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Task-Based Writing Instruction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of task-based writing instruction, a communicative language-teaching method, on second language acquisition and differentiation of instruction for English language learners during the independent work time instructional component of the Open Court Reading program. Through student-teacher interaction that incorporated prompts, recasts, and constructivist pedagogy, the students' rough drafts (written interlanguage) were transformed into standard English at the conclusion of 1-to-1 writing conferences. One teacher and 10 3rd-grade students participated in this mixed-methods study. The study took place after school for 1 month (20 sessions of 20-45 minutes each). The data consisted of 35 transcribed writing conferences, writing samples, and interviews. Results indicate that it can be a useful vehicle for differentiated instruction, constructivist pedagogy, and second language acquisition to address the diverse needs of second language learners.

Introduction

A consensus is growing that the achievement gap between students of high- and low-socioeconomic status is indicative of an education crisis. Barton (2005) contended that California's official high school graduation rate of 87 percent is really about 71 percent. Approximately 24 percent of students in California's public schools are learning English as a second language (about 1.5 million out of a total enrollment of 6.3 million), with especially high concentrations in certain schools (Rumberger, Gándara, & Merino, 2006). Only about 39 percent of Hispanic students in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) graduate from high school, one of the state's lowest rates (Losen & Wald, 2005). California is second to last among the states—above Mississippi—in terms of high school seniors who enroll in 4-year colleges (Rogers, Terriquez, Valladares, & Oakes, 2006). The mayor of Los Angeles has called it "the new civil rights issue of our time" (Landsberg, 2006).

One response to this education crisis has been an increasing reliance on explicit instruction of phonics and phonemic awareness (Foorman, Francis, Fletcher, Mehta, & Schatschneider, 1998; Izumi, Coburn & Cox, 2002; Maddahian, 2002), direct instruction (O'Neill, 1988), and standards-based instructional programs (Williams, Kirst, Haertel, et al., 2005). In contrast, some have

focused on the complex nature of literacy as well as the need for a meaning-centered approach (Moustafa & Land, 2001; Peck & Serrano, 2002; Wilson, Martens, Arya, & Altwerger, 2004) while others have identified the emergence of a two-tier educational system in California: (a) a constructivist and student-centered curriculum that emphasizes academic freedom, creativity, and higher-level thinking skills for schools in higher socioeconomic areas; and (b) a direct-instruction textbook-centered curriculum that emphasizes rigid uniformity, narrow measures of literacy, and lower-level thinking skills (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006; Achinstein, Ogawa, & Speiglman, 2004). Another response has been to reexamine the knowledge base of second language acquisition and constructivist pedagogy, such as task-based instruction (TBI). According to D. R. Ellis (2003), although the emphasis of TBI is oral communicative competence, it can encompass all four domains of language (listening, speaking, reading, and writing); while grammar exercises prompt students to learn target-language forms, tasks guide students to actually use the target language. Skehan (1998) noted that tasks emphasize primacy of meaning by presenting a communication problem that needs to be solved.

Long's (1996) seminal study of interaction between native speakers (NS) and nonnative speakers (NNS) in the classroom led to the interaction hypothesis. He found that pairing students into NS-NNS dyads and giving them communicative tasks could result in meaningful second language acquisition. Several researchers have examined the application of TBI in the classroom (Ammar & Spada, 2006; Doughty, 2001; R. Ellis, 2006; Harley, 1998; Lyster, 2004; Mackey, 2006). The information-gap task was identified by Pica (2005) as a useful and authentic type of TBI for teachers as well as a valid research tool for academia. Swan (2005) took a more critical look and raised valid methodological concerns regarding studies that support the use of TBI in the classroom. He observed that there was no research to support the contention that traditional grammar-based approaches had failed. Swan concluded by noting that although TBI should not be used as an exclusive guide for designing the language course, it could be a resource to address the diverse needs of second language learners.

Vygotsky (1986) likened written language to a conversation with a blank piece of paper, lacking both the expressive qualities of oral speech and a live interlocutor; he called it a highly abstract form of communication that does not repeat the development of speech. How might one synthesize Vygotsky's construct of written language with Long's NS-NSS dyadic approach to communicative language teaching? In contrast to Long's classroom of nearly equal parts of native speakers and nonnative speakers, some classrooms have a ratio of 20 NNS to 1 NS (the teacher). What might a writing conference look like were Vygotsky to be the the teacher of those 20 second language learners? Perhaps the focus would not be teaching the stages of the writing process nor the use of various writing strategies; instead, the goal of the writing conference might be NS-NNS interaction as the end in itself. Could this NS-NNS interaction result in language acquisition? I coined the term "task-based writing instruction" (TBwI) for a type of differentiated writing instruction in which the primary

goal is NS-NNS interaction that facilitates noticing differences between written interlanguage and standard written English.

I had two research questions. First, how might TBwI impact the degree of differentiation of instruction? Second, how might TBwI impact second language acquisition? These questions were answered through the following data sources: (a) transcripts of writing conferences; (b) pre- and postconference writing samples; and (c) interviews. In addition, I had to identify quantitative measures of instructional differentiation.

Method

The study was conducted in an urban K-8 (kindergarten to 8th grade) public school. More than 97 percent of the students were Hispanic and about half were classified as English language learners. I had originally planned to work with 8 students but raised that figure to 10 so that all who expressed an interest could participate. Thus, 10 student participants were self-selected from a pool of two 3rd-grade classes (about 40 students). Their first language was Spanish; they were all classified as English language learners (from beginning to intermediate-high levels of English). I was the sole participant-researcher—a native English speaker and special-education teacher—of the same school. The 10 students knew me, though I had not been their teacher. Thus, I had a level of rapport with them comparable to that of their regular teacher. The school's English language curriculum was the Open Court Reading program (OCR), which includes a 20-40-minute instructional block called "independent work time" (IWT), during which most students learn independently while the teacher works with small groups of students to provide differentiated instruction. Typically, IWT was used at the school to improve oral reading fluency (defined in OCR as the total number of words correctly read aloud during 1 minute); the teacher would work with the lowest 3-4 students while the others worked in pairs reading and rereading the same fluency passages (one read while the other kept score). The OCR program includes a component called "writing seminar," which is a time for the teacher and student to meet, reviewing student comments, clarifying student understanding of the revision process, providing encouragement, and formulating an action plan for revision after the conference (Bereiter, et al., 2000).

The study consisted of 20 after-school sessions of 20-45 minutes, spread out over 4 weeks. At the beginning of each week I briefly introduced the writing prompt (see Appendix A for an example) and answered questions with the whole group. The balance of my time was spent meeting with students individually while the others worked independently or in cooperative groups to write first drafts or make revisions. As they finished writing a draft, they signed up to conference with me. The duration of a writing conference varied between 5 and 10 minutes. At the beginning I would often say, "Read me the first sentence," and then I typed that sentence into a word-processing program. If it were unclear I would say, "I don't understand" and thus initiate a series of conversational turns culminating in a well-formed sentence that clearly communicated the original intended meaning. At the conclusion of the writing conference, I

printed the document containing both the original rough draft and the final draft, one atop the other (see Appendix B for an example). Then I gave that paper to the student with instructions to make editing marks by comparing the two versions and then to recopy the final draft on a separate sheet of paper.

The first step in analyzing the data was to transcribe the 35 writing conferences into a spreadsheet, matched to the corresponding rough-draft sentences and reformulated final-draft sentences (see Appendix C). Each of the 930 conversational turns was classified according to a *prompt category* (the TBI technique used to reformulate the sentence) and the *linguistic target* (the problem that was impeding communication). The iterative process (i.e., trial and error) of identifying the prompt category and linguistic target of each conversational turn took place after the instructional intervention had concluded. The categories are described in Table 1.

Table 1
Prompt Categories

Prompt category	Description	Example
Recast	NS says the correctly formulated statement, inviting the NNS to repeat it.	NNS: "My Mom said, 'No feel sad.'" NS: "My Mom said, 'DON'T feel sad.'"
Prompt elicitation	NS understands the NNS's intended meaning and attempts to elicit a correct reformulation (often through a cloze statement).	NNS: "Me and Kimberly went running." NS: "Instead of ME it should be ..." NNS: "I"
Prompt repetition	NS repeats the NNS's statement, adding stress to indicate confusion.	NNS: "One day my teacher said to draw an imagination." NS: "to draw an imaginATION? NNS: "to draw a picture."
Prompt clarification	NS requests additional information to better understand NNS's intended meaning.	NNS: "I told the teacher if she could help me." NS: "So it was easy because you asked her?" NNS: "No"
Prompt metacognitive	NS guides the NNS to a reflect upon a grammar concept.	NS: "Do we put a period at the end of a question?"
*Read	NS asks the NNS to read the next sentence.	NS: "[read the] Next sentence."
*Statement	The NS concludes a series of turns with a minilecture.	NS: "And we don't really need to say 'watching' twice."

Note: The categories "read" and "statement" are not treated as prompts in this study. They were created to account for writing conference conversational turns that did not fit into Lyster's (2004) understanding of recasts and prompts.

The prompt categories were based upon Lyster's (2004) framework of recasts and prompts; he saw prompts as more cognitively challenging than recasts

because prompts guide NNSs into reformulating the interlanguage themselves. Within a Vygotskian construct, prompts can be seen as operating within the NNS's zone of proximal development (ZPD) while recasts operate beyond that zone. Thus, prompts may be useful when the NNS has had some previous exposure to the targeted concept and simply needs assistance to recall it. I added two additional categories: read (the next sentence to me) and statement. The latter was added because at certain points I made observations that did not invite a response from the NNS. In some cases it was not easy to discern the prompt category. In part, this occurred because prompt categories were determined after the fact. In the moment of a given conversational turn, I was focused on guiding the student toward clarity of expression rather than the category of prompt that was used. In some cases, a conversational turn was split up so that each one could achieve purity of prompt category.

Determining the linguistic target (Table 2) also posed challenges. I designed the writing prompts to elicit instruction on three linguistic features: (a) verb tense; (b) complete sentences; and (c) coherent paragraphs. The writing prompt worksheets (see Appendix A) gave six possible topic sentences, and the NNS then picked one and wrote four more sentences to create a paragraph. The topics dealt with a remembrance (past tense), a plan (future tense), or advice (modals and simple present). Thus, correct verb tense was task essential. Writing a coherent paragraph was also task essential because their sentences had to develop the given topic sentence. With the oral prompt, "Read me the next sentence," and by controlling where the student would stop speaking, I planned for implicit instruction in complete sentences. These three linguistic features were part of the 3rd-grade English Language Arts standards. Since the NNSs were generally working at or below grade level, those linguistic features were posited to be within their ZPD. Spelling errors were automatically corrected during the writing conference, a fact that I did not highlight except when both of us had difficulty decoding the rough draft. Although in some cases and for some students these were salient barriers to written communication, other features of their written interlanguage emerged as more significant barriers during many of the writing conferences. In deciding the scope of the linguistic targets, I struggled with having a manageable number of groups versus accurately describing what happened during the writing conferences.

After coding the 930 writing conference conversational turns for prompt category and linguistic target, I created the following quantitative measures of differentiation:

1. Overall Linguistic Focus, which measured the relative amount of time devoted to each linguistic target;
2. Prompts versus Recasts, which measured the relative use of prompts to recasts;
3. Turns versus Sentences, which measured the average number of conversational turns required to reformulate a sentence; and
4. Teacher versus Student Talk, which measured the quantity of teacher-to-student talk.

Table 2
Linguistic Targets

Linguistic target	Deals with ...	Example (rd=rough draft; fd=final draft)
End marks (M.End)	marking complete thoughts with punctuation marks	NS: "Read me the next sentence." NNS: "I was 8 years old me and my dad …"
Other marks (M.Other)	apostrophes (indicating possession) and commas	RD: "When my to sisters were fighting for a doll and they were fighting for" FD: "When my two sisters were fighting for a doll, I came to the living room."
Quote marks (M.Quote)	conventions of indicating direct speech, including offset comma, quote marks, and capitalization within the quote	RD: "My dad said there's different stuff in the building." FD: "My dad said, 'There's different stuff in the building.'"
Semantics (Sem)	word choices that were a barrier to communication of intended meaning	RD: "One day my teacher said to draw an imagination."
Prepositions (Prep)	prepositions and correct use of phrasal verbs	RD: "and to use their imagination on school" FD: "I will teach my children to use their imagination when they are in school."
Pronouns (Pronoun)	pronoun antecedents and nominative versus objective pronouns	RD: "When we fall down we could see a cut." FD: "When I fell down, I could see a cut and blood on my arm."
Schema (Schema)	revealing sufficient (yet not excessive) background information	RD: "But I like my old friends." FD: "But I wanted to keep my old friends instead of making new ones."
Simile (Simile)	comparisons that facilitate readers' comprehension	RD: "It [the rock] was like brand new." FD: "It was like a brand-new toy."
Syntax (Syntax)	correct word order	RD: "Then I found a dog sad." FD: "Then I found a sad dog."
Topicality (Topicality)	removing information irrelevant to the paragraph's topic sentence	RD: "I remember a time I used my imagination to play … Then it got late so I had to go inside my house. Then I smelled food cooking. It was egg and beans with soup."
Verb tense (V.Tense)	temporal consistency with topic sentence (e.g., "I remember …" indicates past tense)	RD: "My kids was to laughing when the teacher said no laughing please." FD: "My kids will not laugh when the teacher will say, 'Children, no laughing please.'"
Coherency (Coherent)	flow of sentences and manner of connecting them together	RD: "Then my brother helped my mom. Then I helped my mom." FD: "My brother and I helped my mom."

To effect these measures, it was necessary to determine the units of measurement. One unit used was the conversational turns themselves. Thus, to measure the average Turns versus Sentences, I counted the number of prompt/recast (excluding *read* and *statement*) turns needed to reformulate a sentence. To understand the ratio of Teacher versus Student Talk and Overall Linguistic Focus, simply counting the number of turns would not be ideal because the conversational turns varied in length. Since it was not feasible to measure the number of seconds that each turn lasted, I used a formula in the spreadsheet program to measure the text length of each turn. For example, the previous sentence has 31 words and 166 characters (text length) in comparison to the current sentence, which has 26 words and 159 characters. Use of this measure posed certain problems. First, a measurement of text length does not account for wait time, which may have varied significantly among the NNS students. Second, it does not reflect other nuances of communication, such as variation in the speed of my speech and use of nonverbal cues. In spite of these limitations, it seemed an efficient method of approximating the duration of each conversational turn.

Qualitative data included analysis of the specific language of the conversational turns along with the corresponding writing prompt, rough-draft sentence, and final-draft sentence. For example, at certain points students would self-correct the error simply in response to the prompt "Read me the next sentence." Also, certain patterns emerged, such as the relationship between the cognitive complexity of the writing prompt and the type of errors students would make. It also included open-ended interviews with the primary teacher of the students at the conclusion of the school year, approximately 3 months after the conclusion of the intervention.

Findings

Differentiation of Instruction

The first research question asked how TBwI might impact the degree of differentiated instruction within a mixed-ability classroom. The data clearly show that there was a high degree of differentiation of instruction. Table 3 summarizes

Table 3
Linguistic Focus of Prompts and Recasts

Focus	Overall	Student participants								
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
End marks	12%	5%	1%	12%	31%	26%	8%	8%	21%	6%
Marks, other	1%	-	-	-	9%	-	-	-	-	-
Quotation	6%	-	5%	18%	9%	-	7%	17%	-	4%
Semantics	3%	-	-	19%	-	5%	16%	-	4%	-
Prepositions	2%	-	2%	7%	2%	-	2%	-	2%	1%
Pronouns	6%	-	6%	6%	6%	6%	10%	-	22%	9%
Schema	22%	16%	50%	22%	27%	5%	10%	15%	11%	13%
Simile	2%	16%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Syntax	2%	7%	2%	6%	3%	-	-	3%	-	-
Topicality	16%	3%	11%	-	11%	26%	40%	-	21%	30%
Verbs, other	1%	1%	-	6%	3%	-	-	-	3%	-
Verb tense	22%	53%	2%	-	8%	21%	2%	56%	18%	36%
Coherency	6%	-	18%	4%	7%	9%	5%	1%	-	-

the linguistic focus of the prompt and recast turns. The second column indicates the overall focus for all 35 writing conferences. As mentioned above, I crafted the prompts so that three linguistic features would be targeted: verb tense (Verbs), complete sentences (End Marks), and coherent paragraphs (Topicality and Coherency). However, the recasts and prompts addressed these linguistic features only about 56 percent of the time. The percentage varied widely among students. For example, the category *verbs* averaged 22 percent but ranged from 0 to 56 percent.

However, differentiation of instruction was a factor not only in terms of linguistic focus, but also in terms of the quantity and quality of prompt/recast scaffolding. Figure 1 shows a marked bias for the use of prompts (from 81 to 100 percent) with each student. Prompts were used as tools to coax the student into reformulating the sentence into standard English. When this was not possible nor feasible, I recast the sentence myself into standard English and gave the student the opportunity to repeat the recast sentence. Clearly, some students were able to handle more cognitively challenging interaction (prompts). In contrast, other students were challenged to operate within the outer edge of their ZPD, requiring a switch to recasts.

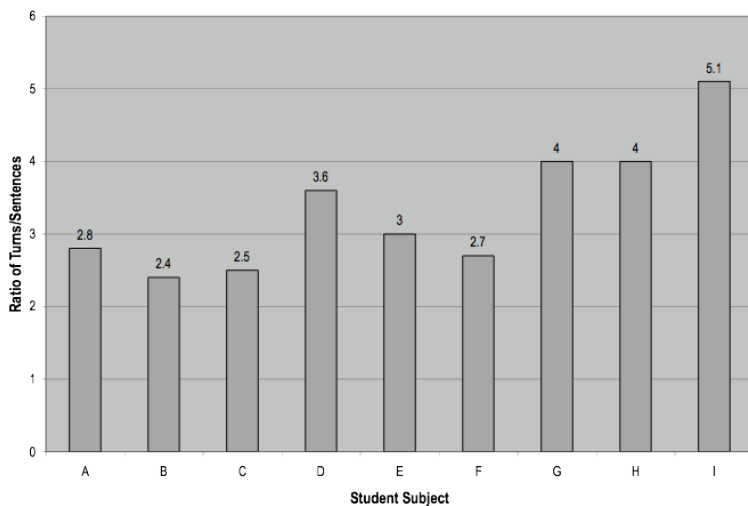**Figure 1**
Ratio of Prompts to Recasts
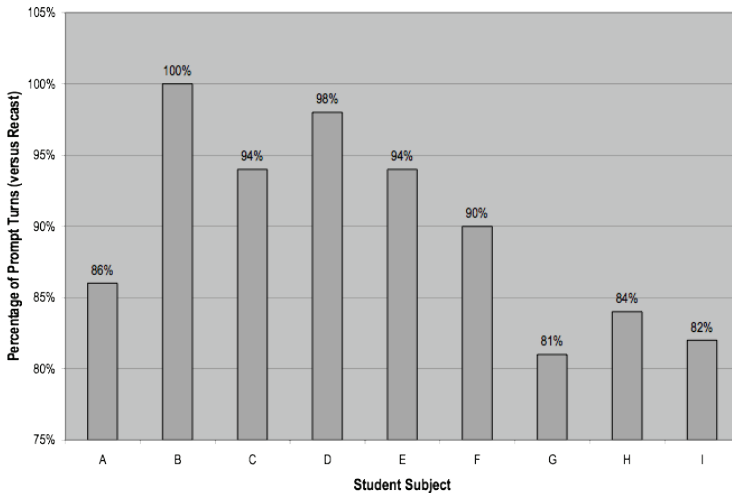
Another finding was that the students received varying amounts of scaffolding in terms of the number of conversational turns provided to successfully reformulate the written interlanguage sentence into standard English. Figure 2 displays that data and was calculated by dividing the total number of prompt/recast turns by the total number of sentences (excluding the teacher-created topic sentence) successfully reformulated into standard English. Some students needed more while others needed less support (from 2.4 to 5.7 conversational turns per sentence, on average). Another manner of providing differentiation

was the quantity of talk provided to each student. Figure 3 shows the ratio of teacher-to-student talk (ranging from a ratio of 3.5 to 15.2, with a greater number indicating relatively more teacher talk) during recast/prompt turns. This measure helps to gauge whether the TBwI writing conferences were an efficient tool for language interaction. For example, *Participant B* had a relatively high level of English language development and required minimal interaction to re-

Figure 2
Ratio of Turns to Sentences

Figure 3
Ratio of Teacher-to-Student Talk
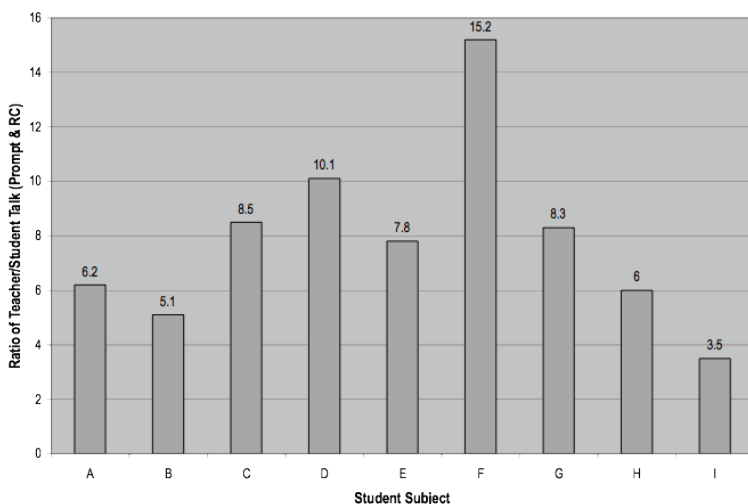
formulate the sentences. In contrast, *Participant G* had a lower level of English language development and required relatively high levels of teacher talk that bordered on one-way communication.

Clearly, the data indicate TBwI was an effective tool for differentiation of instruction. Although certain linguistic features were targeted for instruction, the actual content of each writing conference varied according to the student's instructional needs at that moment because I attempted to provide reactive negative feedback to the most challenging element of the written interlanguage within the context of a particular sentence and paragraph. The mix of explicit/implicit instruction (as measured by the ratio of prompts to recasts) also varied for each student. The amount of scaffolding provided (as measured by the ratio of turns to recast sentences) also varied with each student. Those who required more support received more while students who needed less support received less. Thus, for these English language learners, TBwI provided a relatively high degree of differentiation of instruction.

Language Acquisition

The second research question was to understand how TBwI impacts second language acquisition. This was perhaps the more challenging question to answer because I had to extrapolate to the endpoint of a multiyear process. Interviews with the students' two teachers at the end of the school year indicated that each student had benefited from TBwI in a different way. Both teachers indicated that each student's interest in writing and the writing process had either remained the same or increased as a result of the intervention.

The first teacher found it difficult to comment on the impact of the study upon the participants:

> Well, to tell you the truth, I had a very strong writing program myself this year. And I'm having trouble really distinguishing your impact versus mine. They did really improve, but everybody in the class did too.

In contrast, the second teacher observed a marked improvement with the students' writing. But not all of the students improved their writing to the same degree or in the same manner. She indicated that some participants improved their writing fluency, as the following excerpt suggests:

> [*Participant D*] would always kind of linger with his thoughts about what he would write. That's not a problem to think before you write, but he had long, sustained periods of thinking before he would write, or he would not want to write. So, specifically for him, he narrowed down that thinking time and actually produced. He would be able to pair/share with somebody else and talk to them about what his topic was going to be and then get right to it.

With other participants she noticed an improved ability to edit and revise, possibly due to a greater awareness of the communicative intent of writing:

With [*Participant B*], I noticed that he was able to go back and reread his work and check for grammar and notice that if something was written in incorrect academic English. He would try to rephrase it. And so I often noticed that he would go back to proofread.

With some participants, she observed changes in actual sentence writing, possibly as a result of noticing differences between her interlanguage and standard written English or perhaps simply due to a greater awareness of audience:

[*Participant C*] used to write with lots of run-on sentences, and sometimes her sentences would make no sense, or she wasn't producing what she was trying to communicate. And after a process of finishing her work and going back and listening to others read her work, then she would stop herself and say, 'Okay, I know what I need to do,' when she heard other people read her work.

Some of the participants seemed to increase their ability to write more cohesive paragraphs, as the first teacher pointed out in this section of the interview:

[*Participant I*] has always been very verbal, but she would get easily off the track and [do] anything to keep talking, on paper or in person. Her writing became more focused and structured. When she seemed to learn the formula or the knack for putting a main idea and listing some details. She got better at that, instead of just rambling on and on and on.

In contrast, the first teacher noted that *Participant A* had made significant improvement with writing in terms of sentence complexity and writing fluency:

[*Participant A*] saw a lot of improvement this semester ... he seemed to be able to write more. His sentence structure seems to be a little more complex, using commas in a series, making longer sentences. He struggles so much though, orally.

While teacher interviews were not able to quantify the impact of TBwI on second language acquisition, they do indicate that there was a perceived impact on second language acquisition some months after the conclusion of the study.

Discussion

TBwI is consistent with an assimilation model of constructivist pedagogy. One aspect of this was the presence of a live interlocutor while revising the rough draft. The student participants were already familiar with a narrative oral-discourse structure between two live interlocutors. Having received formal English instruction for 3-4 years, they were already familiar with how to orally recount an experience to another person. Consistent with Vygotsky's (1986) understanding of written discourse as a conversation with a blank piece

of paper (cognitively more challenging because of the absence of the reader and a lack of shared contextual knowledge), they had greater difficulty expressing themselves in standard written English. Changing the focus of the writing conference from writing strategies to NS-NNS interaction with TBwI allowed the teacher to convey a reader's difficulty in understanding the text. Thus, the student was given the opportunity to compare and contrast existing knowledge (communicating to a live interlocutor with a shared contextual knowledge) with new knowledge (having a conversation with a blank piece of paper). The teacher interviews indicated that in at least one case, a participant had perceived gains in terms of awareness of audience and ability to self-correct. This was also borne out from an analysis of the writing-conference transcripts, which had multiple instances wherein the student self-corrected a sentence as she or he read it.

Another tenet of constructivist pedagogy is that assimilation can occur only once a cognitive failure is acknowledged. Given the meaning-centered nature of TBwI, the focus was on reformulating the student's written interlanguage into standard English. The starting point for this process almost invariably began with "I don't understand." Every time this happened, the student was confronted with a cognitive failure, since the written interlanguage did not result in an authentic transfer of meaning from writer to reader. The student then interacted in a NS-NNS dyad to reformulate the sentence into standard written English.

Another aspect of constructivist pedagogy was the use of prompts and recasts as a means of implicit instruction. Clearly, there are instances when prompts have greater efficacy than recasts; however, within a mixed-ability classroom there will be situations in which both will be useful. With TBwI, recasts are used in situations in which the student is unable to more actively participate in the joint construction of meaning. Thus, prompts created more opportunities for them to actively participate in the joint construction of meaning.

Conclusion

Public education, for better or worse, has evolved to have greater accountability and higher expectations. Public policy makers have sought to solve societal problems through high expectations. By raising the bar with higher expectations, it was hoped that student achievement would increase. This action, while laudable and perhaps correct, has had certain unintended consequences. First, there has been an increased emphasis on fast-paced direct instruction in classrooms of low-performing students. This grew in part from a belief that low-ability students have an external locus of control and thus need a fundamentally different kind of classroom focused on delivering direct instruction and behaviorist pedagogy. Rather than wait for these NNS students to grasp a concept through a discovery approach, it is much faster and efficient (from this perspective) to explicitly give the student the answer. In this manner it is possible for a teacher to cover more material in a shorter period.

Unfortunately, this trend has also tipped the instructional pendulum in

favor of accommodation rather than assimilation (the student's actively incorporating concepts and language into already internalized knowledge). Students need to be presented with authentic opportunities to test hypotheses under conditions of assisted performance. This study emphasized eliciting language hypotheses from the students using prompts to provide differentiated instruction within each student's ZPD. Thus, my first recommendation is that English language learners be given genuine opportunities to test and reflect upon their language hypotheses.

The second unintended consequence of raising the bar of academic expectations has been to equate higher expectations with higher motivation. While there is a correlation between the two, it is not one-to-one. Human motivation is a very complex phenomenon. Communicative language approaches (such as TBwI) may be very effective if they are able to tap into the very powerful motivation for communication: to understand and be understood, to achieve acceptance and status within a social group. The students were engaged and motivated in the tasks in part because of a genuine desire to use language as a social tool. Thus, my second recommendation is that TBwI be used with writing prompts that enable authentic written communication. I still remember very clearly the moment that *Participant C* recounted how her mother had asked her daughter's help because she couldn't read the mailman's note. That was a very powerful experience for her and she seemed willing to move heaven and earth to make me understand that experience as well.

My final recommendation to practitioners is to increase awareness of a two-tier educational model: (a) education for high-ability pupils that is based in constructivist pedagogy; and (b) education for low-ability pupils that is based upon behaviorist pedagogy and direct instruction. So-called low-ability pupils may respond well to more implicit forms of instruction that are centered in constructivist pedagogy, provided the teacher is skilled at maintaining instruction within each student's ZPD. Educators need to challenge the association of low-ability pupil with external locus of control (cf. O'Neill, 1988). It is noteworthy that this constructivist pedagogy worked both for *Participant A* (medium), *Participant B* (high), as well as *Participant G* (low). This study indicates that, at least for these 10 3rd-grade English language learners, there was no correlation between ability level and need for behaviorist pedagogy.

This was an exploratory study that sought to apply a method (recasts and prompts) developed within the context of oral language development to a new context (written language). Because of the small sample size, it was not expected that definitive answers would be found to the research questions. One of the issues revolved around the reliance upon transcripts of writing conferences as the primary data source without triangulation from other data sources. Thus, I attempted to use other data sources, including pre-/postinterviews and participants' editing of the papers. Validity and reliability, to the extent possible, was achieved through multiple passes of analysis of the data set so that there would be consistency in the manner of coding and classification, and the coding/classification system used reflected the meaning-focused nature of the interactions that took place.

Clearly, more research is needed to follow up this study regarding the viability of TBwI as an instructional tool. Studies of longer term, with different age groups and language ability levels, are needed to determine whether TBwI can be an effective tool for second language acquisition. More research is also needed to understand the impact of actually incorporating TBwI within the school day instead of simply simulating that through an after-school intervention. More research is also needed that examines other opportunities for noticing (written interlanguage versus standard written English) during the writing process. For example, the student could make corrections to his draft by comparing it to the final version (see Appendix B).

At times during my teaching career I have been challenged by a second language learner's apparent disinterest in completing an academic task or remaining focused during a lecture/presentation. These 10 students, on the other hand, seemed genuinely interested in helping me to understand their text-to-self connections. When I confronted them with a breakdown in communication (that I didn't understand their written interlanguage), they were genuinely committed to helping me understand. Using TBwI will not guarantee a high degree of motivation nor success, but within the context of this study it provided highly differentiated and constructivist instruction while effectively sustaining student interest and motivation through the arduous task of learning to have a conversation with a blank piece of paper.

Author

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Appendix A
Sample Writing Prompt

IWT WRITING
Tuesday, January 16, 2007

Prompt 1:

"So some days became treasure-hunting days, with everybody trying to find that special kind. And then on other days you might just find one without even looking." (Roxaboxen, p. 260)

I remember a time I found something special.
[add 4 detail sentences]

OR

Sometimes you can find something special by accident.
[add 4 detail sentences]

OR

When I get older, I want to go treasure-hunting.
[add 4 detail sentences]

Prompt 2:

"All you needed for a horse was a stick and some kind of bridle, and you could gallop anywhere." (Roxaboxen, p. 262)

I remember a time I used my imagination to play.
[add 4 detail sentences + 1 concluding sentence]

OR

If you use your imagination, you can play without a lot of stuff.
[add 4 detail sentences + 1 concluding sentence]

OR

When I grow up, I will teach my kids to use their imagination.
[add 4 detail sentences + 1 concluding sentence]

Appendix B
Sample Writing Conference

January 19, 2007

I remember a time I tried something new and different. I was eight years old. My dad and I went to the building. I was tired. My dad said, "There's different stuff in the building. You will have fun with new friends." But I wanted to keep my old friends instead of making new ones.

I remember a time I tried something new and different.

I was eight years old.

Me and my dad went to the building.

My dad said there's differenet sufft in the building.

You will have fun with new friends.

But I like my old friends.

/Users/mercuris/Documents/.../c6.pages

Appendix C
Sample Data Set

	A	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	M	N	O	Q	R
1	Num	Row	ID	T	S	Sentence	Recast	Teacher	Student	LenT	LenS	RatioTS	P	Target
737	c06	101	–	T1	S1	I remember a time I tried something new and different.	I remember a time I tried something new and different.	okay, why don't you read me the first sentence.	okay, I'm ready ... I remember a time I tried something new and different.	47	74	0.64	Rea	n/a
738	c06	102	–	T2				okay, wait wait ... "Something new and different" ... So what I'm going to do is ... you're going to read me each sentence ... we're going to read me each sentence ... we're going to stop and I'm going to see if I have any questions or if I have trouble understanding ... and then we'll move on to the next one	–	269	1	269	Sta	n/a
739	c06	103	–	T3	S2	I was eight years old.	I was eight years old.	okay, so what is the next sentence?	I was eight years old ... Me and my dad	35	39	0.9	Rea	n/a
740	c06	104	–	T4				Okay, "I was eight years old" ... that's really like one sentence, right? ... okay, so let's call that a sentence	–	113	1	113	Sta	M.End
741	c06	106	–	T6				Okay so that's the next sentence, right?	yes	40	3	13.33	Rea	n/a
742	c06	109	–	T9				very good, so I ... so we can change this to be "My dad and I went to the building"	–	83	1	83	Sta	Pronoun
743	c06	110	–	T10	S4	I was tired.	I was tired.	okay, so what was the next one?	I was tired	31	15	2.07	Rea	n/a
744	c06	112	–	T12				okay, so when you are going through here, one of the things you are going to check is I want you to notice where I am putting the periods, and you are going to put them the same way	–	181	1	181	Sta	M.End
745	c06	113	–	T13	S5	My dad said there's different stuff in the building.	My dad said, "There's different stuff in the building.	okay so what is the next one?	My dad said there is different stuff in the building. ... you will have fun with your friends.	29	93	0.31	Rea	n/a
746	c06	116	–	T16				marks .... okay: "My dad said There's .... okay so comma, quotation marks, capital "T" there's different stuff in the building	–	124	1	124	Sta	M.Quote
747	c06	117	–	T17	S6	You will have fun with new friends.	You will have fun with new friends."	okay, then what is the next sentence? Okay, so we are going to put the quotation marks, so the quotation marks are going to end there.	You will have fun with your friends but I like my old friends	37	65	0.57	Rea	n/a
748	c06	119	–	T19			But I wanted to keep my old friends instead of making new ones.		–	96	1	96	Sta	M.Quote
749	c06	120	–	T20	S7	But I like my old friends.	But I like my old friends.	and then, what is the last sentence?	but I like my old friends.	36	26	1.38	Rea	n/a

Num	Row	ID	T	S	Sentence	Recast	Teacher	Student	LenT	LenS	RatioTS	P	Target
787	105	1	T5	S3	Me and my dad went to the building.	My dad and I went to the building.	okay, what does the next sentence say?	"Me and my dad went to the building." … it was	38	47	0.81	Met	Pronoun
788	107	1	T7				So, "Me and my dad went to the building." … Just one thing, I notice here … Me go to school, does that sound right? … Me go to	no	139	2	69.5	Met	Pronoun
789	108	1	T8				It shouldn't be "me went to school," it should be … and that is one sentence, right? …	I went to school	53	16	3.31	Eli	Pronoun
790	111	1	T11				now, how many periods do we see here? … one, two … is this two sentences?	no	114	2	57	Met	M.End
791	114	1	T14				Okay, wait … "In the building…" okay, one question here … are we actually using Dad's real words … are we using Dad's exact words?	yeah	138	4	34.5	Cla	M.Quote
792	115	1	T15				Okay, so then we want to put our … Quo	tation	40	6	6.67	Eli	M.Quote
793	118	1	T18				so, let's stick with this for right now. "You will have fun with new friends" … now, is this still your dad talking?	yes	118	3	39.33	Cla	M.Quote
794	121	1	T21				but I like my old friends too?	yes	30	3	10	Rep	Schema
795	122	1	T22				I don't understand, are you saying that you want to keep your old friends? or you want to make new friends but you also want to keep your old friends? … I don't understand.	It's because, I don't like to be somebody's friends … I only like my old friends.	175	83	2.11	Cla	Schema
796	123	1	T23				So you didn't want to have new friends, you just wanted to keep your old friends, right? … Okay so let's say that because if I say "I like my old friends" it doesn't really tell me what you want, right?	no	204	2	102	Met	Schema
797	124	1	T24				Okay, so let's change "but I want, but I wanted … what?	I wanted my new friends	57	23	2.48	Cla	Schema

	A	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	M	N	O	Q	R
	Num	Row	ID	T	S	Sentence	Recast	Teacher	Student	LenT	LenS	RatioTS	P	Target
798	c06	125	I	T25				You wanted your new friends? or you wanted to keep your old friends. ... I wanted to keep my OLD friends. ... and you wanted to keep your old friends and make new ones, or you wanted old friends INSTEAD of new ones? Okay, so did you want to keep ...	When I was watching the stairs, I sort of think about something ... My dad opened the door, and we went to the room 27 ... it was like, third grade, and he let me stay there for a week, then my dad went to his work.	214	215	1	Cla	Schema
799	c06	126	I	T26				So you didn't really want to make new friends, right?	no	87	2	43.5	Cla	Schema
800	c06	127	I	T27				Okay, so we are going to say, "I wanted to keep my old friends INSTEAD of making new ones. ... Okay?	yes	99	3	33	Cla	Schema