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I dedicate this work to my mother for showing me what is possible.

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Abstract

The researcher followed the written and oral work of six students in her first grade bilingual classroom, paying particular attention to their writing and critical thinking skills. She found that students learning was best facilitated when she used explicit language in her instruction in a context students could understand.

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Chapter 1: Explicit Instruction for Academic Writing

A "No pass", I read again and again in the lowest voice I could find in order to hold back the tears that were getting ready to rush out. "It doesn't matter, just try again" I heard my writing professor's reassuring voice. The reality was that it did matter. I had managed to fail the Subject A: The Writing Test, for the second time. The great symbol of the university that proclaimed one's competence, that informed all (especially me) that I belonged in academia. My opportunity to affirm my language, my family and my culture as assets and not as obstacles in attaining a higher degree seemed to be slithering away with this "no pass".

The subject A is a writing test designed to make sure that all students that enter the university are competent writers and therefore equipped with the skills that will determine their success in academia. Even before students enter the university they are informed that due to their failing of the Subject A they will have to take a specific course to help them pass the test, they are given also a guide of what remedial courses they need to take if they don't pass the test the first quarter. Ultimately they are forewarned that they will be in jeopardy of losing their place in the university if the test is not passed within their first academic year. Interestingly these remedial courses have an abundance of people of color in them. All this serving as a reminder that they are not fit to be university therefore causing great stress that eventually leads many to withdraw from academia.

I am a first grade bilingual teacher, and the subject A and other university writing exams may seem like a far cry to what I do in my school. But the affects of my subject A

exam continue to affect me as a teacher and I believe that the foundation that I lay for my students will affect how my students see themselves as writers, and effectively affect all the way up to the time to when they take their subject A. For this reason, I have spent a great deal of energy in my writing program, learning from my students the most effective methods to advance their writing. In the past few years, I have been focusing on explicit instruction within the writing process, and have found that it effectively teaches academic skills as well as letting the students have the success in writing that I hope will stay with them all the way until they take their subject A.

The students I teach, working class Mexicanos, like other working class students of color, have historically struggled academically in higher education. While 39.3% of the non-Hispanic White 18-24 year olds are in college, only 31.3% and 21.7% of Blacks and Hispanics, respectively, of those age groups are in college (NCES, 2002). Students of color not only struggle to get into college, but also to find academic success once they are there. While I served as a tutor in my university, writing professors, fellow tutors and other students told me how students of color were over represented in many of their remedial writing courses. The NCES found that: "At institutions with high minority enrollment, 43 percent of first-time freshmen were enrolled in remedial reading, writing, or mathematics, compared with 26 percent at institutions with low minority enrollment (NCES, 1996)." This points at least to a perception that minorities need remedial classes. In other words, not only are students of color underrepresented in higher education, those that do make it are at least perceived to need remediation in order to succeed academically.

A student's writing can be a strong tool in changing those perceptions. It is up to the writing teacher, from Kindergarten up through higher education, to provide the skills to change that perception. There are many aspects to effective academic writing. Many remedial writing professors not only point to needing a combination of effective writing and critical thinking skills, but also knowledge of the explicit norms of academic and analytical writing (Chaffee, 1999; Shor 1992). This does not mean in any way that we need to teach skills, rigid formats and conventions, but rather that we need to teach the 'codes of power' through explicit critical pedagogy.

Delpit (1988) first coined 'the codes of power' to refer to the many academic and social skills students need to have in order to have access to all kinds of social power, including academic power. The problem, as Delpit points out, is that many of these codes of power are implicit aspects of academic culture and most teachers do not explicitly teach them.

For example, a question on my subject A read, "Describe in your own words what characteristics does a hero need to possess. Don't forget to personalize this." Although there were many students who failed this subject A because they did not know how to write an analytical essay or lacked critical thinking skills, many students of color of working class background including myself wrote powerful essays only to fail because we misinterpreted the prompt. The subject A wanted us to specify generalized characteristics for any hero within a personal narrative while many of my friends instead chose to write about our personal heroes (with their implicit characteristics). We had not penetrated the power language of the exam and had failed to be explicit and were penalized by failing. Others had not been trained in writing analytical pieces. In this

case, the codes of power needed to pass the subject A included having the analytical writing skills to write an effective critical essay, understanding the academic norms of a personal academic piece and being able to utilize and understand the academic language used in academic settings and writing assignments. If students' education lacks any of these concepts, students are not being provided the codes of power to succeed in academia.

The problem then becomes which strategies help teachers explicitly teach critical thinking and writing skills to working class students of color. Teachers will have to draw from a wide variety of sources. Within the bilingual setting, writing skills are most effectively taught in the primary language (Krashen, 1996; Garcia, 1994). Explicit instruction of the writing process offers the most effective strategies to both teach basic writing skills and academic writing norms (Resnick, 1997; Graves, 1994). For critical thinking skills in a context that effectively values students' home cultures, teachers need to use strategies based on a critical multicultural perspective (Cummins, 2000; Banks, 1993). Furthermore, teachers need to have high expectations for their students while using student experiences to critically examine both their world and mainstream academic content. In this way, students will learn all aspects of writing at an appropriately high academic level.

My interest in my students' writing, although drawing from all these sources, focuses in on how to most effectively improve my students' critical thinking skills in their writing. I draw upon Delpit's challenge to explicitly teach the codes of power so that my students can produce writing that will give them access to academia and still value their own homes, perspectives and cultures. I believe this process has to begin early, so I

have decided to demand academic writing from my bilingual first graders. My research question thus states:

How does explicit critical pedagogy instruction in process writing influence 1st grade bilingual students' Spanish writing?

In particular, I will explore:

1) How do explicit teachers' expectations of writing influence 1st grade bilingual students' Spanish writing?

2) How do explicit instructional strategies influence 1st grade bilingual students' Spanish writing?

My background, my passion

Another in-service. One third of the staff missing due to late notices, and the ones who did make it are crammed into an unorganized library with books everywhere. Yet, I feel that this time things will be different. The topic is: Expectations in Writing. The presenter poses the question: What does one expect each student to have before they enter our grade level? Puzzled by the question, I mention that the district and the state standards already spell out the minimum requirements for each grade level. The literacy specialist (the presenter) retorts; "Yes, but we want to know what to expect of our population (referring to the 95% poor Mexican Spanish Speakers)." Even though I felt my face tensing up and my legs numbing, I asked for further clarification in hopes that I had misunderstood. A third grade teacher interjected in a pleasant voice; "For example, I expect them to come to my class with the ability to write a complete sentence, copy something from the board, sit for 20 minutes, and raise their hand. " The inevitable anvil

once again crashed me under its weight since I knew that second grade standards included the ability to write a five paragraph essay in a personal, powerful style, and not just write a sentence. Those were minimum Kindergarten standards. As if in answer to my thoughts, a kindergarten teacher explained her standards by politely smiling and adding "I am pretty happy if at the end of kinder they are able to sit quietly for a story and raise their hand to go to the restroom."

My school was not the only one with low expectations. With 64% and 56% of Black and Hispanic 3rd graders performing below grade level (NCES, 2002), both Garcia (1994) and Kozol (1991) cite an epidemic of low expectations inhabiting schools with high Latino, Black or working class populations. Ladson-Billings (1994) puts it another way and cites high expectations as a corner stone of successful African American schools. I agreed, for I had seen my own students produce writing high above district standards, and the corner stone of those writing samples was that I expected my students to do second to third grade academic writing.

When I shared my concerns about the low expectations expressed at the meeting with my fellow first grade teachers, we decided to examine our own teaching of writing. My students were performing higher than other students, so we went on to share the writing strategies we used with our students. We used many of the same strategies, but the one main difference was that my use of explicit instruction best facilitated the students' learning of the writing process. We decided to expand our use of explicit teaching throughout our writing curriculum. With upper grades' teachers' concerns about critical thinking ringing in my ears and my own personal desire to prepare students academically, my interest lay in improving students' critical thinking. Thus, I focused on

explicitly teaching critical thinking skills and critical pedagogy in all my lessons and found tremendous growth in all my students.

I then had the opportunity to move to Texas into a district in which explicit instruction was a major concern. AISD used the work of Resnick (1997) and Payne (1995) to encourage teachers to use explicit instruction throughout their curriculum. I took this opportunity to combine their strategies with those I was already using to improve my students' critical think skills in their writing. These strategies included using topics based on the students' worlds, discussing and writing critically about the students' experiences, publishing students' books based on a critical examination of their own world, and encouraging them to see how their writing changes their own world in mini-lessons, author's chair, morning message, book talks and interactive journals. It has been a combination of effective strategies, high expectations, and explicit instruction that has continued to develop the growth of all my first grade students in terms of their critical thinking and writing skills. This study hopes to further investigate this process in order to explore how explicit instruction furthers the writing development of bilingual 1st grade students.

Review of literature/ Definition of terms

I am approaching my bilingual classroom from a critical multicultural perspective. Banks (1993) describes multicultural education as: "...an idea, an educational reform movement and a process whose major goal is to change the structure of educational institutions so that male and female students, exceptional students and students who are members of diverse racial, ethnic and cultural groups will have an equal

chance to achieve academically in school (p. 1)". This shares characteristics with Freire's (1970) call for a critical pedagogy, which is a philosophy of teaching in which the teacher facilitates the construction of shared knowledge. Both philosophies demand a process in the way we view education so that all members of society have equal access to education.

By entering into this process, I am examining my teaching and my classroom environment in order to improve the bilingual writing instruction for my students. In so doing I am informed by many different branches of research including bilingual instruction, meaning making, process writing, explicit instruction and critical pedagogy.

Within the bilingual context, Garcia (1994) defines bilingualism as "the ability to speak two languages with equal fluency (p.285)" and then discusses how this goal affects all aspect of bilingual instruction, including writing. In terms of writing, using effective writing instruction in the primary language is the most effective form of literacy instruction. Over and over again, writing process has been the most effective method of writing instruction. Calkins (1986) challenges the writing teacher to teach the writing process: "If we, as writing teachers, watch how our students go about writing, then we can help them develop more effective strategies for writing (p.15)." This description complements the research that views instruction as understanding how students 'make meaning' of their world. Wells' (1983) claims that, "children are active meaning makers (p.215)" and in order to help students make meaning, urges that, "classrooms should be places where the curriculum is negotiated (p. 219)."

To these views of writing instruction is added Delpit's (1988) call for more explicit instruction in order to provide students access to the culture of power. Resnick (1997) draws on Vygotsky (1978) and Piaget (1960) in describing explicit teaching. By

setting clear expectations and giving clear instruction within the child's ZPD, students have greater access to the curriculum. Finally, Ladson-Billings (1994) discusses how, independent of instructional strategies, teachers do not allow students to fail, and instead demand success of each of their students. In the case of writing, teachers must demand success of the students in every aspect of learning how to write.

The Project

I am currently teaching a first grade bilingual class where all my students are Spanish Speakers. All my students come from my schools' service area, where the majority of the community works in the service industry. A large percentage of my children's parents are either service workers or work in low-income jobs. The school is considered to be serving a working class community, with over 75% of the population receiving free or reduced lunch.

I chose to study and implement a "writing-response to culture". In this project I was interested in finding out if first grade students would be able to discuss concepts in a critical manner and transfer those thoughts to language and then to writing. In our classroom, we would study their community, choosing appropriate literature that fulfills Social Studies standards relating to community and reflects their own experiences. I felt that this focus would be a good opportunity for them to see themselves reflected in the literature. I felt that the books selected for this unit would give them a greater opportunity to respond to literature and connect their experiences to the stories. I felt that by tapping on their previous knowledge they would not only comprehend a text in the

literal form but also become critical readers of literature. Allowing them to respond to texts that are similar to their experience will validate who they are as individuals.

After reading and discussing literature, students would write. Depending on the day, the writing would either allow for independent or guided writing, but the focus would be on finding ways for students to explicitly explore the issues that were either raised in the discussion or in the literature. I would expect students to use writing as critically explore their world, while explicitly giving them ideas on how this is effectively done within an academic context. Specifically we will explore narratives, critical essays and persuasive letters.

I chose six students representative of the classroom makeup in order to explore how their thinking and writing changed throughout the two months of the unit. I kept track of their comments and work in a teacher journal and took anecdotal records. In terms of assessment, I used a district writing rubric to follow the academic progress of their writing and Bloom's taxonomy to track which critical thinking strategies they used. I also used anecdotal records and my teaching journal to decide the best methods to push their writing forward. Finally, I reviewed the teacher journal, anecdotal records and their writing to find patterns of the interaction of my explicit teaching and their learning. I found the themes that best helped the students and the areas that caused me the greatest trouble. I then reflected how these issues played out in the literature, and how this research affected my practice. By reviewing student growth and patterns of my teaching I was able to make conclusions on how explicit instruction effected my critical thinking and writing program.

Overview and conclusions

I have just outlined why academic writing instruction is so important to me and to the bilingual classroom. I have found that explicit instruction has been one of my most effective methods of successfully advancing student instruction, and feel that it is imperative that this becomes a stable of effective teaching in working class student of color schools. Yet, within explicit writing instruction, there are many issues yet to be explored, and by focusing on the exact methods that are most effective for me, I improve explicit writing and critical thinking instruction.

In Chapter II, I address major theories as they relate to writing, explicit instruction, bilingual instruction, multicultural and critical theory. In particular, I focus on how these theories affect explicit writing instruction in the bilingual classroom and the consequences of these theories in the classroom. In Chapter III, I describe my qualitative and quantitative methodology. I explain my reasons for using these methods and how they provide the necessary depth to improve my own teaching. Chapter IV presents the quantitative and qualitative results of the study. I describe what happened during the study and what decisions led to further instruction. Chapter V presents my conclusions. I not only address my own reflections, but also the areas I would like to explore further.

This research is meant for primary bilingual teachers. Although the focus is on first grade, the strategies are effective in all primary grades and most can even be employed in the upper grades. This adds to a growing literature on effective bilingual instruction, specifically within the space of first language writing instruction in which there is a great need for more literature. By focusing on a critical multicultural perspective, I hope to highlight the specific needs of the bilingual classroom and the

strategies I have used that have best meet those needs. Finally, by focusing on explicit instruction, I add my voice to a growing chorus of researchers that are describing the effective use of explicit instruction in working class and student of color classrooms. By focusing in on a bilingual classroom, I hope that the depth of the research will allow fellow teachers and researchers to explore explicit instruction in their classroom for the benefit of the growing percentage of working class and bilingual student body.

Chapter 2

Literature Review: Writing, Critical Thinking and the Bilingual Classroom

California, Arizona and Massachusetts are all states that appear to have abandoned bilingual education because lawmakers and public opinion are not convinced it works. Research says otherwise. In fact, most new research has moved away from proving that bilingual education is more effective than monolingual educational for English language learners and towards finding out what are the most effective methods of providing bilingual education (Moll, 1989).

Much of this new research is based on what has been proven effective for monolingual students and finding ways to adapt it for different bilingual classrooms. In my case, my interest is effective methods to teach critical thinking in writing using explicit instruction. Thus, bilingual writing researchers draw heavily from writing process theory (Edelsky, 1986; Graves, 1983), while critical thinking in bilingual classrooms is heavily influenced by meaning making (Ada, 1994; Wells, 1986) and explicit bilingual teaching draws from explicit instruction (Payne, 1995; Delpit, 1988). Bilingual researchers must then not only be familiar with bilingual research, but also with the instructional research from which it is derived.

Bilingual research is further complicated by the many different languages and cultures that bilingual education encompasses. Each of these communities has its own issues and factors that it must address. My interest, Spanish-English classrooms, has two main factors that differentiate it from monolingual classrooms. One, teachers not only teach in two languages, but must also navigate and teach students how to navigate

between two cultures (Garcia, 1994). Secondly, most Spanish-English classrooms are in working class communities that have a historical disadvantage in having an equitable access to education, so teachers must adapt their teaching to overcome these inequalities (Cummins, 2000).

Several theoretical perspectives have emerged to accommodate these factors into educational theory. Multicultural theory (Banks and Banks, 1993) has focused on ways to change schools so that all communities have access to an equitable education. Critical theory (Freire, 1970) encourages teachers and communities to use the educational process to dialogue about ways to change society so that communities have equal access to power. Recently (Cummins, 2000; Banks, 1993), theorists from both of these perspectives have suggested integrating both perspectives to create a transformative multicultural perspective so that teachers, schools and students from many different communities can change institutions so that there is a more equal access to societal power.

I have been most influenced by the transformative multicultural perspective because it most effectively deals with the issues I must address in my classroom. At the same time, I must also be familiar with bilingual instructional research and the general instructional research from which it is derived. Although there is a growing body of research on explicit instruction within literacy, there are very few detailed studies in how to make it a reality within the bilingual classroom. This literature review will discuss those studies that refer to bilingual writing within the context of transformative theory and the instructional studies that have had the most influence within critical thinking and explicit writing. I will first address the transformative multicultural perspective, then I

will cover the general instruction research that influences bilingual theory and finally, the bilingual theory and research that specifically address my classroom. In this way, I hope to add to the conversation on effective practices within the bilingual field.

A Transformational Multicultural Approach

My research is based on the premise that as a bilingual teacher I teach in a multicultural setting and that my students will grow up in a multicultural world. Unfortunately, as both Garcia (1994) and Delpit (1988) point out, the school system does not always address the different learning styles inherent in all our different communities. This problem is exacerbated by a teaching profession that is mainly made up of white, middle class teachers, i.e. people that come from the dominant educational system and are often familiar only with that style of learning (Freeman and Freeman, 1994). Since most teachers and administrators in working class and student of color communities do not share the students' class or ethnic culture, most schools in these communities are lacking the skills to adequately teach their students (Delpit, 1995). Even the schools and districts that experience success in teaching core curriculum as evidenced by higher standardized test scores experience students dropping out of higher academics because their students lack the critical thinking skills necessary to succeed in the academic plain (Shor, 1992). In the case of first grade bilingual writing classrooms, this means that most working class Latino students are not learning core writing skills or the critical thinking skills necessary to write abstract papers (Davila De Silva, 1998). Researchers advocating

a critical multicultural approach to education have shown an incredible success in addressing these concerns (Cummins, 2000; Banks, 1993).

Banks (1993) and Cummins (2000) are two of the main proponents of this educational perspective. Although they address educational issues from slightly different perspectives, they have come to embrace similar theoretical viewpoints. Banks (1993) comes from a background of multicultural theory that advocates the need to look at our educational system, not just at the curriculum or methods, from a multicultural perspective in order to meet the needs of all students. Although he has reviewed several different multicultural perspectives, he advocates the transformative multicultural perspective because it demands that all members of the educational community critically reflect, learn and act upon on the needs of the students so that they become part of a critically academic community.

Cummins (2000), on the other hand, emerges from progressive, critical theory. Cummins advocates the teaching of a critical view of the world and the curriculum starting with the teachers' and students' immediate world. This requires districts, administration and community to critically reflect on their current educational system and to work together so that everyone has access to changing the system to improve the children's education. In proposing a transformative pedagogy, he plays particular attention to how different groups, be they ethnic, gender or ability, have been discriminated in the education system, and the need to critically find answers to so that all students have access to an equitable education no matter their background. In this way, both Banks and Cummins address the diverse needs of the Latino community and

challenge the system to better teach the core curriculum and all academic skills so that all students have an equitable education.

Multicultural theory

Banks (1993) is one of a growing number of researchers who study how to effectively teach a multicultural student body. He argues for a social action multicultural perspective in which teachers help students act out solutions to inequalities in a multicultural society. He favors the adoption of a theoretical lens that encourages students, teachers and community members to view educational issues from the many cultures that shape American society. In order to successfully implement this strategy, all aspects of the educational system have to be studied and continuously questioned and changed. Banks points to research that points to the failure of an additive multiculturalism that only addresses curriculum or methods without addressing all aspects of the educational systems. He argues that all aspects of the educational system must be critically examined and changed to fit the community in which they reside. These aspects of the educational system include but are not limited to methods, curriculum, staff attitudes, school policy, community participation, assessment methods and all aspects that influence these decisions and perspectives. Within the classroom, this means that it is not enough to just change the writing curriculum within a multicultural school, but we also need to address teaching methods, environment and management to address the students' various learning styles. These changes are necessary not only because of the diversity within the school, but because it will teach students strategies to

address these issues in a pluralistic manner in greater society. When students, community members and educational staff and faculty come together in implementing a multicultural school, all the different cultural attitudes which affect learning are respected and students confront the issues they will have to deal with living in a multicultural society.

Other multicultural theorists have followed suit, applying these ideas to different aspects of school implementation. Derman-Sparks (1989) adapted these ideas to Early Childhood Education and primary education, emphasizing the need to challenge bias in our society. By explicitly addressing bias, prejudice and discrimination in society with students as young as two, students learn to resolve, respect and act to correct discrimination. In other words, as early as the age of two, we need to be teaching students how to think critically of their environment and combat racism. Like Banks, she stresses the need to change all aspects of the curriculum, giving concrete suggestions on how to create an inclusive environment, curriculum, instructional method and community relationship.

Lee, Menkart and Okazawa-Rey (1998) accomplish a similar task for elementary and secondary schools in when they edited the collection Beyond Heroes and Holidays. Once again, the stress is on confronting racism and discrimination by integrating a multicultural perspective in all aspects of the educational system and explicitly exploring societal inequalities. For example, within this collection Nieto (1998) argues for an educational vision in bilingual classrooms that goes beyond tolerating different cultures, and instead actively seeks to find ways to act with others to confront societal inequalities. Unless students are explicitly taught to actively confront their society's biases, they will not have the skills to succeed in this biased society. This collection is particularly

important because researchers and practitioners give examples in all grade levels and in all aspects of the educational structure in how to structure an anti-bias educational system.

The above theorists have given an overall umbrella of how to envision a multicultural education. Since then, many other researchers have attempted to create different aspects of a multicultural education within specific contexts. Of particular importance to my study is the branch of multicultural theorists that focus on language and pedagogy. For example, Garcia (1994) addresses the needs of different language learning styles, including call and response and greater socialization, to improve language learning. He has found that management, methods, curriculum and school-community relations have to change in order to account for students who learn language and literacy either in a more vocal or a more passive manner than is expected within White, middle class homes and schools. He then gives research that supports classroom conversational teaching methods that either encourages passive or vocal learners. I will go into more detail on how this and other studies affect bilingual research below, but it is important to note that the multicultural perspective has influenced and advocated change by noting and documenting how language and literacy instruction are greatly affected by the students' culture. This is the power and importance of viewing education from the multicultural perspective.

Critical thinking, critical pedagogy

Critical theory has also spent much time researching how to change the quality of language instruction. For example, Shor (1992) wants to encourage his students to use their critical thinking skills for more than academic purposes. For him, it is essential that action, language and academics be linked. He is part of a group of researchers that view language inextricably linked with action. One cannot develop critical thinking through writing or language alone, but one must act to develop critical thinking skills.

Freire (1970), as one of the forerunners of this group, describes how teachers, as oppressors, must enter into conversation with the oppressed students in order to both act together through praxis, or reflective action, and be part of a critical education. He calls this a critical pedagogy. From this point of view, neither language nor the world are combinations of facts that stay the same, but rather constitute bodies of perspectives and knowledge that are constantly changing. Reflective action and dialogue, or creating a critical consciousness, are necessary in order to understand this constantly changing knowledge that is our world. This focus on reflective action and reflective dialogue has greatly influenced how teachers teach and address the instruction of language and critical thinking skills.

Both Macedo and Freire (1993) stress that it is through language that teachers and students make sense of the world, but since this world is based on inequalities, it is only through discussing these inequalities in precise language can we hope to develop a liberating understanding of the world we share. But, since language cannot be separated from action, it is through reflective action that we create a constantly transforming

understanding of the world we live in. Although many multicultural researchers express the importance of a dialogic pedagogy so that all students can have access to the curriculum, Freire stresses the dialectical nature of language and praxis, critical action, so that all students can have access to a critical consciousness.

Another important theorist within critical theory was Foucault (1973), who wrote crucial accounts in the critical understanding of knowledge and power. For him, societies construct and maintain knowledge discourses as part of their way of maintaining power and order. Depending on who has access to what kind of knowledge within that discourse defines who has access to power within that discourse. For this reason, power is not something one can have, but is more like a network to which one might have access. The chains of power and knowledge within a discourse are constantly shifting so that individuals or other groups can have greater access or be denied access to the discourse or its chains of power. For example, within the educational system, those who have access to the knowledge of how to get the best SAT study course have access to that course and the chains of power related to the SAT, like getting a university degree. Foucault's concepts of knowledge and power are essential in helping researchers and teachers understand how language and access to literacy is used within the educational system and how to help students have access to greater academic chains of power.

Shor combines the concepts of Freire and Foucault when discussing how to teach critical thinking. For Shor (1992) this reading of the world can best be achieved by creating a critical consciousness because it "...refers to the way we see ourselves in relation to knowledge and power in society, to the way we use and study language, and the way we act... to reproduce or transform our conditions (p. 129)." He focuses on how

to create a critical consciousness within the United States educational system by stressing the importance of four qualities: being aware of power, having critical literacy, questioning power inequalities and self-organized educational transformation. In other words, teachers and students need to explore how language, power and knowledge are used to maintain societal inequalities and what they can do to change it.

Shor also describes how dialogic pedagogy improved the critical writing and thinking of the students in his class. He enters into dialogue with students about topics of their choosing, and then makes them aware of the critical nature of knowledge, language and power within that topic. For example, writing tests opened up a critical dialogue about the power of certain kinds of knowledge about language (how to pass the writing test) control access to educational power (getting into university). This dialogue leads to critical writing assignments in which students reflect on how language, knowledge and power have been abused in their lives. He also takes the opportunity to teach standard, academic writing skills. They finally end by taking action on their critical issue, in their case proposing alternate forms of assessing students' written competency. By making students aware of how their language affects their thinking, Shor enables students to use their language more effectively in both writing and reflecting.

Like, Freire, Shor advocates for a critical method of teaching through student action. For Freire and Foucault, this requires a societal transformational. Shor and other critical theorists use Freire's and Foucault's ideas within the classroom to help students improve their critical thinking skills. Christensen (2000), for example, uses similar techniques as Shor with high school students and has had students write for newspapers to address local and national inequalities on issues important to teens. These writing and

thinking skills, in turn, give students access to the academic curriculum and academic chains of power on one hand, and encourage an inclusive critical dialogue about our society, on the other. Both goals aim to allow all students an equitable access to education and all the chains of power that implies. Some theorists, like Perez, Cummins and Banks, found these goals to be amenable to the goals of multicultural theory and encouraged dialogue between the two perspectives so that the theories could build upon each other.

Transformative Pedagogy

Cummins has long been an advocate of both progressive and multicultural theories of education, but only just recently attempted to join the two by discussing a transformative pedagogy. Cummins (2000) refers to a transformative pedagogy that "...uses collaborative critical inquiry to analyze and understand the social realities of [the students'] lives and their communities." As in multicultural and critical theory, language is the basis for critically understanding an immediate reality and the greater society. Focusing on English language acquisition, his transformative pedagogy is based on the experiences of English language learners and other oppressed communities in the US educational system. He argues that schools must transform their educational system not only to provide an equitable education for all, but also to provide a rigorously academic setting where students use their own experiences to critique society. He has found that English language learners, in particular, have neither had access to either the mainstream curriculum nor the critical thinking skills necessary for an advanced academic

curriculum. Only by uniting multicultural and critical theory will schools be able to serve the educational needs of this community by both being sensitive to their cultural learning styles and providing them the critical education required for academic success.

Cummins, in fact, quotes multicultural theorist Banks, when further defining his transformative pedagogy as creating transformative scholars, people who "...assume that knowledge is not neutral but is influenced by human interests, that all knowledge reflects the power and social relationships within society, and that an important purpose of knowledge construction is to improve society (Banks, 1996:9; in Cummins, 2000)." As mentioned earlier, Banks' research in multicultural theory has led him to call for a transformative multicultural perspective for education. Although Banks focuses more on the mechanisms of change with a greater sensitivity towards respecting all cultures, he has placed a new emphasis on using the tools of critical theory to provide an equitable education. Not only does he want students to understand the role of knowledge and language in power, but he also advocates the use of dialogic practice and praxis in schools so that students experience societal change. It is only through this action that students can critically reflect on their ideas and how language and literacy affect their world.

Making meaning, critical thinking, thoughtful writing

Not all researchers agree with the claims of critical theorists that it is only through action that students acquire critical thinking skills. There is a particularly large group of researchers who have studied how the interactions of language and thinking help students

advance their critical repertoire. When discussing the need for improved critical thinking skills, many researchers focus on the link between thinking and literacy.

One of the key researchers in this area is Gordon Wells (1983), who in his landmark study, Making Meaning, described how children as early as two use language to make meaning of their world. Children use language to think aloud their thought process, so language becomes an extension of thinking. He concludes that every child comes to school with the oral and cognitive ability to make sense of their world and experience academic success, although they may do it in different ways. He found that the students who use their language most closely to the school's language are the ones who have academic success. Thus, it is the teacher's job to find out how students use language to help their thinking and transfer this method of meaning making to literacy skills. In a more recent study (1999), he has analyzed how teacher-student dialogues enhance this process. By exploring how their students think through dialogue, or what he calls dialogic inquiry, teachers understand how students make sense of their world and where they are at in their thinking and academic understanding. It is only through dialogic inquiry, he argues, that we can stretch their thinking and literacy skills because it is in this way that we get to know how they make meaning.

While Wells established the relationship between thought and literacy, other researchers have established the relationship between critical thinking and writing. Berthoff (1978) states the writing researchers' classic claim to language: "The relationship between thought and language is dialectical: ideas are conceived by language; language is generated by thought (p. 47)." She stresses the need to make meaning central in student writing by continuously reflecting on the interdependence of

our thoughts and the language with which we make meaning out of our thoughts. Chaffee (1999) takes this a step further and has written extensively on the link between thinking and writing, or what he calls critical thinking and thoughtful writing. He defines critical thinking as the ability of students to 'carefully examine [their] thinking and the thinking of others, in order to clarify and improve [their] understanding (p. 5)", and thoughtful writing as "...the ability to use critical thinking as [they] move through the writing process (p. 5)." Chaffee encourages teachers and students to explicitly think about the steps they make to think about a topic and transfer it to the writing process.

Researchers who focus on the meaning making and critical thinking aspect of writing instruction have not only offered new insights into the thinking-writing process, but also concrete, explicit ways to teach this process to students. In general, they argue for dialogic instruction in which teachers verbally discover how students are thinking (Wells, 1999; Berthoff, 1978) and then explicit instruction on how to develop critical thinking skills within the writing process (Chaffee, 1999; Calkins, 1983). Chaffee, for example, argues that students should be introduced to observation, comparison and contrast, classification and definition, analysis, evaluation, problem solving and agreement in order to further their critical thinking skills. These methods and ideas not only coincide with the recommendations of critical theorists (Christensen, 2000; Shor, 1992), but also give concrete suggestions on how to further students' thinking and writing.

Graves (1994) and Calkins (1983), two influential researchers of writing process, not only agree with a need for greater dialogic inquiry, but found methods to improve writing instruction through dialogic instruction. They argue that teachers should use writing conferences, or one-to-one conversations about a student's writing, as the core of their writing program. For them, writing conferences, during which the relationship between critical thought and writing is made explicit, are the basis for effective writing instruction.

When discussing the best way to improve the quality of writing, Calkins (1983) stresses the need to reach as many students as possible in one-to-one conferences and during these conferences, to "...find important ways to challenge these students so that they do more than they thought they could (p.214)." For her, the key to do this is to understand how the child thinks about the writing process, and then to present them with new perspectives. In other words, through dialogic inquiry, teachers should develop students' critical understanding of the writing process.

Conferences are such an important part of writing instruction, Graves (1994) devoted an entire book to beginning to discuss the most effective way to stretch student writing in these interactions. He focuses on the different ways teachers can help students think about how they think about writing. He feels that teachers must become more critically reflective of their own writing, teaching and thinking in order to help students understand their own thinking and writing. Using this new understanding, teachers can make explicit students' own thinking about writing and then help them become better

writers. For both Graves and Calkins, writing conferences serve as a forum for both teachers and students to critically reflect on the relationship between thought and language in order to explicitly improve writing process skills.

By having as many writing conferences as possible and also explicitly teaching and practicing the rest of the writing process, Graves and Calkins maintain, students have access to both the writing and critical thinking skills necessary to improve their writing. Although Graves (1983) focuses on student choice, and Calkins (1983) writes about authentic stories, both researchers advocate teaching a writing process that includes reflection, drafting, revision and sharing. Many researchers have since labeled this method of instruction process writing, writing workshop or the writing cycle and focus their research on different aspects of this methodology. This has led to a body of research in which many researchers point to the importance of providing students choice in their writing and teaching student writing within the context of their own experiences using a cyclical process that includes brainstorming, drafting, revising and publishing.

Within this body of writing process research, researchers have pointed to the explicit instruction of many important elements within the writing classroom. I will synthesize the studies that I have found most successful in my writing classroom. For example, when discussing classroom management, Poindexter (1998) discusses the importance of praising student efforts, yet managing time so that students can engage in the writing process. Fisher (1995) gives ideas on how to explicitly teach students to organize their writing. Finally, Cunningham (1999) cites a variety of studies that detail how to give students time to share their work in a various ways, from publishing to pair shares to author's chair. These studies stress the importance of the different aspects of

management, from behavior to organization to time, in helping students feel and be successful when learning the writing process.

Other studies focus on the various methods teachers can employ to explicitly teach writing skills and to make writing instruction accessible to all students. Morning messages, or when the teacher writes daily in front of the class, provide a way to model process, writing styles and skills using both think aloud demonstration techniques and a shared message during which the teacher garners ideas from the students but writes the story herself (Hornsby, 2001). Writing mini-lessons allow the teacher to focus on general classroom practice and specific writing skills within a similar routine (Avery, 1997). Teachers can lead small, guided writing groups to focus on an area of concern for a few students or offer a guided writing lessons for the whole class when learning new strategies during which students closely follow structured and focused writing guides modeled by the teacher (Evans, 2001). The teacher also can intervene one on one during writing conferences to cover the individual needs of each student (Graves, 1994). These are some of the studies that have most impacted my writing instruction, especially when it comes to giving me specific ideas on how to explicit instruction within the writing classroom.

Explicit language

The importance of using explicit language in the classroom has recently been gathering attention among researchers. For example, Resnick (1997) states that the cornerstone of having high expectations is setting clear expectations. When teachers explicitly state what they expect, students more often reach these expectations. Wray and

Lewis (2001), working off Vygotsky (1978) discuss how explicit scaffolding helps students go from dependent to independent instruction. The key point of both of these researchers is that whether one is teaching a subject matter, a management process or a skill, the students must be able to understand what is expected of them and how to reach these expectations, so explicit language and clear expectations in all aspects of classroom instruction is vital.

Several researchers argue that this is especially true in working class communities and communities of color. Delpit (1988) discusses the importance of using explicit instruction within African American communities so that all students have equal access to the core curriculum and beyond. She has found that the most successful teachers of African American students use explicit language. Although she does not know whether it is because more African American students expect explicit instruction or fewer teachers in African American schools give explicit instruction, she has found that students are not learning because they are not understanding vague or indirect instruction. Her argument for more explicit instruction has influenced many researchers in their attempts to improve instruction for all students of color or students in working class communities.

Garcia (1994) found that explicit instruction is vital in teaching English as a Second Language and was an important component of successful multicultural classrooms. As mentioned earlier, he argues that students from different cultural, home or personal backgrounds learn in different styles using different kinds of language. As a teacher, it is out job to learn which is the most successful method of teaching for the student. He has also found that explicit instruction is under utilized in English language

learner communities, and so stresses that teachers be more explicit to reach those students that learn best with specific language.

Payne (1995) discusses how explicit language is necessary in working class schools in order to raise standards and expectations. She argues that the teacher's inability to reach students not only affects students, but also teachers. When students do not respond to a style of teaching, teachers lower expectations and thus fail to meet basic standards. On the other hand, in schools where standards and expectations are explicit, not only are teachers encouraged to keep their own high expectations, this helps everyone, including students, know what is needed of them in order to succeed. Thus, it is in working class schools that are most often fighting with bouts of low expectations and lowered standards that explicit instruction is most important.

All three researchers discuss communities in the United States that have historically not had access to the core curriculum or to academic success. Delpit, among others (Payne, 1995; Kozol, 1991; Delpit, 1988), explains that this is partially due to the fact that many academic and curricular questions are implicitly taught within the oppressing culture so students from the dominant culture do not need to be taught these concerns explicitly. For the communities that have remained outside the oppressing culture though, these skills and perspectives need to be taught explicitly. These skills are not only academic concerns like literacy and math, but also how to listen or learn with the dominating instructional styles. Since many oppressed communities, including communities of color and working class communities, have been left out of many aspects of the educational culture, many researchers (Resnick, 1997; Payne, 1995) argue that

explicit instruction is vital in all aspects of classroom instruction, from management to the teaching of writing skills.

Explicit Instruction within process writing

Research on process writing has concurred with the need to use explicit instruction. Evans (2001) writes about the need to guide young writers critically, carefully and with attention to detail. Cunningham (1999) discusses the need for students to understand the process through specific modeling and conversation. Graves (1994) discusses the need to observe students writing critically and respond to their writing with specific questions and guidance. Fisher (1995) describes how she explains the writing process to first graders in a step-by-step method, including everything from organization to management to writing skills. Although these researchers do not use the term of explicit instruction, they validate the need of using specific and clear language during writing instruction all throughout the writing process.

In the following section, I will share the specific studies that have furthered the use of explicit instructional strategies within my process writing classroom. For example, several studies have guided my use of morning messages. Poindexter (1998) describes how to explicitly think aloud through each step of a modeled writing lesson. Manning (1997) describes in great detail how she explicitly comes up with ideas, organizes her topic, and revises if necessary. Hornsby (2001) focuses on how morning messages state explicit think alouds while shared messages allow students to begin being part of the writing process. In both cases, he stresses the need of clear language and expectations so that students understand why they are thinking or volunteering information. Cunningham

(1999) echoes the necessity of using clear and specific language during morning message and other modeling activities so that students internalize the thinking process and start to use it in their own writing. It is through modeled and shared writing that the students explicitly experience how writers write.

It is equally important to use explicit language when students begin to write on their own. Wagner (2001) makes the case of using mini-lessons to specifically address students' writing difficulties. Avery (1995) goes one step further and organizes mini-lessons into procedures, strategies, qualities and skills. No matter the reason, though, she states the importance of clear language so that students can go from the lesson to do the objective on their own. It is through observation and conferences that teachers can be sure that they understood the expectations. Graves (1994) discusses how conference conversation is the key method to check for understanding and to specifically address young writers' needs. He argues for explicit questioning strategies that allow for student choice, praise student writing, and yet allow for student growth.

Other researchers have guided me in making the reading writing connection explicit to improve young writers' attitudes, critical awareness and understanding of writing. Escott (1995) describes how to make this connection by discussing authors' perspectives while reading and how to explain why one choose appropriate texts to read while teaching writing. Then she goes into great detail about the need to explicitly teach literary elements in writing by getting into the 'authors' head' using multicultural literature. Bearne (1995) stresses the need to use specific questioning strategies to create the appropriate context for writers to become critically aware of the strategies all writers use to evaluate their own writing and get a message across. Cunningham (1999) uses

graphic organizers to help students make the explicit connection between reading and writing in both fiction and non-fiction texts. By making these academic connections more explicit, students learn use the reading-thinking-writing cycle that is so important for future academic success.

Wray and Lewis (2001, 1997) are among a group of researchers that have guided my use of models in improving writing skills. Wray and Lewis (1997) are concerned about organization and suggest the use of frames to help students improve their non-fiction texts. They have identified a variety of 'frames', or set language pieces that help guide students into organizing different genres of non-fiction writing. Moline (2001) uses graphic organizers to help students brainstorm their fiction and non-fiction pieces. He also recommends thinking of the appropriate graphic organizer based on the genre. All these researchers maintain, though, that although these models serve as ways to make academic suggests more real, they need to be removed as quickly as possible to reduce formulaic writing.

There are similar concerns when addressing punctuation and spelling. Hall (2001) suggests modeling a variety of punctuation continuously from the very beginning of school. She stresses that punctuation should be a decision, though, and not a rule. By seeing punctuation used in context and thought aloud why that decision was made, students better understand how to make decision about punctuation in their writing. Cunningham (1999) makes a similar claim about decoding. She uses students' names and thematic vocabulary to explore decoding patterns. This provides a context for students to understand language, while explicitly exploring the different, important uses letter order and punctuation have in writing. Both researchers warn about turning explicit language

into rules, but yet also give suggestions on how to explicitly explore the patterns visible in the English language.

The use of phonics, frame sentences, focused and formulaic writing remain a controversial topic within process writing. Many researchers (Cummins, 1996; Giroux, 1988) are concerned that explicit instruction will encourage teachers to teach explicit skills in isolation, thus further hurting students' access to the academic curriculum by leaving them with nothing but 'basic skills'. Delpit (1988) argues that explicit instruction is not 'basic skills' and that teachers and researchers need to get beyond labels and use whatever strategies work for each child. Cunningham (1999) offers a third way basing her observations on Calkins (1983). She argues that students need a context to learn writing and best learn from their own writing, so the key issue is that explicit instruction needs to be presented within a student context so that skills are not taught in isolation and yet teachers can still address all learning styles. As Payne (1995) points out, it is most important to have the flexibility to teach to all children while being aware that each child has specific needs that we need to address.

Writing Response to Culture

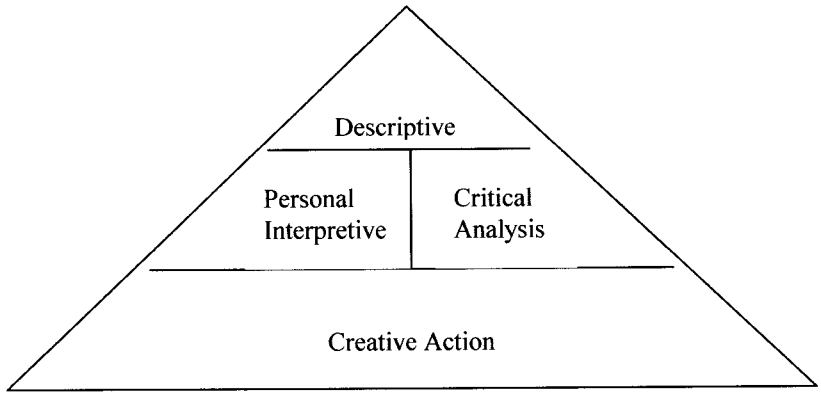
Teaching writing within the students' cultural context is a challenge in bilingual, working class schools when most academic curriculum is dominated by White, middle class bias (Giroux, 1988). Ada (1988) and Freeman and Freeman (1994) have discussed using a "writing response to culture" to help give students access to the mainstream academic curriculum. The idea behind this teacher led literacy curriculum is to use either cultural artifacts or multicultural literature that highlights aspects of the students' culture

with which they are most familiar to teach the writing process. After the teacher presents the literature or artifacts to the class, he/ she leads a class discussion so that students verbalize their personal connections to the cultural issues discussed. For Ada (1988a), during this discussion is the best time to explore critical issues and explicitly teach critical thinking skills because students are learning within a context that is most familiar to them. After this discussion, the teacher can then lead a writing lesson directly related to the discussion, thus teaching explicit writing skills within the students' cultural context. Freeman and Freeman (1994) go on to stress that this must all be accomplished within the framework of the writing workshop as the most effective method of instruction. By combining explicit instruction within the children's cultural context and process writing, these researchers provide a model through which successful writing instruction can be adapted for working class bilingual classrooms.

Cummins (1996) describes this model within his framework of providing both comprehensible input and critical literacy. Discussing Ada (1988b), he explains how she describes four phases within a 'creative reading act' that "progressively opens up possibilities for the articulation and amplification of students' critical thinking (p.158)." These four phases; descriptive, personal interpretive, critical analysis and creative action, can happen concurrently and are interwoven. The teacher must be sure to provide learning experiences within an interactional process (with the teacher or other students) that include each of the four phases so that students have an opportunity to fully develop their critical thinking. Figure 2.1 shows Cummins' interpretation of Ada's model with a focus on how all phases allow for critical literacy with high comprehensible input no matter the English proficiency of the learner.

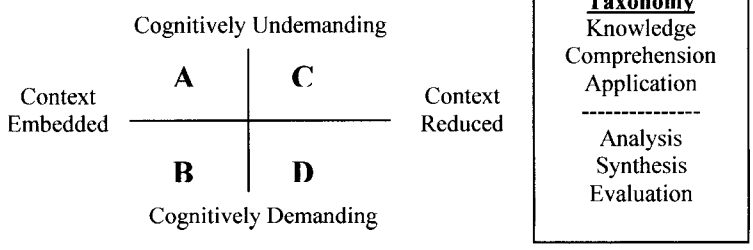
For Cummins, this is especially important since he has found that English language learners (ELL's) need to be able to learn in a cognitively demanding and

Figure 2.1 – Cummins' Description of Ada's Creative Reading Acts (1996)



context reduced environment to succeed academically. He uses figure 2.2 as a way to show how teachers can help students reach cognitively demanding, context reduced tasks. Although students will begin by best learning in quadrant A (cognitively undemanding, context embedded), but through careful scaffolding they can be encouraged to learn in quadrant B (cognitively demanding, context embedded) and then to quadrant D (cognitively demanding, context reduced). As he notes, Ada's creative reading acts help students reach from descriptive, cognitively undemanding tasks to creative action,

Figure 2.2 – Cummins' Grid (1996) and Bloom's Taxonomy (Scott, 2003)



cognitively demanding tasks.

Although Cummins helps provide a theoretical framework for Ada's creative reading acts, Scott (2003) uses Bloom's taxonomy to help guide instruction. He overlays Bloom's taxonomy on Cummins' grid so that teachers can have a more specific guide in planning cognitively demanding tasks (see Figure 2.2). As Banks (1993) points out, Bloom (1956) devised his taxonomy of cognitive levels of learning to help teachers plan activities at a variety of cognitive levels. Bloom's taxonomy divides cognitive learning into knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Since then, Bloom and others have added to the taxonomy, providing skills students should be able to demonstrate within each level and questions teachers can use to cue these skills (Gynan, n.d.; Bloom, 1956). Appendix B provides a more complete list of skills and cues expected within each cognitive level. By dividing cognitively demanding and undemanding tasks into Bloom's six levels with their corresponding skills, teachers are able to have a better guide on how to plan lessons to meet the diverse cognitive needs of their classroom.

Ada, supported by Freeman and Freeman and Cummins, presents a teacher led curriculum that supports the critical literacy of all bilingual students. Within that framework, Cummins argues that we may begin with lessons that are cognitively undemanding and context embedded, but that we need to lead students to tasks that are cognitively demanding and context reduced. Although Bloom provides a more specific framework for planning appropriate tasks, Ada stresses that students will express her phases concurrently and that the phases will be interwoven. By adding Bloom's and Cummins' suggestions to Ada's creative reading acts, it becomes a powerful curricular

tool for enhancing critical literacy within the bilingual classroom. Yet, as many bilingual researchers attest, it takes more than just curricular change to address the many needs of the primary, bilingual writing classroom.

Bilingual Writing

The basic tenets of bilingual education are academic. It is an effort to find the most effective method of teaching academic skills to English language learners. As such, its ultimate goal is for all students to have access to the most rigorously academic education in English (Krashen, 1996; Cummins, 1996; Garcia, 1994; among others). Bilingual research has found that the most effective way to do this is through the primary language. In the case of literacy, literacy skills are learned in the primary language while students develop academic and communicative English language skills (Cummins, 1996). Once students have attained sufficient cognitive literacy skills, their literacy skills in their primary language transfer to literacy skills in English (Krashen, 1996). Thus, Latino students whose first language is Spanish most effectively learn literacy skills in Spanish.

As mentioned earlier, although there are still many political and public doubts about bilingual education (Schnaiberg, 1996; Ruiz and Figueroa, 1995), the dearth of research on the effectiveness of bilingual education has shifted much of the focus of research from finding the most effective language of instruction to developing the most effective methods of instruction within bilingual education (Moll, 1989). In terms of teaching writing to native Spanish speakers, this means that research indicates that students learn writing most effectively if they are taught in Spanish (Ruiz and Figueroa,

1995). There is now a growing body of research that explores the most effective methods of teaching bilingual writing.

Much of the body of research on teaching writing within the bilingual classroom indicates that the most effective method of instruction is writing-as-process instruction. This places bilingual writing research firmly within the scope of literacy research. That is, the most effective method of teaching writing, whether in English or Spanish, is writing-as-process instruction. Even many researchers who have approached bilingual writing instruction from the bilingual perspective agree that a more holistic method of instruction is the most effective way to teach students writing in their primary language.

Within the writing as process framework, though, there is also a body of research that explores the differences that exist between a monolingual English and bilingual Spanish classroom. These differences are explored from a variety of perspectives. Some researchers explore the differences produced by the differences in the languages while others explore how the instructional context affects literacy instruction. These distinctions provide critical insight into literacy instruction within the bilingual classroom.

Edelsky (1987) was one of the first people to come out advocating a more holistic approach to writing instruction with the bilingual classroom. Although her research was marred by inconsistencies in methodology and results (Edelsky, 1987; Lipski, 1991), Goldman and Rueda (1988), Reis (1993), and Ruiz and Figueroa (1995) among many others conducted more rigorous studies that confirmed Edelsky's claims and specifically advocated the use of the writing-as-process approach within the bilingual classroom.

Goldman and Rueda (1988) use Vygotsky's ideas to provide a rationale why a more holistic approach to writing instruction is more effective within a bilingual classroom. Vygotsky (1978) argues that instruction is a social process between teacher and student because a child's cognitive schema for approaching the world are socially based. Because of this, learning is most effective when it is meaningful, goal-directed and at the child's zone of proximal development (ZPD). Thus, learning to write in the primary language is most effective because it is both meaningful and at a child's ZPD. Bilingual instruction also takes into account the child's bicultural social world (Goldman and Rueda, 1988; Vygotsky, 1978).

Drawing from Vygotsky's conclusions and their own research, several researchers give suggestions on how to best teach within a bilingual child's cultural context, especially as it relates to writing instruction. Instruction should be in their primary language (Garcia, 1994). Writing should be taught within the students' cultural context (Cummins, 1991) using the students' knowledge base (Cummins, 1996). The writing classroom should support the students' home language and culture (Diaz and Klinger, 1991) while lowering the students' affective filter (Krashen, 1982).

Krashen (1998) cautions that these literacy concepts must be made explicit in both languages for the students to understand these connections.

Many researchers have found that language use within bilingual programs particularly affects writing programs. Specifically, students who learn how to write in Spanish, write more effectively in English and Spanish (Carlisle and Beeman, 2000). Those who are taught in English, still show grammar and writing styles indicative of Spanish speakers (Schnaiberg, 1996). Finally, Spanish speakers are able to transfer their

writing concepts from Spanish to English much easier than they can transfer their concepts learned in English to Spanish (Carlisle and Beeman, 2000; Kirschner, 1996). These studies not only argue for primary language instruction in writing, but also for advanced writing instruction in the primary language (Kirschner, 1996; Garcia, 1994).

Not only is the language of instruction important within bilingual program, but there must also be sensitivity to all the dialects students bring into the classroom. Lipski (1991) emphasizes the use of code switching and the important role it plays in literacy development. Teachers must support students' code switching as valid means of communication and explicitly discuss its role as compared to standard Spanish and literacy acquisition. Garcia (1994) also discusses the role of code switching as a normal part of language and literacy development and advocates the validation of all Spanish dialects within the education system while still teaching academic Spanish.

Garcia (1994) also focuses on the importance of the use of language in literacy instruction within the bilingual classroom. Teachers need to be sensitive to the students' culture's communicative style, especially when it comes to audience participation, questioning, and exploring different perspectives. For example, in many Mexicano households, students are not expected to initiate questions, so teachers must explicitly teach students that this is an expectation within schools while supporting a home behavior that respectfully waits to be called upon. Garcia also advocates the use of 'classroom conversation' among students so that they can practice the use of both languages. Without classroom conversations, students cannot grow and explore the use of language that is necessary to promote critical thinking, reading and writing.

Research has focused on two factors that influence primary language literacy instruction for native Spanish speakers, the instructional context and how language is used within the classroom. Edelsky (1987) among others advocate a writing-as-process approach that teaches literacy within the child's cultural context. Garcia (1994) and others argue that advanced primary language instruction that validates the students' home language while explicitly teaching and giving them practice with standard Spanish and English is the most effective method of instruction. Although researchers focus on different aspects of the bilingual literacy classroom, these researchers agree that teachers must learn to use language effectively and within each child's cultural context.

Conclusion

Banks (1993) calls for student to learn a transformative academic knowledge: "...the facts, concepts, paradigms, themes and explanations that challenge mainstream academic knowledge and expand and substantially revise established canons, paradigms, theories, explanations and research methods (p. 16)." This definition of the kind of knowledge students need to succeed academically could have come from a critical theorist, yet it is advocated within mainstream multicultural theory. Banks (1993), Cummins (2000, 1996) and Nieto (1998) represent a core of researchers that advocate both perspectives and report success when both perspectives are used to structure an educational system.

Yet, separate from this perspective, there is also a body of research that focuses on the most effective way to teach literacy to students and writing to bilingual first

graders specifically. While writing process researchers like Calkins (1983) and Graves (1983, 1994) use Freire's (1970) ideas on facilitating learning to teach the writing process to all students, Payne (1995) and Resnick (1997) point to the need for explicit instruction within all classrooms and working class populations in particular. There is no disagreement here, for researchers like Cunningham (1999) and Calkins (1983) both stress the importance of explicit instruction within process writing. Resnick and Nelson-LeGall (1997), on the other hand, use Vygotsky's ideas (1978) to stress the importance of creating a socializing intelligence in which students are explicitly taught ways to learn socially, in which they are responsible for learning and generating their own knowledge. By explicitly teaching how to learn, teachers become facilitators in the exploration of language, knowledge and culture.

Finally, it is in the union of this critical multicultural perspective with effective methods that the most effective instruction takes place. As seen in Calkin's (1983) and Resnick and Nelson-LeGall's research, Freire (1970) and Vygotsky (1978) represent critical multicultural perspectives that influence method. Yet, researchers also caution that the same methods used from different perspectives give different results. Freeman and Freeman (1994) explore how a teacher's change in perspective into an 'exploratory' teacher allowed her students to change from passive to active participants despite using some of the same methods. This teacher also continued to explore many new methods, constantly improving instruction for her students. Freeman and Freeman point to the need for both method and perspective to match for effective teaching. Perez (1998) gives another example relevant to bilingual writing to show how process methods can fail students of color. "...the student's and the teacher's interpretations of a literature log

activity were different and the teacher failed to make the expectations explicit." On one hand, as Payne points out, explicit instruction and knowing each student's learning style is considered good teaching, it just fails to be used with working class students of color. On the other hand, as Cummins (2000) points out, by integrating explicit instruction within meaningful practice and transformational pedagogy, students emerge with both academic success and a critical awareness of how to succeed personally and in the greater society.

Chapter 3

Methodology: Patterns of Instruction

Design/ Setting/ Participants

I conducted a participant action research study on the effects of explicit writing instruction on bilingual first grade students. The design was essential to the study because my goal was to improve critical thinking instruction within the writing process classroom for working class Mexican students. Since writing instruction has so many variables and any population is diverse, I had to choose a study that allowed me to look for patterns in instruction. By being a participant, not only could I explore in depth instruction methods and student reactions, I had the chance to explore instruction from the point of view of the writing teacher. This gave the study a practical validity in inhabiting the setting of first grade bilingual instruction.

My school is 87% Latino and 11% African American and 2% other. 83% of the population receives free or reduced lunch. 100 % of my classroom receives free lunch and is Latino. No students in my classroom are bused to school, so they all live within walking distance. The school offers an early immersion bilingual program, meaning that I teach all subjects in Spanish (the primary language) and offer an hour of English Language Development. In other words, my classroom is a working class, Latino, community, bilingual first grade classroom situated in a working class, mainly Latino community.

I chose six of my twenty students to participate in the study. I chose three girls and three boys. From each gender, I chose one student below grade level, one student at

grade level and one student above grade based on the district writing rubric (see Appendix A). All names have been changed. I asked permission from the parents before the study began for their child to participate in the research. Since my classroom was ethnically and economically homogeneous, I only accounted for gender and writing ability. Although by the start of the program, much of my class was above grade level, I was interested in finding out how explicit instruction affected the wide spectrum of a first grade classroom, so I made sure to choose students who represented all writing levels. In this way, I accounted for a diverse sample as possible while still keeping it small enough to allow for greater depth within the study.

The curriculum

The study took place between January 5th, 2004 and February 28th, 2004. I taught a community unit that was a combination of the district's Social Studies unit and a community unit I have been doing with my first graders for the past five years. I have used this unit in the past because I feel that it validates who the students are and where they come from. Cummins (1996) argues that children who see their culture and language advertised in the curriculum will have a higher self-esteem and this will provide them with the impetus to succeed. He argues, "By contrast, when student's language, culture, and experience are ignored or excluded in classroom interactions, students are immediately starting from a disadvantage. Everything they have learned about life and the world up to this point is being dismisses as irrelevant to school learning (p. 2)." Furthermore, as Ada (1988) argues, students need to be able to explore higher order and critical thinking skills within a context that is most accessible to them. Studying their

community, as a concrete, familiar object of study, allowed my first graders easier access to acquiring and exploring critical thinking skills.

Furthermore, a community study was an essential standard of Texas State Standards and the District's chosen curriculum, Mi Mundo. I had already had experience with this curriculum in my former school, so I was able to add and adapt the curriculum to teach Texas State Standards, critical thinking skills and writing process. In fact, I was able to get feed-back from my team of first grade teachers when I first adapted the curriculum to focus on critical thinking skills. Their feedback and the success I had already experienced with this curriculum encouraged me to use this thematic unit as the basis of my research. As part of the first grade team, I continued to use suggestions from my current first grade team and shared my success with them. In this way, the richness and depth of the thematic unit was enhanced not only by State Standards and a developed curriculum, but also by the experiences of more than six other bilingual teachers and my experiences with five years of first grade students.

This unit draws on research in using literature to create critical thinking opportunities and discussions, followed by mini-lessons, modeling and time to write their ideas down. It was mostly taken from Ada's description of her 'creative reading acts' (1988a, see Literature Review), but it was also enhanced by the literature on critical thinking (Wells, 1999; Chaffee, 1999; Bloom, 1956), explicit pedagogy (Resnick, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Delpit, 1988) and writing process (Cunningham, 1999; Graves, 1984; Calkins, 1983). This unit, fused with Mi Mundo's curriculum and cognizant of students needs as defined by the state standards, the district writing rubric and Bloom's taxonomy, were what drove this writing curriculum.

In this unit, students first wrote narratives and essays concerning both positive aspects and challenges within their community. I then used selected literature to represent community issues students brought up in their writing or discussion. Other literature I chose to discuss specific State standard students did not bring up. And finally, others I chose as having successfully brought up critical questions with students in the past. : Tomas y la senora de la biblioteca by Pat Mora , El camino de Amelia by Linda Jacobs Altman, El canto de las palomas by Juana Felipe Herrera, Gathering the Sun by Alma Flor Ada, Cuadros de familia and En mi familia by Carmen Lomas Garza, Los pajaros y la cosecha by Blanca Lopez de Mariscal, Diez deditos and De colores by Jose Luis Orozco. The illustrations, the stories, the poems, and the songs in all of these books validated my students' experiences, challenged them to think critically of these experiences, and gave them greater access to both the curriculum and the codes of power.

During this unit, I also focused on three modes of writing, the personal narrative, the critical essay, and the persuasive letter. I began the unit by focusing on the personal narrative and teaching students explicit techniques to make their writing more powerful and compactly organized. The focus of the content of the narrative was stories about their community, starting with family vacations, families, schools and opening it up to personal narratives concerning anything that occurred in their community. This was a genre students were partially familiar with, it gave them time to renew their familiarity with the writing process, worked on skills directly related to the district writing rubric and gave me starting samples with which to judge and build upon their work.

We then moved on to the critical essay in which they used the literature and personal experiences to critique their immediate environment orally, and then transferred

these thoughts onto paper. Although narratives relied heavily on oral language also, in this particular section I explicitly discussed the importance of think alouds, critical thinking and dialogue. I then modeled and explicitly put down the critical process within our writing process. The content of this section was driven by a four week study of the different aspects of the community. We began by mapping and describing our neighborhoods, and then focusing on descriptions of different organizations or places within the community. These led to comparisons, likes and dislikes of our neighborhood and neighborhood institutions. This content leant itself to developing organizational, descriptive and analytical tools for the students while teaching them norms of the expository essay.

Finally, these critical essays led to a writing campaign, during which I used the opportunity to improve my students' persuasive letter writing skills. The neighborhood library particularly impressed the students, but they wanted more books in Spanish to read. Putting their concerns about lack of Spanish books accessible to the community into action, we organized a letter campaign to the school library and the community library to improve the children's Spanish section. Once again, the process was first discussed, then explicitly modeled and practiced. Students not only had to present an effective persuasive letter with all the expected academic norms, they also had to use as many of their critical thinking and writing strategies as possible to explicitly persuade librarians to stock more Spanish material. Figure 3.1 shows a timeline of the eight weeks and the focus of study of each week, under the three major genres of narrative text, expository text and persuasive letters. The writing and critical thinking objectives are shown in order respectively.

Figure 3.1 Timeline of Writing Curriculum

Narrative (Narr) and Expository (Expo) Genres with their Writing and Critical Thinking Objectives Respectively

Week 1 *1/6-1/9*	**Week 2** *1/12-1/16*	**Week 3** *1/20-1/23*	**Week 4** *1/26-1/30*	**Week 5** *2/2-2/6*	**Week 6** *2/9-2/13*	**Week 7** *2/16-2/20*	**Week 8** *2/23-2/27*
Narr: Vacation Assess Obj: Sentence Knowledge	Narr: Comm. stories Obj: Vocab. Compre-hension	Expo: Neighbor hood Obj: Voice Describe	Expo: Comm. jobs Obj: Content Identify	Expo: Favorite places Obj: Organize Apply	Expo: Libraries Obj: Vocab. Analyze	Letters: Favorite books Obj: Organize Compare	Letters: Persuading Obj: Content Persuade

Data Collection/ Instruments

I observed the six students twice a week in their writing time between 9:00 am and 10:30am. In this time period I led small groups in direct writing instruction. Students wrote in daily personal journals, daily literature responses, weekly buddy letters, weekly books, selected essays and selected letters. I also kept a teacher journal in which I kept at the time observations of the six students' comments or lessons during the day and a daily reflection on the students' writing and my teaching. The observations and reflections served both as a guideline for further instruction and as a record for qualitative analysis (see Data Analysis, below).

I used two main instruments to guide instruction and observations. The first was a district writing rubric that graded students on a one to four basis on their organization, voice, conventions, vocabulary, sentence structure and theme. (See Appendix A). Each grade had specific guidelines on what we as teachers were to observe to give that grade under that category. I also used Bloom's taxonomy as enhanced by Gynan (2002). Assessing their thinking through observed comments and their writing, I made sure to

include all levels of cognitive learning while focusing on specific skills and questioning cues (See Appendix B).

The writing rubric and Bloom's taxonomy provided a basis for my observations and reflections. During the day, I would observe all students' manipulation and use of characteristics in both the taxonomy and rubric. After the day was over, I would reflect on both the students' observed successful use of a particular aspect of writing or critical thinking and how my teaching, both explicit and otherwise, reflected the use and encouraged the growth of areas covered by these assessment instruments. Furthermore, I assessed the entire class three times, January 5th, February 3rd, and February 28th, using a whole class writing sample based on the district writing rubric and the taxonomy. These writing samples also provided material for instructional reflection and research.

Data Analysis

My two main methods of analysis were a quantitative analysis of student documents and a qualitative analysis of observations, teacher journal and student writing. On a more quantitative level, I tracked the six students' progress on the district rubric and use of skills in the taxonomy. I graded their writing entries daily, giving them a grade from 1 to 4 on the six rubric categories. The district has both a narrative and expository rubric. I began the first two weeks of the study only grading on the narrative rubric, but since we were also writing expository rubrics, I switched to grading using both rubrics to help with the study's consistency. I also kept track of which critical thinking strategies students were using. At first I used the general Bloom's taxonomy, but by the third week I realized I need a more specific guideline, so I switched to Gynan's review of more

expanded taxonomies. In both cases, I regraded all papers using both the new and old assessment tools. Using my lesson plans for that time period, I particularly paid attention to how the different methods of instruction affected the different levels of writing expertise. The student grades and number of strategies they used provided a quantitative tool to track their writing throughout the study.

On a more qualitative level, I used my observations, teacher journal and student writing to find generative themes that emerge from the research. Following Glesne (1999), I observed and reflected on my practice, student comments and student writing concerning major themes that kept reoccurring in the classroom relating to explicit writing and critical thinking. After the research, I coded my observations based on these themes, making sure to triangulate my different data sources so that I used codes present in most of my sources of data. Reflecting once again, I observed my codes for new patterns through which either new categories might emerge or that might shed a new understanding on one of the original themes or on explicit teaching in process writing. I chose the most obvious patterns, and triangulated with another data source to check validity. For instance, if I saw a pattern within the journals and observations, I might observe student writing. I also triangulated data with quantitative sources to validate or find new perspectives to the results. In all cases, I followed only the most obvious patterns and made sure to revalidate all coded patterns. These new patterns became their own categories to which I added all relevant data. By coding my journals and observations, I was able to reflect on patterns that had not been visible to me during the research.

My analysis, presented in the next section, presents the results of the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study and how they relate to each other. Although I compared the literature, observations and student writing throughout the study, they take on a new light after the analysis and I discuss this interpretation in the conclusion. By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, I come to understand new patterns in my explicit instruction of the writing process.

Chapter 4:

Data Analysis: Rubrics and Observations

During my eight-week study, I collected three main kinds of data. I collected student writing samples, my observations, and my teacher reflective journal. The student samples provided documents I graded based on the district writing rubric and Bloom's taxonomy. These grades provided quantifiable numbers I could keep track of during the eight-week study, and break down according to the different skills present in the rubric or taxonomy (see Appendices). These papers also provided limited qualitative data based on the subjectivity of the assessment method and the open-ended quality of the writing samples.

The teacher journal was almost exclusively qualitatively analyzed. My evaluations of student work, reflections on their needs and plans for the next day allowed a depth of material for me to analyze based on the issues which came up that both directly and indirectly pertained to explicit teaching within process writing. The observations, on the other hand, provided a more even mix of qualitative and quantitative data. The number of times I observed or addressed specific issues were easily tallied, while the ways and methods I addressed these issues allowed for a certain amount of depth in analysis. This mix of qualitative and quantitative data analyzed on their own and in perspective to each other presented a fairly clear picture of certain aspects of my study, yet left other related issues open to interpretation.

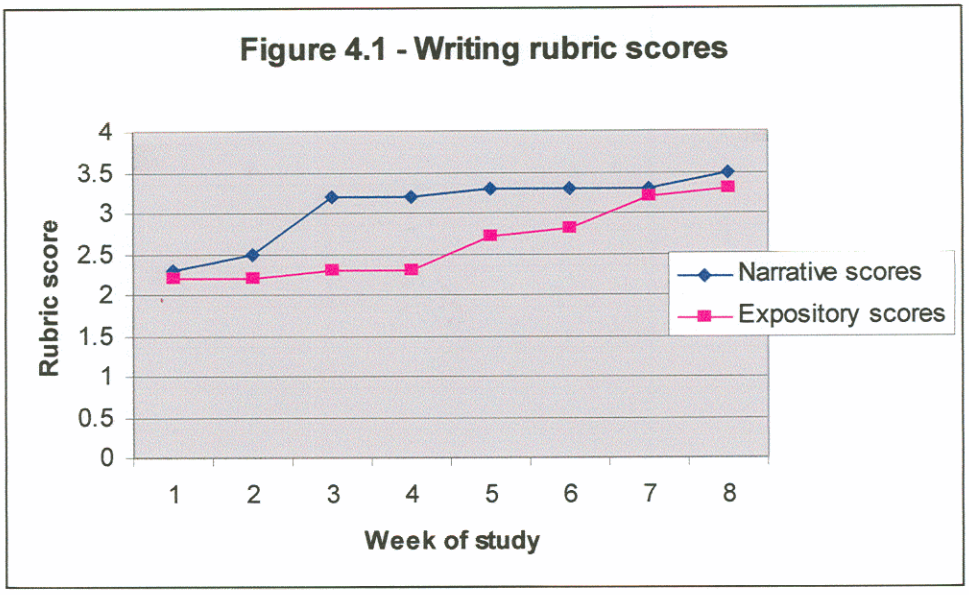
Expository rubrics

The six students I studied wrote in a daily journal and wrote three more writing samples during the course of this study. As mentioned earlier, these were evaluated daily using two different instruments, a district writing rubric and Bloom's taxonomy. The writing rubric assessments, correlated with lesson plans, provide a method of viewing how students responded to explicit writing skill instruction within process writing. There are two different district writing rubrics, one used for narrative texts and one used for expository texts, yet they follow the same outline. Students are assessed on a grade of one to four on six themes, content, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency and conventions. The rubric presents guidelines for establishing each grade within each theme, and it is up to the teacher to provide an overall score based on how the student preformed in each theme. Although students wrote narratives for the first two weeks, and expository for the other six, for consistency, I decided to regrade all papers using both rubrics after I began expository writing in the third week. The results of these assessments gave me the information I needed to plan my daily writing lesson plans.

My writing lesson plans provide an account of which lessons I gave when. Within these lesson plans, I included my read alouds, shared readings, discussion topics, writing mini-lessons and objectives, materials and assessments having to do with each lesson. I could then count how many lessons I gave each week on each objective and which strategies I used to teach each objective. From this information, I could not only determine what my focus was during a week, but by correlating it with student writing, I could also determine how my plans for an objective affected student learning.

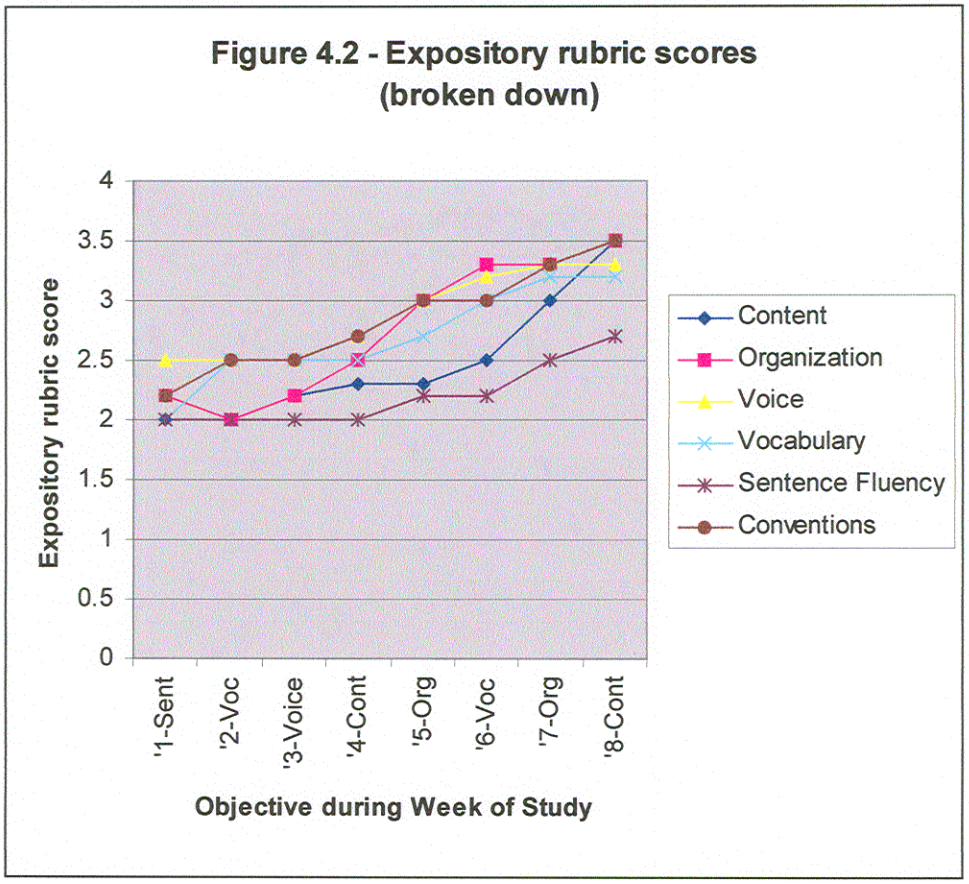
Analyzed on their own, these assessment methods point to two trends when it comes to the students' learning of writing skills. First of all, student narrative writing

samples improved most while we were reviewing narrative writing. As shown in Figure 4.1, although the average of these students' narrative writing scores steadily improved, they had their greatest jump at the beginning of the year when we were reviewing narrative writing skills, and remained pretty much constant, rising very gradually, throughout the rest of the study. Figure 4.1 also presents the results for expository writing scores. Expository scores begin lower than narrative scores, and do not begin to rise until almost the fifth week of the study, well into our study of expository texts. Yet once they begin to rise, they jump up, and take another jump when we began our action phase of letter writing.



Since lesson plans were focused, I also broke down scores to match their lesson objective. In Figure 4.2, I correlate some expository skill objective plans with their accompanying student assessments. In this analysis, students' themes/ writing skills do not improve in general until the fifth week, two weeks after their introduction. Although themes are introduced sequentially, not all of the students' skills improved in that order. Some themes (organization and vocabulary) improved immediately after their

introduction, while others improved over a longer time period (content, sentence fluency and voice). Although all students writing skills improved, there seemed to be little correlation with when it was introduced.

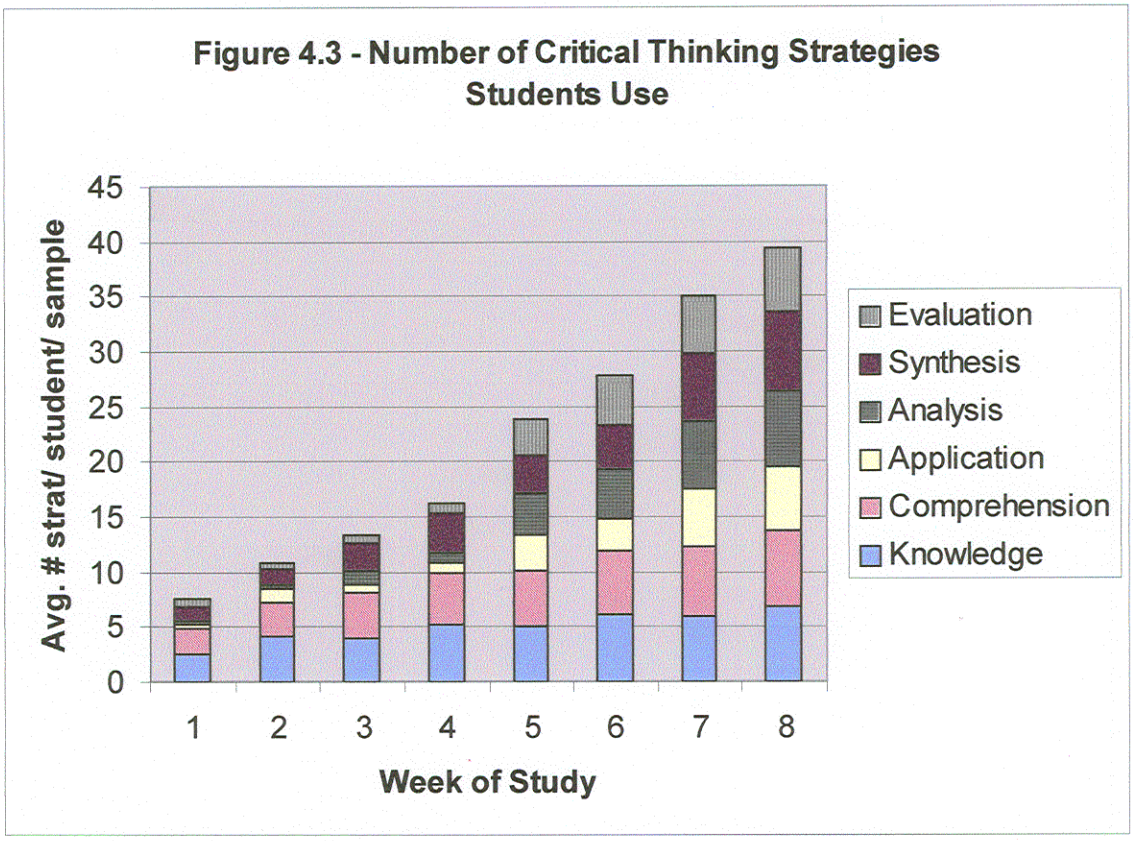


Bloom's taxonomy and critical thinking

When I began this study, I knew I wanted to improve the students' cognitive levels of learning and I had the curriculum to do it, but I lacked practice using Bloom's taxonomy as an assessment tool. My lesson plans show this. Lesson objectives are vague and the plans lack articulation. As the study developed, I became more familiar with the assessment tool and so focused on more specific objectives. Starting the second week, I began to note the cues students used, and began to use them in my lesson plans. By the fifth week, I became more specific still and regraded the papers using a more specific list

of cues found within each cognitive level (see Appendix). Although these changes were attributed to a desire for me to find more explicit ways to assess students' critical thinking skills, they also improved my ability to analyze student writing.

Figure 4.3 - Number of Critical Thinking Strategies Students Use



Students' use of critical thinking skills within their writing follow a similar pattern as that of expository skills, but I found another method of analysis more thoroughly represented students' acquisition and use of cognitive cues within these writing samples. My first level of analysis, as shown in Figure 4.3, showed which levels of learning the students demonstrated each week. In terms of cognitive levels, there was no change until the sixth week, but then they started to demonstrate the use of more kinds of complex thinking. Yet, when we are more specific in our analysis, and look for the kinds of cues students are using within each level, we begin to see a greater diversity of

learning methods students employ as early as the second week, and really exploding the fifth and sixth week, until there is tremendous diversity by the end of the study.

Observations and the reflective journal

Most of my material for immediate impact of my activities came from the observations. I took two kinds of daily observations. First, I filled out a daily observation guide that helped me tally how many times the focus students discussed the thematic focus of the day (See Appendix C). I used the same format for the guide and observed the same students every day, but I changed the focus of the observation to coincide with the day's lesson objectives. There was also a space for me to record any detailed observations I might want to add concerning these comments. The second method of observation was just field notes I filled out during or directly after my writing time. In these notes I recorded specific quotes from the study participants or observations I made about my or student actions that related to the study. I also synthesized writing conferences and personal reflections on the lesson in this manner. These observations were a direct help in my lesson planning for the next day and provided a great detail of analysis for my interactions with students, their thinking and their writing.

In general, the observation guide recorded student responses. This helped me realize which students were willing to discuss the writing and critical thinking concepts that I was presenting. This also provided a tool to analyze how student discussions compared to student writing. Figure 4.4 compares number of student comments to their expository writing score. In general, students who were most comfortable with the concepts shared most often, though there were exceptions when particular topics captured

the attention of some students. For example, student 2 was particularly interested in Tomas y la senora de la biblioteca, and discussed his visit to the library. This level of involvement showed up in the depth of his writing, also.

Figure 4.4 – Average student comments per week as compared to average expository rubric score and average number of critical thinking strategy strategies used during study's three genre themes

Weeks of study	Instrument Score Average	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6
Weeks 1-2	# Comments	6	5	8	12.5	13	22
	Rubric Score	2	2	2	2	2	3
	# Strategies	5	4	8	7	11.5	13
Weeks 3-6	# Comments	12.5	23	18.5	22.25	28.5	31.25
	Rubric Score	2.25	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.75	3.25
	# Strategies	12	16.5	18.25	25	27	42.5
Weeks 7-8	# Comments	17	25.5	18	23	27.5	30
	Rubric Score	3	3	3	3.5	3.5	4
	# Strategies	24.5	36	33	42.5	45	51

Figure 4.5 – Total number of comments in the observations concerning each coded category

Code category	Mini-lesson	Reading writing connection	Literacy context	Literacy strategies	Specific student success	Personal critical reflection	Other
Week most common	3	4	4	7	5	3	1
# of comments	57	45	41	38	33	25	27

The second half of the observation guide recorded my reactions to student discussion. In my field notes, I not only recorded my reactions to these six students, but my reactions to the lessons as a whole. These reactions I then coded and searched for connections between the observations over time. Figure 4.5 shows which themes were most common, including the time period when they most came up. The overwhelming majority of my reactions had to do with the writing mini-lesson, and more specifically a connection to the writing process or to specific strategies. In other words, I would redirect student comments to make a connection with their writing. Another important area included connections either to their or my experience, attempting to ground the material in a familiar context. Finally, there were my observations to myself about success or struggles I was having as a teacher during a lesson, most notably having to do with engaging critical thinking and getting students to write expository texts. These observations provide a guide to how I responded to students during a lesson in my thinking, my words and in my actions.

Reflective journals

Although student writing and classroom discussion observations suggested that explicit instruction was benefiting student learning, it still did not lead me in finding how it did this. I needed a deeper exploration of my own teaching not only to finder more concrete links between instruction and learning, but also to explore some of the issues that surround the use of explicit instruction in my writing classroom. A qualitative study of my reflective journals provide that depth. It was through my reflective journals that I made the cognitive link between student learning as evidenced by their writing and my

instruction as evidenced by my lesson observations. By studying how I went about thinking about their learning, reflecting what I knew and felt about instructional theory and planning for the instructional future, I could observe the patterns and issues that arose around my attempts to make links between critical explicit instruction and effective student learning about writing and critical literacy.

The two biggest issues that emerged from my teaching were how to help students transition from narrative to explicit texts and how to more effectively teach critical skills so that students could write more critical essays. My struggles with teaching critical thinking started the second week and continued throughout the study with personal successes being met with further challenges. My fascination with expository writing culminated in the fifth and sixth week when it eclipsed every other topic in my journal. Figure 4.6 tracks the most prevalent issues on a weekly basis and how often I expressed a comment concerning these issues during that week. Aside from these teaching points, other key issues included effective teaching strategies, critical action and how to teach conventions.

Figure 4.6 – Total number of comments in the reflective journal concerning each coded category

Code category	Critical thinking	Expository writing	Effective teaching strategies	Critical Action	Conventions	Other
Week most common	3	5	8	5	7	2
# of comments	83	72	48	33	28	23

Integrating the data

By following the themes that emerged from the teacher journal and integrating it with the observations and writing samples, I was able to observe two processes. First, the process of how I made my decisions for explicit writing instruction, for the writing samples and observations were the key ways in which I monitored my students and that influenced my reflections concerning my teaching. And second, I am able to step away and monitor the validity and reasons that I took the instructional decisions that I did. By using the teacher journal and its thematic codes as a guide, I can integrate the data to provide a more holistic picture of my explicit, critical writing instruction.

Critical thinking skills

The first theme that occurred in my writings and continued throughout the study had to do with teaching critical thinking skills. Although the focus of the reflections changed throughout the study, concerns over my critical instruction surfaced again and again. For example, in the first week, I saw fifteen different comments, well above the second most theme that concerned complaints about testing taking writing time. Figure 4.7 tracks the different comments about critical instruction and when I made them in the study. In general my focus followed from concerns whether I was teaching my students critical thinking skills to concerns about the effectiveness of the assessment tool to discussions concerning the more explicit tool and its affect on students. Not until the fifth week do comments change to designing more effective lessons and student achievement.

If we follow the Bloom's assessment scores, we can see how writing scores were affecting my reflections. Using my initial Bloom's scale, no change is visible until the

Figure 4.7 – Most common teacher journal codes

Code category	Expos. writing	Beyond know-ledge	Evalu-ative stra-tegies	Context	Bloom Use	Other	Bloom effect?
Week most common	4	5	8	6	1	3	2
# of comments	24	17	15	11	6	5	4

seventh week, but if we use the more explicit scale, we can see students start to use a greater diversity of cues as early as the second week (Figure 4.3). Once I start to use the more explicit scale, students begin to use even more cues and their growth is even visible using the most general taxonomy. My observations mirror this analysis (Figure 4.5). Students' comments concerning cues show up throughout the study, but when I start to observe and respond to them more and more between the second and fifth week, their number of critical comments dramatically rises.

A particularly good example of this process is seen near the end of the study when we switch from expository texts to letter writing. As early as the fifth week, I write, "I could do so much with these letters: order, analyze, relate knowledge, but mostly apply their old writing skills. But shouldn't I be focusing on creative action?" I was already starting to integrate the more specific skills into the curriculum, and was instead focusing on what to teach how. My main concern became whether students would be able to learn higher cognitive levels if they had not shown me a grasp of lower ones. I went ahead and

taught persuasive letters focusing on seeing different perspectives and making arguments. By using a more explicit assessment tool, I was able to see and teach more explicit skills.

Expository writing

The theme that had the most comments during one time period was expository writing when I was most frustrated about students' inability to show me in expository writing what they had shown me in narrative writing. This led to longer journals, especially the fourth week, where I wrote 24 longer comments trying to view the issue from as many perspectives as possible (Figure 4.7).

Although I would try many strategies, from more explicit teaching to comparing narrative writing samples, the one with which I gave most energy was reading more expository texts using topics they were familiar with and then making explicit connections to their expository writing. The reasons for this switch emerge from my observations and field notes. After I read 'La tienda', I began a more lively discussion with students. As I started to focus both my morning messages and read alouds to topics with which they were more familiar, the number and depth of comments began to rise (Figure 4.4). Although they were discussing the expository skills, these skills did not appear in their writing until I made explicit connections of the reading to their writing in the fourth week (Figure 4.2). By facilitating and observing student literacy discussions, I was able to find the strategies that helped me best facilitate student growth.

Effective Teaching Strategies: The Convention Debate

Near the end of the study, first grade met as a team to discuss our writing bringing our writing samples. We found that although all students had an excellent grasp of conventions, only my students had advanced tremendously in their writing content. While

other teachers took away from our sharing the need to write daily on subjects with which students were familiar, this prompted me to reexamine my teaching for how I taught conventions and how I taught content. Figure 4.6 shows how concerns over effective strategies and conventions dominate my last two weeks of the study.

By the beginning of my study, most of my students had mastered their use of conventions in their writing, receiving the highest score on the rubric (Figure 4.3). For this reason, I made comments in my journal early in the study that I would no longer focus on conventions, but rather on the other five parts of the rubric that we called 'content'. But as I sat in that meeting, I realized that I never exclusively focused on conventions within my writing lessons, but always put it within the context of whatever mini-lesson I was teaching. This led me to reexamine my data to see if I was still doing that for the students who were still working on convention. Sure enough, in both observations and reflections, I was noting that certain students had still not mastered certain conventions, and was making notes to include that in the lesson by either making a small note of that rule in the reading or writing, by reminding that student before he/ she went to write or discussing it during a conference. I also noted that I reviewed criterion charts regularly, two to three times a week, in which I included the expectation of regularly using conventions. Although conventions were not a focus of my instruction, I still continued to meet the needs of those students who needed it.

This focus on conventions led to a review of all the writing strategies that I mentioned throughout the study; in lesson plans, observation and journals. An important point here is that I made this review within my teacher journal before the study was finished in order to inform my own teaching, and not for the purposes of the study. Figure

4.9 tabulates the result. During this time period I was most concerned with explicit think alouds, conferences, criterion charts and contextualized literacy. I then reviewed each strategy and questioned whether it was an integral part of instruction, whether it could be improved, or whether I should maybe use it less. I concluded that think alouds were essential because they made explicit connections for students on how to think about learning and even how to explicitly do some skills, from writing a letter to organizing a persuasive essay. By taking a more thorough review of my own writing instruction, I was able to note and reflect on the effective strategies I was already using and change them accordingly.

Summary

The data shows that student writing improved while I used explicit instruction. Students' narrative and expository writing scores grew when graded on the district writing rubric. Student discussions also became more explicit as the study progressed. Finally, I explored a variety of issues concerning my own explicit instruction throughout this study. There were also correlations between the themes I explored, student discussions and student writing, since my reflections influenced my plans which influenced student writing, which once again influenced my reflections. Thus, by just focusing on explicit instruction, I was able to change all aspects of my teaching.

Chapter 5

Conclusions: Learning Context

By focusing on student writing and my teaching process, I was able to explore many issues that surrounded my own explicit instruction. Of most immediate value were the issues concerning the teaching of critical thinking skills and expository writing because they had an immediate impact on student learning, but broader issues of student-teacher dialogue and effective writing instruction also impacted my teaching both in the short term and in the long term. The data show many positive effects of explicit teaching, but the exact process of how this occurs is beyond this study. Instead the data highlighted more significant issues about how both a critical and explicit perspective effects how I think about teaching.

Providing a context for expository writing

One of the over arching themes throughout the study was the necessity to provide sufficient context to my students for their learning. Although this was seen in many contexts, it first became a central issue to me while I was trying to introduce expository writing skills to my students. As I mentioned in the analysis, it wasn't until I read expository texts that were situated within the students' worlds and then made explicit connections between the texts and their writing, did I begin to see growth in my students' expository writing ability. This example provides three separate examples of the importance of context for first graders and it wasn't until I combined all three kinds of context that my students began their greatest growth.

First, I had to contextualize literacy within their personal worlds. Banks (1993), Cummins (1996) (and many others) refer to this as providing a cultural context, and in my case I had to focus my study of the community on an urban school. Earlier, I had read about fire men and fire women, doctors and a rural school, but nothing sparked discussion like Mi primer dia de escuela (My first day of school – 36 comments by students). Not only was this a familiar shared reading, but also most students remembered what it felt like to be a first grader at the beginning of school in a bilingual classroom. Other texts that shared similar reactions included 'La tienda' (the store), 'El parque' (the park) and 'En mi familia' (My family). On the other hands, some texts really interested some students and not others, such as 'La biblioteca' (The library) and 'Amigos (Friends)'. Not all students are going to recognize all expository contexts, but I made sure that all students related to at least one text.

Table 5.1- Plans of book themes read in 3rd – 6th weeks

Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
school community home family	home comm. places and helpers (where I live)	comm. places and helpers (docter, police, firemen)	comm. places and helpers (library, school)

Once students had enough experience with expository texts with which they could relate, I could then start reintroducing them to other texts that they at first found little to talk about. 'Bomberos y bomberas (Firemen and women)' was particularly popular the second time around, and so I was able to follow with new books from the same series

including 'Doctores y doctoras' and 'Enfermeros y enfermeras' (See Table 5.1- Plans of book themes read in 3rd – 6th weeks). Reading the book several times certainly helped students become familiar with expository texts, but even new expository texts far from their experiences became accessible once they became familiar with some of the norms of expository language. First though, they had to have an expository text within their cultural framework that provided a doorway into the norms of expository texts.

Most students did not pick up the norms of expository texts on their own. This was one role of explicit language. This was brought to my attention when on reading, 'El parque', a student raised their hand to note "Like the other book..." She had found a pattern in the organization of both books that used a child to explore both the store and the park. In making this explicit connection between books of the same genre, Cox (1999) argues that you are making a literary context for their writing. It was to this context that I found that my students needed most exposure. It was a combination of reading up to five or six expository texts a day and then helping the students make the explicit connections between the books that raised the level of student dialogue.

Once student dialogue switched from "I know that subject" to "I recognize that writing element", students level of expository writing jumped up. Erins (1999), writing in the same book titled the Reading Writing Connection, writes of creating a literacy context where the reading-writing connection is so explicit that students can easily jump from reading to writing to reading again automatically. In order to do this, students need to be able to talk about the explicit connections between thinking, reading and writing. In this case, the key step for my students was becoming familiar with the expository genre of literacy. It was in our discussions about expository texts that we made the connections

between how authors think about writing their texts, thus providing the foundation for an easy transition to my students growing in their expository text writing.

In the end, I had to provide a cultural/personal, a genre and a literary context for my students to successfully have access to expository writing. Explicit teaching played an important role in this process, for most students did not understand the norms of expository writing until I explicitly pointed them out. But the key point for me is that these explicit norms always emerged from a context they could understand and were never presented in isolation. As Wray and Lewis (1997) point out about expository writing, norms and organizers must always be placed within the context of effective literacy. In some cases, as this study points out, it might take the form of several contexts.

Conventions and effective teaching revisited

Discussing the danger of explicit teaching in isolation, this topic is most brought up when teaching conventions. Cunningham (2000) and Delpit (1995) most famously make the argument for explicit teaching in specific contexts, and against explicit teaching in isolation. Yet, as Krashen (1996) points out, that is difficult since isolated explicit teaching so dominated instruction when most teachers were being brought up that many teachers cannot separate explicit teaching from isolation. These arguments were of course brought up when my first grade team met to discuss our teaching, and we all admitted to doing a certain amount of our teaching of conventions in isolation. I, for instance, have students memorize the alphabet, their syllables and their high frequency words at the beginning of the year. It was this dissonance between this discussion and the theory of effective practice that led to my many reflections on conventions and effective practice.

The conclusions of my reflections emerged from my reexamination of my own effective strategies. As I mentioned earlier, I found that I was still teaching conventions to those that needed it, and even had conventions on a criterion chart I reviewed regularly with students. Most of my other examples of effective teaching were clearly taught in context, from one-one-one conferences about their writing to capitalization in the morning message, I generally discussed a convention based on its use on a piece of text we were already discussing. The criterion chart, at first glance, appears to be a different case since it lists what needs to be in writing on a separate list, devoid of any context. The criterion chart, as a teaching tool, is an important example because Resnick (1997) and Cunningham (1999), among others, name it as a key tool in explicit teaching. Criterion charts provide the students with the teacher's explicit expectations of their work. Reviewing my use of it, though, I realized that I made sure to always use it in a context. For example, I would reread our week's work, and then ask students what we need to remember to review. Out would come the criterion chart, and we would review our morning message together. If I only had students repeat the criterion chart, it would be no more than a list of rules and would not help student learning, but by making an explicit connection between the explicit suggestions that a criterion chart includes and literature, explicit teaching is given a context from which to learn. Much like the above example of expository text, it is important to make the rules of conventions explicit so that students are aware of those patterns, rules and uses, but it needs to be placed within the context of living language so that students can internalize the conventions into their own system of understanding the world. Otherwise, they are just useless rules.

My beginning of the year memorization of sounds, syllables and high frequency words treads in much murkier waters. My students learn these conventions within the context of morning messages and conferences, and I could certainly explicitly point out that Spanish has a system of sounds and patterned sounds called syllables to help students find these patterns. But my daily five minute listing of the sounds and high frequency words to help students memorize this pattern is certainly out of context and helps no one explicitly make a connection. That is to say, those five minutes are convention learning in complete isolation. One argument is that students need to know this system in order to progress in their literacy learning. In some respects, repeating the criterion charts in context helps students memorize what are my explicit expectations of their work. Secondly, while some students see syllabic patterns and memorize the sounds in context, some students need the repetition to memorize those patterns and be able to use it in their literacy growth. I defend my use of conventions because I see it helps students learn, but also realizing that most of my convention instruction is in context. At the same time, I realize that my reasoning could be used for further instruction in isolation that could end up harming student learning, so it is important that I not only examine my own methods of instruction (not only, but including critical instruction), but also the reasons why I choose to use those methods of instruction.

Higher cognitive learning levels

Another issue that came out of that first grade meeting was that one reason other teachers only covered conventions was because not all their students had mastered all aspects of conventions. Looking back, I realized that that was the case with my students

also, but that I still made a point to also focus my lessons on content. I was still covering conventions, but I was covering conventions and content. Not all my students were getting both the content and the conventions, but it allowed access to this academic content to many, and thus raised the academic expectations of the classroom.

I found a similar challenge when I approached the instruction of critical thinking skills. My students did not appear to be using their critical thinking in their writing, so I kept on trying to find different ways to teach the same skills. Once I found a more specific assessment tool, I found that my students had learned a variety of cues and I was stuck in the quandary of teaching the next stage of cognitive levels or following Ada's suggestions and attempting an action. As I mentioned earlier, when I taught the action, all students benefited tremendously and there was evidence of great jumps in the number of question cues students used in their writing. Much like the question of conventions versus content, the most effective answer was to do both for the betterment of all students.

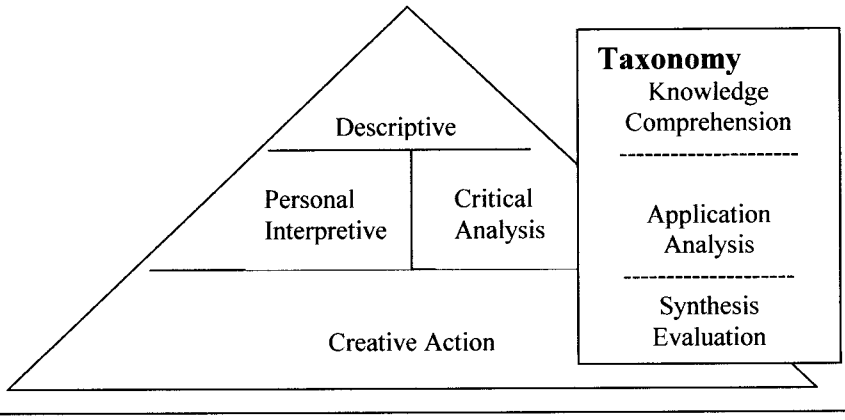
This example underlines a key point about teaching critical thinking skills. One needs to have explicit critical thinking objectives. In both my curriculum and in the beginning of the study, critical thinking objectives were too vague, and when I tried to teach these concepts, students were not sure what they were supposed to learn. Students cannot learn to acquire knowledge or ask descriptive questions, but rather they can learn mnemonic strategies for memorizing addition tables and using visualization techniques and evocative adjectives to describe their room. These are explicit strategies placed within students' familiar contexts.

Yet Ada (1988a) also warns about going too formulaic with thinking skills and providing them with a set pattern of questions and strategies that teaches them how to

think in a specific situation. Chaffee (1999) chooses a middle path when he describes a critical thinking process with which we need to become familiar in writing and practice in certain genres, but then also learn to use that strategy in as many contexts as possible. What Cummins (1996) calls moving from a context embedded situation to a context reduced situation.

Returning to Ada's (1988b) creative reading acts, her ideas seem to fit well with Bloom's taxonomy. Much like Scott (2003) overlaid Bloom's taxonomy on Cummins' grid, we can overlay Bloom's taxonomy on Cummins' (1996) interpretation of Ada's creative reading acts (see Figure 5.2). Each of Gynan's (2002) more extensive description of each level matches with Cummin's descriptions of Ada's phases. For example, knowledge and comprehension are part of Ada's descriptive phase, while application and analysis fit within Ada's personal interpretive and critical analysis phases and synthesis and evaluation fit within Ada's creative acts phase. Gynan's interpretation of Bloom's

Figure 5.2
Ada's Creative Reading Acts Alongside Bloom's Taxonomy



taxonomy provides a specific framework for guiding students in developing their cognitive ability, but Cummins and Ada provide a model for how my students acquired those abilities.

Ada's description of her phases as being concurrent and interwoven aptly describes how my students used the strategies outlined in Bloom's taxonomy. My students did not stick to one level of cognitive ability, but rather used a mixture of abilities (see Table 4.3). Although students' who used higher levels also strategies from lower levels, they did not seem to master any level before moving on to higher levels and sometimes even skipped levels on a new task. Thus, I didn't find Bloom's taxonomy to be an assessment tool where I could check off abilities students mastered and grade them at a certain level, but rather, as Banks (1993) points out, a guide that accomplished three important tasks. One, it helped me identify the strategies my students were using. Two, it helped me develop lessons which help students develop abilities at different levels. And three, it helped me teach explicitly those strategies students were missing.

Thus, my critical thinking objectives focused on those strategies students were not expressing, but at the same time addressed a variety of other strategies at a variety of differing levels to expose students to many strategies and address the needs of specific students. By observing further my instruction of Ada's creative action phase, this becomes clear. When I taught persuasive letters, I had one high expectation of teaching the ability to see and compare different points of view. By discussing why students like their favorite book, I taught students how to see different perspectives of 'favorite'. From there we went on different perspectives on which books should be in the library. In both instances students had to write their perspectives and the perspectives of other people. To

complete this assignment, some students simply stated different perspectives, while other students illustrated using examples, provided arguments, and some even had sophisticated evaluation systems to prove their point. All students had to learn the explicit expectation of expressing different perspectives, yet by studying this within a context that was accessible to them, students also had access to many other kinds of cues that demonstrate all levels of critical thinking skills.

It is for this jump in number of used strategies that Ada's model and critical theory in general is so powerful. As teachers, we are forced to have students act, and it is in that action that students best learn. Learning is the combination of praxis and reflection. It is this action which differentiates critical theory from other theoretical perspectives, and I found that my students were forced to have high expectations, had a real situation for learning, and were exposed to a greater variety of learning situations when they were forced to act and reflect on those actions. In this way, Ada's creative reading acts were a success. This success was due to two concepts. One, I had a high expectation of my students to learn higher order thinking skills and academic skills. And two, I provided explicit instruction within a context my students understood. Once again, explicit instruction within a high academic context provided the framework for rigorous academic learning.

Contexts of further study

The key for my explicit instruction was paying careful attention to the context of instruction. As stated earlier, this study does not purport to prove that explicit instruction raises student writing scores, but rather explores how my instruction was affected by my

exploration of explicit instruction, especially as it relates to expectations and strategies. There were several issues that I was hoping to address that I was not able to address in this study, but that instead led me to other conclusions.

A good example is the issue of whether explicit instruction is an effective method of instruction of writing for working class students of color. I was hoping to learn with which strategies explicit instruction worked best and to some how prove the effectiveness of being explicit, but in both counts this study falls short. Although students' writing scores rise, as I pointed out earlier, there is no direct correlation between instruction and students' learning. In table 4.2, students' scores do not rise in any pattern after instruction. Some rise directly after instruction, while others rise a few weeks after instruction. Krashen (1996) would argue that with enough exposure and practice, students' literacy abilities, including writing, would improve. What the study did suggest was that by teaching writing and critical thinking skills explicitly in context, my students' writing improved *faster* than isolated or general instruction. I am still interested in studying explicit instruction within specific strategies, but in order to do that I would have to focus in on one strategy and either do a qualitative study with a greater depth of data (either by doing a longer study or videotaping lessons) or do a carefully controlled comparative analysis with a larger student sample.

The size of my sample greatly limited the conclusions I could draw. I chose a small sample so that I could have greater depth of data, but it left other interests of mine unanswered. I purposefully chose a diverse sample with both boys and girls and even distribution of writing abilities to find out if explicit instruction affected literacy gender gaps or the diverse abilities one always finds in a classroom. In fact, the sample did not

reflect my classroom since the below grade level group was twice as over presented in the sample (1/3 as opposed to 1/6 of my classroom) and the at grade level group was under represented (1/3 as opposed to ½). This led to two major limitations of my study and thus, two area of further interest for me.

First, there was often a disconnect between my instruction and the perceived needs of this sample. For example, we never directly studied conventions during the study although the average convention score of the sample was comparable to the writing skills we did study. But this was only three of my nineteen students were below grade level with their conventions, but two of these three were in the sample, bringing the average down. By working with these students in conferences and reminding them with charts, I was able to meet their needs, as the sharp rise in their convention scores shows (Table 4.2). This slanted perception of my classroom persists throughout this table, with lesson objectives appearing to randomly meet with student needs. In fact though, my objectives were based on classroom needs, and not just on the needs of the sample. The importance of the table is that it shows how everyone benefited when I properly embedded instruction in the appropriate context or with the explicit instruction. My interest for further research would then explore a full class sample the intricate relationship between the teacher's perceived needs of a writing classroom, expecially when it comes to explicit assessment tools, and her plans and the students' writing.

The second area left unexplored is how explicit instruction affects different writing abilities and gender. This is because I only has two students of each general writing ability and three of each gender. To draw any conclusions for any category, I

would have to both have a much larger sample and have a more specific study that focused only on that subgroup with a greater depth of data.

Finally, the last area left unexplored were the specific strategies I used, especially student conferences. Although I am interested in all literacy strategies, and this study barely scratched the surface of many of them, both Wells (1999) and Graves (1994) point out the power of the dialogic nature of the writing conference. This study particularly ignored the writing conference because I did not have the instruments or focus to record these conferences. I find a great potential for powerful research in this area, especially in working class student of color sites, based on the findings of this study. It is particularly important to be explicit, context embedded and sensitive to students personal and cultural contexts when helping students advance during a one-on-one conference in bilingual first grade classrooms. Yet, if one can succeed here, providing effective, fast instruction, students' academic and personal learning could be greatly advanced.

Final Words: Explicit Instruction and Context Embedded Conferences

In some sense, the conference is a microcosm of the greater classroom, and I would expect much of my learnings from this study to hold true for conferences as well. As evidenced with my experience with Bloom's taxonomy, we need explicit assessment tools that provide specific areas of instruction yet are still broad enough to allow for student growth at all levels. Furthermore, since conferences are oral, it is in these exchanges that teachers can best learn about student thinking and guide them towards personal growth. At the same time, we can make sure that they are still getting the main goals that criterion charts and explicit objectives provide.

Secondly, the conferences, as did my teaching, needed to be grounded in the experiences of the students' learning contexts. I learned that these learning contexts encompass a broad gamut of personal, social and academic contexts. Conferences provide an excellent opportunity for us to make sure that learning is grounded in the personal context of student experience so that students understand academics in the framework of their own lives. We can come to understand their social and cultural contexts, helping them place academics and the social restructuring it implies within their own understanding of their sociocultural worlds. Finally, we must find a way to understand their cognitive and academic framework of instruction and help them grow and acquire both state standards and academic critical awareness within that framework. As Cummins (1996) points out, it is not only a continuous process of leading students from context embedded learning to context reduced learning, but teaching students to embed their learning not only in their concrete worlds, but in more abstract, cognitive worlds that become academic contexts. Context reduced academics thus becomes, with familiarity, a context in which they can embed new learning. It is by explicitly describing, explaining and expecting the acquisition of academic tools that teachers allow students the freedom to place academic learning within their own contexts and thus provide the necessary tools and foundation for later academic success.

Appendix A: District Writing Rubric

1º grado

Nombre del estudiante: _____ Maestro(a): _____ Fecha: _____ Calificación: _____

	Excelente—4	Maestría—3	Mínimo—2	Por debajo de las expect.—1
Contenido/ Propósito	• Los elementos narrativos aparecen constantemente. • Presenta un cuento nuevo y original. • Los detalles están presentes y se desarrollan. • Puede corregir el significado con ayuda mínima del maestro.	• Imita los elementos de la narrativa. • Genera constantemente muchos temas. • Las ideas están presentes y se desarrollan. • Hay detalles presentes, pero no se han desarrollado. • El cuento permanece en el tema. • Puede corregir el significado con ayuda.	• Incluye algunos elementos narrativos. • Puede generar una lista corta de temas. • El propósito es generalmente claro. • El contenido se apega generalmente al tema. • Narra un cuento simple. • Corrige el significado con bastante ayuda del maestro.	• Incluye pocos o ningún elemento narrativo. • Intenta escribir acerca de un tema sugerido por un adulto. • La idea principal no es clara o es difícil de entender. • Corrige con el maestro como escritor.
Organización y estructura	• El cuento tiene un título original. • Las transiciones conectan las ideas principales. • El principio, medio y final están bien establecidos.	• El cuento tiene un título apropiado. • Intenta hacer transiciones de una oración a otra. • La secuencia es lógica. • El cuento tiene principio, medio y final.	• La historia quizá tiene un título. • Las transiciones son limitadas. • El cuento tiene buen principio; intenta desarrollar el medio y el final.	• Hay muy poca evidencia de organización del cuento. • Solo incluye palabras y frases.
Voz	• Hay relación con el tema. • Incluye sorpresas o cambios ocasionales. • Es individual y expresivo. • El diálogo, si se incluye, suena natural.	• Existe conocimiento del público. • Están presente energía y humor. • Podría haber diálogo.	• La manera en que se tratan los temas es predecible. • Existe alguna evidencia de "autor." • La expresión de los sentimientos es limitada.	• La narración es plana, cautelosa, "sin personalidad." • No hay conocimiento del público.
Opción de palabras: elaboración y apoyo	• Usa palabras descriptivas para crear imágenes (verbos, adjetivos, adverbios). • Hay buen uso de las palabras diarias. • Experimenta con palabras inusuales.	• Intenta seleccionar palabras para ser específico. • Uso correcto de las palabras diarias. • Usa palabras del vocabulario oral.	• Se conforma con palabras que "funcionan." • Usa palabras menos sofisticadas que el lenguaje oral.	• Uso de pocas palabras básicas. • El lenguaje es funcional.
Fluidez en los enunciados	• Las oraciones tienen ritmo y fluyen. • Las oraciones se pueden leer con expresividad y envolvimiento. • Usa de manera efectiva las oraciones simples y compuestas.	• Las oraciones suenan naturales. • Intenta desarrollar oraciones complejas. • El texto contiene oraciones simples y compuestas.	• Usa oraciones complejas. • Es funcional. • No todas las oraciones comienzan igual.	• Las oraciones son cortas. • El texto es difícil de leer. • La estructura es repetitiva.
Convenciones	• Uso consistente de una variedad de convenciones. • La mayoría de las palabras comunes están escritas correctamente. • Las palabras inusuales están escritas casi correctamente. • Experimenta con los párrafos. • Escribe en mayúsculas los sustantivos propios.	• Intenta usar la gramática estándar. • Usa puntuación final constantemente. • Usa ortografía convencional en palabras de uso frecuente (20+). • Experimenta con comas, guión largo. • Usa mayúsculas al principio de una oración.	• Uso frecuente de puntuación final, sin intentar usar ningún otro signo. • Uso inconsistente de letras mayúsculas. • Usa ortografía convencional en hasta 20 palabras de uso frecuente.	• Uso inconsistente de la puntuación final. • Usa ortografía convencional en hasta 10 palabras de uso frecuente. • Intenta usar letras mayúsculas.

Appendix B: Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Levels of Learning

(Adapted from Gynan, 2002; Bloom, 1956)

Bloom's Taxonomy identifies **levels of cognitive learning**. These levels are arranged from mental functions that are simpler to those that are more complex. Following each level there are examples of the kinds of activities that involve each level of learning.

Knowledge

the lowest level of learning, often ridiculed as being boring and of little worth; nevertheless, being able to list, order, memorize (see handout on strategies) or repeat are all basic cognitive functions; in isolation this kind of cognitive learning is of questionable use; gifted math students show knowledge of procedures even in the absence of content, an indication that knowledge is a necessary prerequisite to higher levels of learning ; the same may be true for language learning: the basics of grammar must be controlled before progressing to higher levels of content; the teacher must learn to present these basics in an interesting way by embedding orderly lists of words and grammatical paradigms in a communicative context

(listing, memorizing, ordering, repeating, identifying, labeling, collecting, examining, tabulate, quoting)

Comprehension

this level of cognitive functioning is of considerable interest to facilitators of second language acquirers (formerly known as teachers), but while comprehensible input is essential for successful language learning, the activity is still at a low cognitive level; descriptions of paragraph length and narration in the past, present, and future are identified by ACTFL as advanced language functions

(describing, discussing, explaining, identifying, locating, narrating recognizing, selecting, translating, classifying)

Application

this involves a number of commonly used language learning activities, especially demonstrating , dramatizing (the use of skits is a testing technique used during oral proficiency interviews), interpreting, and writing of compositions; games and tests often involve choosing ; teachers often illustrate with pictures; a common technique for testing comprehension is to request that students sketch

(applying, choosing, demonstrating, dramatizing, illustrating, interpreting, solving, using, writing, sketching)

Analysis

this and the next two levels require language that is more complex and is therefore the activities listed are often not found in lower level second language classes; recent standards developed by ACTFL encourage contrast, comparison, and differentiation

(analyzing, appraising, calculating, comparing, contrasting, criticizing, differentiating, experimenting, questioning, testing)

Synthesis

use of collaborative techniques can facilitate synthesis; ACTFL performance assessment units emphasize these kinds of activities for language learning in a cooperative framework; students may be asked to make a class presentation on a country to which they want to travel; in order to carry out the project, the students must plan and manage their activities, assemble information, and create a design a presentation

(arranging, assembling, composing, constructing, creating, designing, developing, formulating, managing, planning)

Evaluation

the highest level of cognitive learning presents many of the hallmarks of language function at the superior level, using ACTFL terminology; learners at that level must be able to use the second language to hypothesize and support opinion; these kinds of cognitive function require irrealis mood (subjunctive, potential, hypothetical, and conditional moods); even at a simple level of language, however, students can use simple tenses to predict actions or states in the future

(appraising, arguing, assessing, choosing, defending, estimating, judging, predicting, supporting, evaluating).

As with the six skills and the seven intelligences, the six levels of the texonomy provide you with the opportunity for ordered development over time with tremendous potential for a tremendous variety of student performance in class.

Appendix C: Observation Guide

Date _____ Thematic Focus _____

Writing Objective: _____ Critical Thinking Objective: _____

Other Objectives: _____

Objective Notes: _____

		Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6
Comments	Writing						
	Thinking						
Writing	Writing						
	Thinking						
Notes							

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