (e.g., a story, information, or opinion) in writing, with some details**	**Conveys a clear, focused main idea in writing, using multiple sentences with supporting details**	**Conveys a rich, focused, and well-developed main idea in writing that is fresh or original**
A. Main idea	Uses scribbles or shapes that imitate letters and/or writes letters randomly; may dictate ideas or labels for pictures	Uses some recognizable letters or words that may include line forms imitating text; drawing, if present, may be labeled but may not relate to writing; may dictate ideas or labels for pictures	Shares a simple experience or information about an idea using words, but meaning is not entirely clear; drawing, if present, may relate to writing; may dictate ideas	Conveys a simple, clear main idea (e.g., through a story, information, or opinion); drawing, if present, is appropriate to the main idea	Conveys a clear, focused main idea; drawing, if present, supports main idea	Presents a rich, focused, and fresh or original idea; drawing, if present, enhances main idea
B. Details and support	Shares drawing or writing that is lacking details	Shares simple details in a drawing but does not support the main idea	Offers one or two details in writing but does not support the main idea (e.g., provides lists without additional explanation); drawing, if present, may add details that have limited connection	Uses multiple details and/or reasons that support the main idea in writing; drawing, if present, relates to main idea	Includes many specific details and/or reasons that develop the main idea in writing; drawing, if present, provides additional detail	Features specific, interesting, well-developed details and/or reasons that enrich the main idea in writing; drawing, if present, deepens meaning

KEY QUESTION

Does the organizational structure enhance the ideas and make them easier to understand?

	Not proficient			Proficient		
	1 Beginning	2 Emerging	3 Developing	4 Capable	5 Experienced	6 Exceptional
	Has no obvious organization or structure	**Attempts an organizational structure in writing or drawing, but it is incomplete or confusing**	**Begins developing a simple organizational structure in writing; may be confusing in places; uses limited transitions and/or random sequencing**	**Uses a basic organizational structure in writing that orders ideas using transitions and logical sequencing**	**Demonstrates an organizational structure in writing that connects ideas using varied transitions and sequencing that extends meaning**	**Provides an organizational structure in writing that enhances ideas using rich and varied transitions and sequencing that enriches meaning**
A. Beginning, middle, and end	Has no sense of beginning, middle, or end; drawings, if present, may appear random or disconnected	Has a beginning sense of organizational structure in writing and/or drawing, but text may be out of order or incomplete	Begins developing an organizational structure in writing though may be hard to follow; experiments with a beginning (e.g., "Once upon a time") and/or a middle, but includes no clear ending except possibly "The End"	Has a beginning, middle, and end though that may not be entirely clear or work together smoothly; includes a lead and/or a concluding sentence	Has a beginning, middle, and end that work together to communicate clearly; includes identifiable lead and concluding sentences	Includes an inviting beginning, a middle with appropriate details, and a developed ending that is effective, interesting, and/or thoughtful
B. Transitions	Demonstrates no sense of order or grouping of words and/or drawings	Attempts to group like words and/or drawings; may attempt limited transitions	Includes limited transitions but relies primarily on simple words (e.g., so, and, then); drawing, if present, may attempt to link ideas	Uses often predictable transitions (e.g., linking and temporal words); drawing, if present, links ideas	Selects frequently varied transitions to connect main ideas and details; drawing, if present, builds connections	Connects ideas in interesting, workable ways using a variety of transitions; drawing, if present, elaborates connections

KEY QUESTION

Does the organizational structure enhance the ideas and make them easier to understand?

	Not proficient			Proficient		
	1 Beginning	2 Emerging	3 Developing	4 Capable	5 Experienced	6 Exceptional
C. Sequencing	Shows no sense of sequencing in writing and/or drawing	Has random sequencing in writing and/or drawing	Attempts sequencing in writing and/or drawing that may be confusing or out of order	Uses logical sequencing that organizes text; drawing, if present, also reflects logical sequencing or placement	Uses sound sequencing that clarifies meaning; drawing, if present, also clarifies meaning	Uses convincing sequencing to enhance or extend meaning; drawing, if present, also enhances or extends meaning
D. Title (optional)	Has no title	Has an unrelated or confusing title	Includes a basic title (e.g., "The Dog") or a title that does not directly link to the main idea	Creates a title that connects adequately to the main idea	Develops an interesting title that reflects the main idea	Creates an original, insightful, or clever title that reflects the main idea

KEY QUESTION

Does the reader hear the writer speaking in the text?

	Not proficient			Proficient		
	1 Beginning	2 Emerging	3 Developing	4 Capable	5 Experienced	6 Exceptional
	Shows indifference or distance	**Makes ineffective attempts to connect with task and/or purpose and engage reader**	**Uses emerging voice that does not yet support task and/or purpose or engage audience**	**Employs voice that supports task and purpose and audience, engaging reader adequately**	**Strengthens writing with voice that fully addresses task, purpose, and audience**	**Uses voice uniquely, demonstrating powerful ownership of task, purpose, and audience**
A. Feelings/mood	Expresses little or no feeling	Offers hints of feelings through words, phrases, and/or drawing, but is not yet clear	Shares predictable feelings or personal opinions in writing and/or drawing, though may be weak and/or repetitive	Shares identifiable feelings or personal opinions in writing; drawing, if present, may support feelings	Features writing that has strong feelings and/or personal opinions; drawing, if present, highlights emotion	Creates writing intentionally to show a variety of feelings; drawing, if present, enhances emotional appeal
B. Individual Expression	Reveals nothing specific about writer in writing and/or drawing	Reveals little of writer's personality in writing and/or drawing	Offers glimpses of personality in writing and/or drawing but shows minimal risk-taking	Expresses personality; drawing, if present, conveys personality; may take risks in one or two places that surprise, delight, and/or move reader	Frequently interacts and engages with reader in an authentic, committed manner	Reveals highly unique personality that enriches text; drawing, if present, heightens personality; demonstrates risk-taking that makes it easy to "hear" writer
C. Engagement/audience awareness	Has no connection with or awareness of reader in writing and/or drawing	Has little connection with or awareness of reader in writing and/or drawing	Shows limited connection with reader but is unsuccessful; may express a general awareness that writing and/or drawing will be seen by someone else	Connects with reader in some places; drawing, if present, supports connection	Connects with reader in several places, demonstrating awareness of audience; drawing, if present, strengthens connection and engages reader	Creates close connection with reader; shows clear sense of audience throughout; drawing, if present, engages reader

KEY QUESTION

Does the language convey precise and compelling meaning and/or create a vivid picture for the reader?

	Not proficient			Proficient		
	1 Beginning	2 Emerging	3 Developing	4 Capable	5 Experienced	6 Exceptional
	Uses no or very few printed words; uses drawings to represent words and/or copies some environmental print, making meaning unclear	**Has some simple words that may be difficult to decode; may rely on environmental print**	**Uses words, word groups, and/or phrases with possible drawing; vocabulary is limited to general, known words and may be repetitious**	**Uses basic vocabulary correctly, including basic domain-specific vocabulary if appropriate; may attempt a few creative word choices**	**Uses precise, accurate, varied vocabulary, including domain-specific vocabulary if appropriate; may attempt creative word choice including figurative language**	**Uses precise, accurate, varied, and/or creative vocabulary, including domain-specific vocabulary if appropriate; may employ figurative language; vocabulary reflects understanding**
A. Word meaning	Uses drawings to represent words and phrases; writes some letters and/or letter strings inconsistently, and meaning cannot be decoded	Uses some simple words and/or phrases that may be decodable to make meaning	Uses general or ordinary words and/or phrases, sometimes incorrectly, to make meaning; may attempt new or challenging words that may not fit meaning	Uses favorite and/or basic vocabulary correctly, including basic domain-specific vocabulary if appropriate; may attempt varied, sophisticated words with some success	Uses precise, accurate, varied vocabulary, including basic domain-specific vocabulary if appropriate; may experiment with more sophisticated words	Uses precise, accurate, varied, and creative vocabulary, including domain-specific vocabulary if appropriate
B. Word quality	Uses no descriptive words	Uses comfortable, high-frequency, and/or simple words and that may be repetitive (e.g., names, letters, high- frequency words)	Uses familiar and/or basic words; attempts descriptive words to create an image	Uses some descriptive vocabulary to provide details and/or create a vivid image	Frequently uses creative vocabulary to provide details and/or create a vivid image; may attempt more advanced and/or figurative language	Consistently chooses expressive vocabulary to create vivid, detailed images that linger in the reader's mind; may use metaphors, similes, or other figurative language

KEY QUESTION

Does the language convey precise and compelling meaning and/or create a vivid picture for the reader?

	Not proficient			Proficient		
	1 Beginning	2 Emerging	3 Developing	4 Capable	5 Experienced	6 Exceptional
C. Word usage	Uses no or very little print or drawings to represent words but does not make sense; may attempt to copy environmental print	Uses functional words and words copied from environmental print but may be incorrect and/or repetitious	Uses limited, simple words; may occasionally be incorrect or repetitious	Uses basic and appropriate vocabulary; may attempt creative word usage (e.g., synonyms, adjectives, adverbs) but may not be correct	Chooses varied, accurate vocabulary for specific purposes (e.g., synonyms, adjectives, adverbs) and to create a vivid picture for the reader	Consistently chooses rich, varied, accurate, creative vocabulary to enhance meaning and/or create a vivid picture for the reader

KEY QUESTION

Does the writer control sentences so the piece flows smoothly when read aloud?

	Not proficient			Proficient		
	1 Beginning	**2 Emerging**	**3 Developing**	**4 Capable**	**5 Experienced**	**6 Exceptional**
	Has no sentences; may make random, undecodable attempt to represent words	**Includes part of a sentence that is decodable, but text contains no sense of rhythm**	**Has some decodable sentences, but they are choppy and lack rhythm**	**Uses simple sentences with limited transitional words; may have little variety and/or rhythm**	**Uses multiple sentences with transitional words, including a variety of sentence beginnings; has rhythm that is fluid and easy to read aloud**	**Uses a variety of sentences with varied transitional words, that flow smoothly and are easy to read aloud**
A. Sentence structure	Has no sentence structure but may use left-to-right progression in marks or letter strings across the page	Uses short, phrase-like wording as sentences, some of which are decodable	Correctly uses simple sentences that have no variation in sentence patterns	Correctly uses simple sentences with some variation in sentence patterns; may be mechanical	Effectively uses varied simple and more varied sentence patterns to create strong sentences	Employs varied, effective sentence structure throughout text; sentences are frequently creative
B. Sentence variety	Contains no sentences or sentence fragments	Uses short, repetitive word patterns; has no variety; may be incomplete in places	Uses sentences that begin the same way, with few exceptions; uses sentences that are about the same length, resulting in choppiness	Uses some varied sentence beginnings and lengths that help make the text flow	Uses a variety of sentence beginnings and lengths that make the text flow smoothly	Purposefully uses a variety of sentence beginnings and lengths that enhance flow
C. Connecting sentence	Has no transition words	Uses a few simple transitions among clusters of words that are not yet sentences	Includes a few simple transitions; may be repetitive	Uses transitions to connect words and/or phrases with minimal errors	Uses transitions to connect words and/or phrases correctly; creates readability	Uses varied transitions smoothly and effectively to enhance readability

KEY QUESTION

Does the writer control sentences so the piece flows smoothly when read aloud?

	Not proficient			Proficient		
	1 Beginning	2 Emerging	3 Developing	4 Capable	5 Experienced	6 Exceptional
D. Sentence rhythms	Has no or limited words; has no rhythm	Has limited text and very little rhythm when read aloud	Lacks rhythm due to uneven sentence structure and/or repetition; text is difficult to read aloud	Has some rhythm but may be somewhat mechanical in parts; is easily read aloud	Has frequent rhythm and flow; sounds natural when read aloud	Uses natural rhythm and cadence to create a flow that is easy and enjoyable to read aloud

KEY QUESTION

How well does the text illustrate the writer's proficiency with grade-appropriate conventions?

(Note: For the trait of conventions, grade level matters. Expectations should be based on grade level and include only skills that have been taught.)

	Not proficient			Proficient		
	1 Beginning	**2 Emerging**	**3 Developing**	**4 Capable**	**5 Experienced**	**6 Exceptional**
	Demonstrates little or no understanding of grade-level conventions	**Has many types of convention errors scattered throughout text**	**Handles conventions well at times but makes errors that impair readability**	**Applies standard grade-level conventions accurately on most occasions**	**Has few errors with only minor editing needed to publish; may attempt more complex conventions**	**Uses conventions effortlessly without significant errors; may use conventions to creatively enhance message**
A. Spelling	Uses letter strings indicating gaps in knowing letter/sound relationships; has emerging print sense	Attempts phonetic spelling (e.g., MTR, KLOSD, UM, KD) that is mostly decodable; may include some simple words spelled correctly	Has inconsistent spelling of grade-level, high-frequency words; uses some phonetic spelling	Uses generally correct grade-level, high-frequency words correctly; uses phonetic spelling for less frequent words	Spells grade-level, high-frequency words with minimal errors; attempts more difficult words logically	Spells nearly all words correctly, including grade-level, high-frequency, and more difficult words
B. Punctuation	Has no punctuation	Attempts some random punctuation	Experiments with end punctuation	Has end punctuation that is mostly correct	Uses end punctuation that is usually correct; attempts other punctuation with some correctness	Uses end punctuation correctly; often correctly uses advanced punctuation with few errors; may use punctuation for style and/or effect

KEY QUESTION

How well does the text illustrate the writer's proficiency with grade-appropriate conventions?

(Note: For the trait of conventions, grade level matters. Expectations should be based on grade level and include only skills that have been taught.)

	Not proficient			Proficient		
	1 Beginning	**2 Emerging**	**3 Developing**	**4 Capable**	**5 Experienced**	**6 Exceptional**
C. Capitalization	Has no or little capitalization	Uses upper and/or lower-case letters inconsistently	Has inconsistent capitalization but shows signs of appropriate use	Has mostly correct capitalization at the beginnings of sentences and for names and/or titles	Uses correct capitalization at the beginnings of sentences and for names, titles, and usually for proper nouns; may attempt creative capitalization for effect	Uses consistently correct capitalization for sentence beginnings, names, titles, and/or proper nouns; may use creative capitalization for emphasis
D. Grammar/usage	Demonstrates no understanding of basic grammar and/or usage in text	Demonstrates limited understanding of grammar and/or usage in text	Attempts basic grammar and usage, but is mostly uneven, overly simplistic, or incorrect	Has mostly correct noun/pronoun agreement, verb tenses, and subject/verb agreement in simple constructions	Uses correct grammar nearly all the time	Shows consistent and correct use of grammar at grade-level expectations and frequently beyond

KEY QUESTION

Is the finished piece easy to read, polished in presentation, and pleasing to the eye?

	Not proficient			Proficient		
	1 Beginning	2 Emerging	3 Developing	4 Capable	5 Experienced	6 Exceptional
	Strings letters or words together with no sense of spacing; may use drawings randomly	**Begins to make letters but may be randomly placed; drawings lack connection to text**	**Has some discrepancies in letter shape; has mostly correct spacing of letters and words; drawings connect to text**	**Has most letters, words, and sentences properly spaced; drawings/ graphics, if present, include pictures, charts, tables, and/or graphs that logically connect to text**	**Produces an easily readable text, with appropriate spacing; drawings/graphics, if present, logically connect to and support text**	**Creates a text that is polished with proper spacing and effective use of white space; drawings/graphics, if present, purposefully enrich the text**
A. Handwriting	Has no consistent shape to marks or letters; alphabetic understanding may	Shapes some letters properly, but others are difficult to recognize or inaccurate	Shows inconsistencies in letter shape, but many letters are identifiable	Has consistent letter shape that makes most letters and words readable	Uses letters that are well formed and easy to read	Features handwriting that can be read easily, is attractive, and shows style
B. Spacing	Strings letters and words together randomly without spacing or margins	Shows random attempts to use spacing between letters and words and/or use margins on page	Has some letters and words that are readable; uses mostly correct spacing	Uses proper spacing for most letters, words, and sentences; may attempt to indent first line(s) of paragraph(s)	Has words and sentences that are correctly spaced; uses proper margins; indents first line of paragraph(s)	Features words and sentences that are consistently and evenly spaced throughout; uses margins that frame text; consistently indents or blocks paragraphs, if used
C. Drawings and graphics (optional)	Places drawings randomly on the page; does not support print if present	Places drawings randomly within text, making it distracting	Places drawings or graphics to support text	Positions drawings or graphics logically	Incorporates text features that help to integrate ideas, articulate meaning, and support reading	Uses text features to extend meaning and/or develop more complete understanding

6+1 Trait® Writing

Model of Instruction & Assessment

Education Northwest developed the 6+1 Trait® Writing Model of Instruction & Assessment to help educators provide clear, consistent, and evidence-based feedback on student writing. As more schools and districts emphasize students' writing skills across the curriculum, it's essential that all staff members use a common terminology and shared strategies to provide feedback. We offer a broad range of training, technical assistance, and resources, including free starter materials such as rubrics and Common Core crosswalks.