Summer 2019

Enhancing Writer's Voice in Argumentative and Expository Essay Writing Using the Embedded Voice Technique

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ENHANCING WRITER'S VOICE IN
ARGUMENTATIVE AND EXPOSITORY ESSAY WRITING
USING THE EMBEDDED VOICE TECHNIQUE

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education in

Curriculum and Instruction

College of Education

University of South Carolina

2019

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this endeavor to my family with whom I was lucky enough to be blessed. To my mother who inspired me to read and write even when I thought it was not "cool;" to my father, who helped to give me the competitive nature to succeed; to my brothers who always challenged me, even though they did not realize it; to my stepfather and stepmother, who were always supportive of all of my endeavors.

I would also like to dedicate this to all of my grandparents. Although they are not here to see this achievement, they were all instrumental in preparing me for life by inspiring me to be my best.

I would also like to dedicate this to one student in particular, Morgan, the inspiration for this research. Your former struggles with writing, despite your ability, were due to your shaken confidence. You inspired me to do more so that I could help others like you. It is because of you that many will prosper in the future.

Finally, I want to dedicate this to my wife, Stefanie, who has been with me throughout my educational experiences. We have graduated together with all of our degrees, and without her support, guidance, and ability to structure and schedule life, I would not have made it through my master's, let alone, this doctoral, program. She believed in me even when I did not believe in myself, and she is truly the foundation on which my life is built. I cannot imagine having attempted any of this without her by my side.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this action research study was to examine the impact that the Embedded Voice Technique of writing instruction had on one's writer's voice. The teacher-researcher posits that voice is not an individual component of writing, but rather a culmination of multiple components of writing; it is the sum of parts rather than a part in and of itself. The study took place in an English 3-Honors class with nine randomly chosen participants over an eight-week period. Data were collected using a variety of data collection instruments. Pre and post-treatment Likert scale surveys determinee participants' dispositions regarding writing. Pre and post-treatment questionnaires generated additional insights. Pre and post-treatment interviews were established from the questionnaire responses and teacher-researcher interest. Participant artifacts were collected throughout the study. These were the result of guided practice activities that were designed to intentionally build voice in student writing and were assessed and peer-reviewed using a teacher-researcher created essay rubric. The final data-collection tool utilized was teacher-researcher observations. As a result of the study, findings support the claim, that the Embedded Voice Technique can enhance writer's voice and links writing ability and writer's voice to writing confidence/efficacy and peer interactions.

Keywords: writer's voice, writing confidence, writing efficacy, student writing, essay writing, writing instruction, peer interactions, grouping, high school, secondary English, writing practice.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCSS ....Common Core State Standards

EOC...End of Course Exam

EVT ....Embedded voice technique

MLA ....Modern Language Association

SCCCRS.......................................South Carolina College and Career Readiness Standards

TDA ....Text-Dependent Analysis

WAT..Writing Apprehension Test (Daly-Miller Test)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

For decades, writing performance by students has been of great concern for educators (Enos, 1985; The Committee of Ten, 1894; Wilcox, 2015). Students often struggle with writing fluency (Atasoy & Temizkan, 2016), a misconception of how to apply rhetoric (Enos, 1985; Hasani, 2016; Saidy & Early, 2016), and a reduced level of motivation (Cocuk et al., 2016; Rook, 2012; Schoeffel et al., 2011). These challenges have often been identified as areas of concern, and each of these connects to one common cause: students' struggle to develop a strong writer's voice.

Historically, formal writing instruction focused primarily on grammar and mechanics, proper methods of writing, and strategies to help students achieve these ends (Enos, 1985; Gilbert, 2016; The Committee of Ten, 1894; Thompson, 2011). This "prescriptive and product-centered" (Smith, 2000, p. 1) approach dominated writing instruction for over half a century and finally gave way in the 1970s as "the dominant theory of writing instruction began [to shift] from [the traditional emphasis on grammar and mechanics] toward an emphasis on the writing process and all its complexity" (McCarthey, 1990, p. 1). In other words, educators and researchers realized that rather than focusing on a product that is specific to one domain, students should learn a process that transcends the ELA classroom so that writing may be used effectively in other content areas. However, the previous experience of teachers manifested in the continued

focus on what they had learned themselves: the traditional belief that strong conventions define good writing (McCarthey, 1990).

Today, the focus on strong conventions established decades ago continues to be the main focus for writing in many English classrooms. Teachers often find themselves grading more for appropriate syntax, grammar, and mechanics than on the process of the writing, the outcome of the final product relative to the thought and analysis put in by the student, and the way it "sounds" when it is read (Enos, 1985; Gilbert, 2016; Thompson, 2011). In turn, students have learned to fear the complexities of grammar and spelling and do not realize that writing is more than an amalgamation of errors; it is their "ability to say…with clarity and economy and grace, precisely what [they] want to say" (Payne, 1965, p. 11). Teachers can empower students by showing them that writing is an organic creation that is not easily quantified; writing can be interesting. Teachers can begin to remove the fear of writing that students often face by enhancing the intangibles of writing that are often elusive during writing instruction.

Problem of Practice

My experience as a classroom teacher has revealed that many students believe that writing is similar to a scientific procedure that can be replicated at any time in any place; it has a "right" and a "wrong" with which they are all too familiar. For my students, writing has become a means to an end. Many are scared to the point of immobility and regress to the most basic form of writing they know: a five-paragraph essay in which they attempt to focus more on the right and wrong aspects of grammar and mechanics (Oral communication, class discussion, 2017). Their fear has turned writing into something students detest; they see no reason for it, neither in the present nor in their

future. What may appear to teachers as "apathetic performance" is actually a result of their dire outlook on writing. Sadly, student performance may have been inadvertently fostered by previous classroom experiences in which the focus leaned heavily towards conventions.

Although writing is a nation-wide concern, my experience at Riverside High School (pseudonym) has revealed that students have a particularly difficult time transcending their past writing experiences and often do not believe that they can become more proficient writers. The students I teach range from struggling 11th grade juniors to advanced 10th grade sophomores and 11th grade juniors. Yet, regardless of their level, they all have similar stories upon entering my classroom. According to them, they have not written anything substantial in years. They tell me that they feel overwhelmed, underprepared, and unintelligent based on their past experiences. They know that something is missing from their writing, but they do not know what it is. They dread upcoming writing assignments and the time that will be spent on them, all while expecting to receive a bad grade (Greene, 2016).

Given the historical emphasis on grammar and mechanics by many teachers, final drafts of initial student essays often have significant lapses; many will have only one paragraph, few will have an identifiable thesis, and typically, none will have transitions that are not stock, clichéd expressions. The vocabulary used is often simplistic, as is their sentence structure. Fragments are common, and the few that try to make longer sentences in an effort to make their writing "better" often have run-ons, sometimes for a page. These areas of difficulty for students seem to be the result of the intense focus on grammatical and mechanical errors that has permeated writing instruction for years, a

focus that has proven ineffective for bettering student writing ability. Therefore, the time

has come to shift the writing paradigm from one that focuses on the nuances of

conventions to one that focuses on enhancing the writer's voice.

Research Question

What impact will the Embedded Voice Technique have on the improvement of

one's writer's voice in a 10th and 11th grade English 3-Honors class at Riverside High

School?

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of the Embedded Voice

Technique on one's writer's voice in a 10th and 11th grade English 3-Honors class at

Riverside High School.

For the purposes of this study, the Embedded Voice Technique is defined as a

process of writing instruction and practice that enhances the various components of

writing to achieve an increase in overall voice. By enhancing students' abilities regarding

the components of writing (see page 13), students learn how to reconstruct their writing

in a manner that advances their writer's voice.

Moreover, writer's voice is defined as a construct derived from the combined

attributes of all components of writing; therefore, it cannot be isolated. Writer's voice

must be measured as a result (average) of the quality of the individual aspects of writing.

(For more detailed definitions, see the definition of terms beginning on page 13.)

Researcher Positionality

As a teacher, I have struggled to help students reach higher levels of writing

ability, often watching passively as students struggle to grasp the demands of

increasingly difficult classes. Such passive observation of their struggle has bothered me. Every year, students prove that they have the cognitive ability that is required to write well, but something happens as their pencil touches the paper. Their thoughts are seemingly inaccessible, though I know they are present. For some reason, there is a disconnect between their minds and hands. I have searched to find a way to help my students overcome this disconnect so that they write as well as they think, and over time, I have developed strategies that seem to have aided students in the past: The Embedded Voice Technique.

Although many have previously noted that voice is something innate that cannot be taught, I disagree; therefore, I developed this technique to support my unique belief that voice is not an isolated part of writing but is a synthesis of all of its components. Based on my critical deconstruction of my own writing and the writing of others, I contend that writer's voice is found in the connections that lie among each component of writing as each contributes to the piece as a whole. In other words, writer's voice is generated by the relationship among components within a given piece of writing. My belief is that if students master the many individual components of writing, voice can be bolstered. The Embedded Voice Technique explains to students how they can develop the components with which they are already familiar to establish their own voice as a writer.

In an effort to determine the impact of the Embedded Voice Technique, this study was conducted as "an intentional, systematic, and purposeful inquiry…[u]sing an organized process of collecting and analyzing information…[to] understand a phenomenon" (Efron & Ravid, 2013, pp. 2-3). For this reason, the most effective

researcher is the teacher who must plan the study from inception to conclusion, though the cyclical nature of action research suggests that there is no real end but rather a new direction in which to go (Efron & Ravid, 2013; Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2015; Mertler, 2014). With this in mind, action research best accomplished the task of studying EVT, as it is the teacher-researcher's belief that writing education can only be enhanced through "inquiry done by… [an] insider" (Efron & Ravid, 2013).

For this study, a mixed-methods approach was used to allow the teacher-researcher to acquire both quantitative and qualitative data from data collection instruments. Quantitive data came from analytic rubric scores and Likert scale survey scores. These two were used as a means to assess subjective material in an objective manner. These data were used to calculate increases in writer's voice and participant dispositions throughout the study (see Voice Calculation in the Definition of Terms). Qualitative data were obtained from questionnaire responses, participant interviews, participant journals, and teacher-researcher observations (Efron & Ravid, 2013).

In action research, a teacher-researcher must fulfill multiple roles throughout the research process. This means that the researcher must be an insider, working within the study as not only an observer, but as an active participant who influences the outcome. The teacher-researcher is the person responsible for guiding participants through the treatment while ensuring that they benefit from the experience; therefore, his actions affect the outcome (Efron & Ravid, 2013; Herr & Anderson, 2015; Mertler, 2014). It is the responsibility of the teacher-researcher to determine what constitutes change, to develop instruments for data collection and analysis, to execute data collection and analysis, and to ensure that every aspect of the research is conducted in a manner to

protect the study's validity (Efron & Ravid, 2013; Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2015; Mertler, 2014).

Methodology

Throughout the eight-week study, the teacher-researcher employed a variety of quantitative and qualitative research measures. Initial data were acquired using two pre-instruction Likert scale surveys, a questionnaire, a diagnostic essay, and pre-treatment interviews with participants. Although all surveys focused on participant perceptions of and feelings toward writing, open-ended questions on the questionnaire and in interviews allowed participants to explain how and why their perceptions toward writing exist. Quantitative data regarding their current ability was gathered using a previously designed rubric to limit subjectivity, while qualitative data were acquired from individual and group interviews and teacher-researcher observations.

Procedures

At the onset of the treatment, participants composed an essay for diagnostic purposes and completed the pre-treatment surveys, questionnaire, and interview. Upon beginning explicit writing instruction, a new pattern for introductory paragraphs and thesis statements was introduced and modeled. The next step instructed participants on blending body paragraphs together with purposeful transitions rather than using stock phrases on which they typically rely. Participants also integrated embedded quotes into body paragraphs. After this, the teacher-researcher instructed participants on writing conclusions that are well developed and that adequately accent the writing. All phases of the teaching process followed the teacher model, pair model, self-produce paradigm.

Once these phases were completed, participants wrote an essay that served as a benchmark for progress and a model for revision. Participants revised their essays multiple times with peer input prior to submitting their final draft. The teacher-researcher assessed the essays, adding comments in areas that could be modified for clarity so that participants had a model to follow on subsequent essay. Two follow-up essays were conducted in the same manner. After submitting the last one, participants completed post-treatment surveys and interviews regarding the experience.

Data collection

Data collection was conducted weekly throughout the study. Initial data used surveys, interviews, and data from the essay rubric to determine where participants began in terms of writing ability, both real (with the essays and rubric) and perceived (using the surveys and questionnaire). Subsequent data were collected via observation notes and participant samples. Data for all essays were collected and rudimentarily assessed prior to the next essay assignment to ensure that participants were able to see where corrections to their writing could enhance their voice.

Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted throughout the process, though data were not analyzed in-depth until the end of the study. Initial survey data and data from the diagnostic essay helped determine the participants' needs for writing instruction and their desire to enhance their writing. As additional data became available, the data were coded by the teacher-researcher and entered into a spreadsheet for analysis. The teacher-researcher identified trends in the data, such as increased or decreased confidence,

willingness to experiment with new syntax and diction, and feelings in regard to participants' abilities and products before, during, and after the study.

Significance of the Study

This study has clear professional applications. As writing generally, and voice specifically, is often viewed as difficult to teach, any means of teaching writing that has beneficial results, especially results that indicate an increase in writer's voice, would be welcomed by teachers in all grade levels. However, this study focuses on secondary English education. Current trends in South Carolina educational policy mandate testing in "text-dependent analysis" (TDA) through written expression on end-of-course English exams. Additionally, state policy requires all third year students to take a test for college readiness (the SAT or the ACT), each of which has a writing section that uses textual analysis. This study, based on response to texts, may serve as an integral supplement to current methods of preparation for such tasks.

Additionally, literature reveals a dearth of studies or guides that focus on secondary education. For this reason, the findings of this study are of particular interest to secondary ELA teachers. This study provides a means to better understand the needs of students while exploring different methods that may offer a solution for teachers going forward. Although the intent of this study is the generation of knowledge, and it is not intended to demonstrate external validity, the teacher-researcher's hope is that findings will help teachers to have a point from which to begin teaching students to write with enhanced voice.

There is also the potential for great social benefit from this study. Wilcox (2015) has found that "[t]he majority of high school graduates do not exhibit the ability to

accomplish the communicative purpose of their writing" (p. 243). While this is true as a whole, gaps in performance further separate students along socio-economic lines, particularly for students from ethnic and linguistic minorities or for students who are not native English speakers (Wilcox, 2015). "Writing has [also] been recognized as an important component of preparing middle and high school students to engage in the more advanced, discipline-specific discourse required in and beyond high school" (Wilcox, 2015, p. 243). In other words, writing proficiency equates to future success, and currently all students, particularly those who have historically struggled, may face great difficulties if some intervention does not occur. Wilcox (2015) further explains that "[r]esearch has indicated that developing students' abilities to successfully perform [writing] tasks during adolescence can have a considerable impact on their academic trajectories" (p. 244). Therefore, teachers must do more to ensure that students have an equitable education and are adequately prepared for their futures. Writing can accomplish this task; it transcends social restrictions and is the key to unlocking their future (Wilcox, 2015).

Writing ability may also affect students' future employability as well. In a 2004 study conducted by College Board entitled "Writing: A ticket to work…or a ticket out," 120 American corporations stated that "writing is a 'threshold skill' for both employment and promotion" and that "people who cannot write and communicate clearly will not be hired and are unlikely to last long enough to be considered for promotion" (College Board, 2004, p. 3). In fact, writing is so vital that corporations spend "$3.1 billion annually" (College Board, 2004, p. 29) to simply train employees to write appropriately. Such a revelation exposes the insignificant instruction and writing ability with which

students are leaving educational institutions nationwide as well as the potential cost in employment based on skills that were instructed but not acquired.

What is clear is that students must learn to harness their writer's voice. This is the key to good, well-developed writing, and writing is the key to their future. By helping students enhance their voice, teachers will not only raise the level of writing in their classroom but will help students overcome years of writing oppression, whether perceived or real; as they do this, students will gain confidence and perform in a manner that surpasses the expectations of their teachers, their parents, and themselves. Enhancing voice will open pathways that students currently do not know exist.

Limitations and Potential Weaknesses of the Study

This study has limitations that should be mentioned in order to provide the most transparent account possible. One weakness of this study is the sample. The study was conducted using an English 3-Honors class. This class represents high-achieving students within their respective grade levels. Most have aspirations of continuing to AP classes and attending universities upon graduation, so their ability to learn quickly, as well as to infuse new concepts into their work, must be noted. Although the small sample size of nine participants from one class, along with the limited, eight-week duration of the study, are not necessarily limitations, the small sample size does signify that generalizations cannot be made (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

Additionally, it must also be noted that writing assessment tends to be subjective in nature; what one teacher deems acceptable or exceptional may be shunned by another. To account for this, all essay writings were scored using a rubric alongside a peer in an effort to ensure that data were correctly attained. Although rubrics are often speculative

in nature, they are the most effective methods for assessing subjective materials to date (Skelton, Rogers, Ellis, & Lyles, 2014). As Kohn (2006) suggests, rubrics attempt to make precise determinations of imprecise data. Put another way, rubrics attempt to make the subjective aspects of assessment objective to ensure equity among students (Turgut & Kayaoglu, 2015). Additionally, essays were assessed using a concept derived by College Board: if more than a one point discrepancy between scores is found, the teacher-researcher and his peer discussed why the grade was chosen until a common point value can be assigned (College Board, 2006).

It should also be noted that throughout this study, additional, unassessed writing was assigned that may have affected the study's outcome. Participants were assessed using formal essays only; however, the teacher-researcher assigned additional writing pieces in class that were not evaluated for this study. As suggested by Gardner (2017), all writing, particularly low stakes writing, affects writing outcomes. Therefore, other practices within the classroom (and in other classes) that were not part of the treatment (those involving low stakes writing, for example) may have skewed outcomes of the research. Additional external factors, such as the participants' schedules outside of school, difficulties that arose at home, and potential student burn out (the time period of the study coincided with a variety of AP classes), should be noted since these may have affected the internal validity of the study.

<center>**Dissertation Overview**</center>

Chapter One of this dissertation explains the need for this study, offering context from today's classrooms and experts in writing education as support. It explains the alignment of the study with the research question, offers a general model of the

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methodology used, and offers potential implications that this study may have. Chapter Two focuses on literature regarding the topic of writing, writer's voice, and student confidence from a variety of researchers in the fields of education, writing, and psychology. This research showcases the connection between the teaching of writing, participant perceptions regarding writing, and the outcome of such variables on participant products. Chapter Three begins with an overview of the setting of the study before leading into a more refined explanation of the methods used and a justification of such methods. Chapter Four offers the findings of the study with interpretation of the data acquired. Chapter Five examines the implications of the research findings, makes recommendations for additional future research, and develops a plan for disseminating the information deduced from this study to other teachers of writing.

Definition of Terms

Accuracy – Describes the frequency of grammatical and mechanical mistakes in a given piece of writing (Atasoyo & Temizkan, 2016).

Audience – Those to whom a piece of writing is focused; the intended readers (Shea, Scanlon, & Aufses, 2008).

Components of Writing – These are the areas on which writing assessment is often based. The components of writing refer collectively to the introduction, the thesis, body paragraph development with embedded quotes and exceptional critical thinking, unique transitions that demonstrate high-level ability and generate a smooth flow, conclusions, enhanced diction, and complex syntax. Initially, the components were derived by decoding the holistic 2006 SAT Essay Rubric (College Board, 2006). However, components found in the initial rubric have been modified by the teacher-researcher to better approximate student writing

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ability and writer's voice for this study. Please see the rubric for additional explanations of what each component looks like (Appendix A).

Confidence – Confidence is seen as a short-term increase in a student's perception of his or her ability that, if nurtured, will lead to efficacy.

Critical Thinking – The process of interpreting the ideas of others through analytical evaluation of their writing, synthesizing these ideas, and relating the analysis back to a desired audience (Lane-Patrice, 2013; Zori, 2016).

Diction – The use of high level and specifically chosen vocabulary or phrases that either generates a stronger reaction from the audience or that enhances the fluidity of the writing (Shea, Scanlon, & Aufses, 2008).

Direct Instruction – Direct instruction is a form of instruction that is directed by the teacher. Direct instruction seeks to "teach generalized skills…that can be broadly applied" (Watkins & Slocum, 2003, pp. 75-76) to other situations. In this study, the nature of direct instruction is similar to the concepts described in explicit instruction given its systematic organization and focus on logically sequenced content (Archer, 2011).

Efficacy – A long-term increase in a student's perception of his or her ability that results from repeated enhancements to his or her confidence.

Embedded quotes – Textual evidence and quotations that are seamlessly blended into a sentence, the result of which makes it impossible to tell where the quote begins and ends when read aloud. The only way to identify the quote is to see it on the page. Embedded quotes greatly enhance writer's voice because they become part of the sentence into which they are written.

Embedded Voice Technique (EVT) – The Embedded Voice Technique is loosely based

on Process Writing Theory which instructs teachers to teach specific steps –

planning, prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing – for stronger writing

(Freedman & DiPardo, 2017; McCarthy, 2001; Smith, 2000). EVT goes further

and explains how each component of writing (see "Components of Writing," p.

13) both appears and fuses together within an essay so that students can write

stronger, more cohesive pieces with greater writer's voice. Rather than isolating

voice as its own entity, EVT develops voice throughout each component, so that

all combine to enhance voice.

The teacher-researcher posits that by supplying participants with

directions that explain how to strengthen isolated components of writing that are

found within their essays, then following instruction with intense practice, the

teacher-researcher was able to illustrate how and where small changes in

participant's writing would alter the overall sound and quality of their writing (see

Appendices K-P for details of instruction).

First Date Analogy – An analogy developed by the teacher-researcher and used to

demonstrate the purpose and structure of both an introduction and a conclusion.

For introductions: When you go to pick up you date, there is a certain protocol

you (should) follow. You park your car, walk up to the door, ring the door bell,

and wait. You greet the person that answers the door respectfully and introduce

yourself. You offer the father a firm handshake and you daintily shake hands with

the mother. You explain where you're going and what you're doing. This is

exactly what you do in an introduction. The introduction is where you "introduce"

your topic to the audience. You tell them your intentions and your claims here before you move on to the meat of your essay.

For Conclusions: What you do here is dependent on the date. You cannot have a predetermined plan for how the date will end as there are too many variables. The same is true of conclusions with essays. You cannot plan it before it is written; therefore, you cannot have a model that always works for conclusions. If, as you have been instructed in the past, you reverse your introduction, what happens? Put that into the context of the date. Can you reverse what you do at the beginning of a date at the end? Would you re-introduce yourself, then turn and walk out the door?

Flow/Fluidity – The ease with which a piece of writing moves from sentence to sentence and section to section (Atasoyo & Temizkan, 2016).

High stakes/low stakes writing – This concept was developed by Peter Elbow (1997) in an effort to lower writing anxiety for his students. Elbow (1997) created a hierarchy of writing assignments that corresponded to both the weight of the assignment and the amount of feedback students received. Low stakes writing is simply writing to write. Feedback is minimal, and it is more or less assessed for completion. By contrast, high stakes writing is summative in nature. The writing is scrutinized for accuracy and feedback provided to explain areas of concern.

IIA Thesis Format – The IIA Thesis, co-created by the teacher-researcher and a colleague, consists of three parts: an introductory clause, an independent clause, and an appositive within the independent clause. When these are combined properly, the result is a very strong thesis that allows students to develop their

writing in a malleable format (Pride, 2016). In many cases, the teacher-researcher

prompted participants using the following questions: For the Independent Clause:

What are you trying to say in your essay? Introductory Clause: From where did

you determine this idea? Appositive: What is important about the subject of your

Independent Clause?

Process driven instruction – Instruction that focuses on the steps throughout the writing

process for assessment and is less concerned with the final product as learning

occurs by doing. It focuses on the "journey" of the writing rather than the

destination (Freedman & DiPardo, 2017; McCarthy, 2001; Smith, 2000).

Product driven instruction – Instruction that focuses on the assessment of the final

product rather than the steps taken or thought provided along the way. It focuses

on the "destination" of writing rather than the journey to get there (Freedman &

DiPardo, 2017; McCarthy, 2001; Smith, 2000).

Syntax – Enhanced sentence structures that are chosen for specific, purposeful effects

and that enhance fluidity of writing (Shea, Scanlon, & Aufses, 2008).

The Teacher Model, Pair Model, Self-Produce Paradigm – This paradigm is a form of

scaffolding that was developed for this study. In it, the teacher first models the

desired actions for students to follow. Modeling allows students to ask questions

throughout the process as they see how to apply the concepts and knowledge.

Next, student-pairs work together to mimic the actions of the teacher. Mimicry

allows students to work through the process with assistance, asking questions first

of each other, then of the teacher, before attempting the action individually. The

final step is individual practice to display mastery of the concept (Miller, 2012).

Tone – The "sound" of the writing developed through diction and syntax that is based on the perceived audience (e.g., friendly, formal, academic, etc.).

Writer's Voice – The intentional use of varied syntax, diction, and structures that enhances the fluidity and readability of a given piece of student writing; a blending of higher diction and syntax that constitutes the combination of three things: "personality on the page, the effect of style, and the right tone for [the piece]" (Pattison, 2007). It is important to note that the premise of this study is that voice is not a stand-alone component but is constructed through the various components of writing.

Writer's Voice calculation – This calculation, created and tested by the teacher-researcher specifically for this study, is obtained by averaging the 14 components of the rubric.

The Writing Process – Generating ideas, reflecting on prior knowledge, planning, composing, and revising – to ensure successful writing (Freedman & DiPardo, 2017). Typical steps are planning, prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing (Comparative Media Studies, MIT, 2017; Purdue Online Writing Lab, 2017; The Baltimore County Public Schools, 2017; KU Writing Center, 2017)

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

In order to understand the need for writing improvement, it is imperative to look at previously established philosophies on writing instruction. First, an understanding of the history of writing education is needed. From here, the link between writing and critical thinking develops by examining research that unites the two. Then, the connection between writing ability and student motivation is examined, followed by the need for scaffolding throughout writing instruction. Finally, the need for the modification of student writing is discussed. Through this examination of the literature, foundations for new methods of writing instruction are established that help to improve students' overall quality of writing and writer's voice.

The History of Writing Education

For over a century, writing instruction has been a key principle in American education. In its earliest form, writing instruction focused on orthography (penmanship) and the construction of letters in proper form; actual composition education was reserved for the elite who were destined for universities (Freedman & DiPardo, 2017). However, as the eighteenth century drew to a close, ideas about such instruction began to change.

In 1894, The Committee of Ten established that all high schools should prepare students the same regardless of their future direction, be it college or vocation. According to the Committee, every subject that students take in the high school should involve the same instructional processes and the same depth of knowledge. Furthermore, instruction

should extend throughout the duration of the student's pursuit of a given subject, regardless of their probable future goals. Understanding the differences in potential outcomes of students, the Committee acknowledged that not everyone needs the same amount of education in all subjects, but each student should attain the same education and be held to the same standards as long as they are in the same classes (The Committee of Ten, 1894).

Although a number of disciplines were included in the report's findings, English seemed to be overarching as they suggested that writing should be implemented and developed across the curriculum regardless of the subject (The Committee of Ten, 1894). Additionally, they found that English should be pursued throughout secondary school because it develops critical thinking in students and helps "to enable the pupil to understand the expressed thoughts of others and to give expression to thoughts of his own" (The Committee of Ten, 1894, p. 86). Thus, the expectation of high-level composition ability was introduced to the American school system. Students were to learn orthography, spelling, grammar, and mechanics, the mastery of which was to be assessed through composition. Unfortunately, the ideas of style and voice were abandoned as these skills were believed to be innate and unteachable (Freedman & DiPardo, 2017; Payne, 1965).

For decades, few things changed in the field of writing instruction, and throughout the first half of the twentieth century, writing was typically taught using the traditional essay model based on description, narration, exposition, or argument, or the "ideal product [which focused] on words, sentences, and paragraphs as component parts, and emphasiz[ed] usage [over] style" (Freedman & DiPardo, 2017).

However, at the 1966 Dartmouth Conference, studies presented revealed new theories for effective English education as teachers and researchers from America and England expressed their beliefs that English is not "something one *learns about* [but is] something one *does*" (Harris, 1991, p. 631). In other words, English education should not be seen as the depositing of knowledge from teacher to child but should grow from students' experiences and "how these [experiences] are shaped by [the students'] use of language" (Harris, 1991, p. 631).

As a result, the notion that writing education was more than a focus on conventions spurred the development of the writing process (Dartmouth College, 2013; Harris, 1991). The conclusions taken from the seminar explained that students required support throughout the process they use to write in order to ensure successful writing rather than using the assign and assess format in which only the final product is examined (Freedman & DiPardo, 2017). In other words, writing changed from a product-driven endeavor derived by the teacher to a process that allowed students to produce a self-created product. And, as postulated by the Committee of Ten (1894), this new writing process should begin early in a child's education (Freedman & DiPardo, 2017).

Unfortunately, the findings were overlooked. Project English, the predominant educational policy for English education in the 1960s, adhered to extremely prescriptive and standardized English education and left little room for change. Additionally, teachers' had very little experience with the writing process and how to teach it (Harris, 1991). What resulted was that writing continued to be of overall low quality in terms of style and voice for years as teachers continued to emphasize grammar and mechanics

rather than the process of writing (Enos, 1985; Freedman & DiPardo, 2017; Payne, 1965).

For years, no advancement was made in writing instruction. Students, already reluctant to write, began to fear writing, believing that good writing was an accomplishment reserved for the few with natural talent, a mindset held by many of their teachers (Anderson, 2001; Cocuk et al., 2016; Elbow, 1997; Payne, 1965). Decades of potential writers, influenced by the overemphasis of traditional writing instruction and a hyper-focus on grammar and mechanics, developed not only fear, but hatred, for writing that still persists in classrooms today (Anderson, 2001).

Criticism of the Writing Process

The theory behind the writing process (also known as process writing) is that there are certain, logical steps that are completed in a specific order as one writes. The basic process is that of generating ideas, reflection, planning, composing, and revising (Freedman & DiPardo, 2017). Today, several variations exist that indicate five to seven steps, but the most common model is planning, prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing.

Yet with all of its benefits, the writing process has been credited with creating its own detriments to student writing. Current process writing instruction is "organized around a series of skills determined by the teacher…[and is] usually taught without a writing context" (Pollington, Wilcox, & Morrison., 2001, p. 250) in which to write. However, without a specific context to frame writing, instruction often becomes bland and watered down as it revolves around whole class instruction and a one-size-fits-all method, and students often see writing as a skill that is unneeded outside of the English classroom (Pollington, Wilcox, & Morrison., 2001). Such teaching espouses the idea that

there is one correct way in which to write as "writing…consists of correct steps…[that] are exactly the same for all writers" (Anderson, 2001, p. 30).

The idea that there is one correct manner in which to write has all but become an axiom by which writing must be instructed. Various universities and high schools laud the writing process for its variety, yet all have the same basic structure and explain that it is to be followed for all writing (Comparative Media Studies, MIT, 2017; Purdue Online Writing Lab, 2017; The Baltimore County Public Schools, 2017; Kansas University Writing Center, 2017). Only the Kansas University Writing Center (2017) concedes that no one writes in quite the same way and that there is no right or wrong way to write; there are only common steps that are typically used. Yet, to the detriment of their students, teachers often insist that there is only one correct way to write.

Such thinking has debased the writing of many students as they struggle with the one-size-fits-all belief that permeates writing instruction. According to Anderson (2001), many students believe that rather than skill or ability, "success in writing is often a matter of luck or inspiration, two factors that we have not…ordered up into 'steps'" (p. 30). In other words, writing achievement for many students is seen not as preparation, nor as a matter of skill, but as a matter of luck on a particular day with a particular prompt and the teacher's particular disposition (Anderson, 2001; Payne, 1965). Students hope that "cosmic forces" will align so they can write effectively; otherwise, they believe they are destined to fail, and nothing they can do will prevent it.

Regrettably, the success, and domination, of writing as a set process is tied to the need for data and widespread basal material, such as textbooks, worksheets, and other pre-packaged writing schemes (Pollington, Wilcox, & Morrison., 2001). Conceptually,

this seems logical; however, this practice is rooted in a tradition established more than a century ago by the Committee of Ten and their desire that students receive the same education regardless of skill or desired future outcome (The Committee of Ten, 1894).

Although a standardized method of writing is beneficial for quantifying results, many have come to criticize the strict, formulaic design that process writing reinforces, particularly in regards to prewriting; such a design inhibits student creativity and the natural, organic writing process (Anderson, 2001). Just as people are diverse, so is the method by which people write. Yet all too often, teachers "place too much emphasis on getting the writing started and forcing students to develop a beginning, middle, and end right from the start rather than letting it happen naturally" (Thompson, 2016, p. 58). Anderson (2001) explains that such steps are counter-intuitive for some students as they have their own method of composition, albeit mysterious and inexplicable for them. Others concur, believing that extensive prewriting actually nullifies quality writing as students lose interest before they actually put pen to page (Anderson, 2001; Sanders-Reio, 2010; Thompson, 2016).

Although some experts scrutinize the writing process for the rigid adherence to predetermined organization, the writing product must be internally organized in a logical manner. Writing represents human intelligence, so for writing to be effective, there is an implicit need for organization (Hasani, 2016). Just as oral communication requires a great deal of organization to present ideas effectively, writing, as a form of communication, "requires systematic and well-ordered thinking…[so students can] deliver messages, ideas, and feelings systematically" (Hasani, 2016, p. 1574). However, such a structure for writing is often instinctive, just as it is for oral communication.

The Call for Standardization

Though desire to have students better communicate their ideas in written form prevailed throughout the twentieth century, the belief that there was an actual crisis in writing was formally established by the infamous report, *A Nation at Risk* (1983). The report suggested that American schools were failing, a concept purported by statistical data and comparisons of American and international test scores. Although the focus of the report seemed to be on applied math and science, writing was not immune to the scrutiny that followed its publication. The report found an underlying belief that reading and writing were not seen by students as a beneficial skill to attain one's goals. Citing that students typically take remedial or low level ELA classes to alleviate the anxiety that accompanies higher level courses, the report asserted that millions of dollars must be spent on remedial education and training for employees' literacy by employers when students graduate and join the work force without the needed level of education (A Nation at Risk, 1983).

Recent research from College Board (2004) shows that little has changed regarding the writing ability of high school graduates in the last thirty-five years. In 2004, The National Commission on Writing, sponsored by College Board, surveyed 120 corporations to determine the importance of writing in such establishments. Their report, entitled "Writing: A ticket to work…or a ticket out" (2004), revealed the explicit connection between writing, employment, and promotion. Among the findings of the survey, researchers determined that:

- Writing is a "threshold skill" for both employment and promotion, particularly for salaried employees.

- Half the responding companies report that they take writing into consideration when hiring.

- People who cannot write and communicate clearly will not be hired and are unlikely to last long enough to be considered for promotion.

- Two-thirds of salaried employees in large American companies have some writing responsibility.

- More than 40 percent of responding firms offer or require training for salaried employees with writing deficiencies…[that] may cost American firms as much as $3.1 billion annually. (College Board, 2004, pp. 3-4)

With the propagation of such reports, calls for writing improvements were mandated through a variety of bills, such as Goals 2000 and No Child Left Behind, and continue to appear in Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and state-based standards, such as the South Carolina College and Career Readiness Standards (SCCCRS).

Trends in Classroom Writing Instruction

Although federal funding has forced states to adopt standards and high stakes assessments to measure the degree to which those standards are met, neither standards nor such testing have proven useful in resolving the problems outlined by various national reports (Berliner & Biddle, 1996; Ravitch, 2010). For years, South Carolina students could easily demonstrate writing skills as "mastered" on the state's HSAP test, the prompt for which was always narrative in nature. The rubric designed for writing assessment was the same for all grades tested from 3rd – 10th, and based on the qualifiers, students could score well with little skill and limited ability ("HSAP writing rubric", 2017). The simplicity with which students could pass led to a muddling of writing

instruction, and rather than raising student ability as it was purported to, the narrative format justified simplistic writing with lackadaisical attention to conventions in order to be deemed exemplary (C. Klein and R. Flowers, personal communication, September 15, 2017).

As a result, classroom writing instruction took the form of journaling, freewriting, and extensive work with narratives. Although each of these serves a purpose and promotes writing, none is adequate in today's world where corporations "report that they "frequently" or "almost always" produce technical reports (59%), formal reports (62%), and memos and correspondence (70%)" (College Board, 2004, p. 4). This need legitimizes the shift that occurred in CCSS from narrative to argumentative writing.

Today, most English classrooms tend to steer away from the typical narrative, seeing it more as a tool than as a product itself. As a tool, narrative can be used as a source for "gateway-writing" to get students used to the thought processes needed for effective writing in other modes (Calkins & Ehrenworth, 2016; Fletcher, 1993). Pytash and Morgan (2013) illustrate this technique with students in middle schools by using the personal nature of narrative, particularly memoir, which incorporates what students know personally into the teaching of writing, as a tool for developing writing in middle grades (Pytash & Morgan, 2013). These researchers also see memoir writing, a style of narrative, as a means by which to teach metacognition and introspective critical thinking as it focuses on the self, something with which students are particularly interested and familiar (Pytash & Morgan, 2013).

Similarly, freewriting and journaling have also become gateway writing activities. In a case study conducted in a middle school, Lannin (2014) found that "regular

freewriting helped develop student confidence and comfort with writing" and went on to explain that this newfound confidence enabled students to show "flexibility in thought and style of writing" (p. 555). Lannin (2014) expects that writing will continue to improve in quality and ease if the practice of freewriting is implemented and maintained. If true, these findings are paramount to improving writing in all modes and disciplines.

Elbow (1997) concurs that such writing is indeed beneficial. In one article, Elbow (1997) defines two types of writing: high stakes (writing that is used for summative assessments) and low stakes (writing that is informally assessed, if assessed at all, as a means to gather relevant information regarding student insights) and posits that "low stakes writing improves the quality of high stakes writing" (p. 7) as students have increased experience in writing through such activities. He views low stakes writing, such as freewriting and journaling, as something that can be dismissed in terms of assessment while creating changes in cognition and ability in students (Elbow, 1997). Therefore, by incorporating low stakes writing into instruction, overall student writing improves in quality, quantity, and fluidity in a relatively short time.

Writing and Critical Thinking

Perhaps the most important attribute of writing is its ability to illustrate the thought processes of students for teachers. That is not to say that students are assessed on the accuracy of these processes, but rather that there is no way other than writing to examine what a child thinks and how such a conclusion was reached. According to Hasani (2016), writing requires students to think systematically and clearly in order to convey their desired meaning. Similarly, critical thought necessitates such a systematic, orderly method. Zori (2016) defines critical thinking as "a set of skills and behaviors that

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drive thought processes that lead to decision making and actions" (p. 321). While true, English teachers typically have a different definition of critical thinking as it pertains to the discipline, often characterizing it as "ideas…organized in a rational and cohesive manner" (Atasoy & Temizkan, 2016, p. 1458). It is this organized thought that not only links critical thinking to the writing process but that is an essential and undeniable requirement in essay writing (Hasani, 2016; Kovalik & Kovalik, 2007).

Zori (2016) asserts that critical thinking consists of six skills: "interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation" (p. 322). Due to the quantity and intensity of these skills, the process of critical thinking must develop over time (Zori, 2016). The same is true of writing. As students begin to incorporate these skills into their studies, they better understand their thought processes. This understanding translates into enhanced writing ability through metacognition. In other words, "proficient writers can successfully employ aspects of metacognition through self-regulation as they engage in the process of planning, producing text, and revising while…novice writers struggle" (Woods-Groves et al., 2014, p. 249).

As students become more proficient writers and master these skills, they often experience an increase in student confidence that leads to increased efficacy, which their writing embodies as voice. Through careful analysis of texts, students develop the ability to explain with what they agree or disagree regarding an author's perspective while explaining what makes their own ideas significant (Gentry, 2010). By learning to explain where they disagree, students are able to confidently elucidate their argument in new ways that are reflected within their writing.

Writing and Student Motivation

The heart of the writing crisis may not lie in the inability to write, but in the students' gradually diminishing motivation, often due to fear of assessment and fear of failure (Cocuk et al., 2016; Gardner, 2017; Pollington, Wilcox, & Morrison., 2001; Sanders-Reio, 2010). Years of overemphasis of syntactical and grammatical structure, paired with minimal positive, constructive feedback, has instilled a sense of anguish and dread into the hearts of many young writers (Elbow, 1997; Gardner, 2017). Too many students believe that the ability to write has escaped them (Anderson, 2001; Payne, 1965). They believe they are incapable, and worse, destined to continue to be incapable. For many students, writing has become a form of academic torture (Class discussion, personal communication, April 28, 2017).

The Role of Assessment in Student Motivation

Although assessment and education have always been connected, the psychological effects of assessment continue to plague teachers (how to accurately assess and manage assessment) and students (how to prevent failure) alike (Elbow, 1997). Students feel "pressure to 'succeed' based on externally driven criteria [due to] the achievement culture" in which we live (Schoeffel et al., 2011, p. 3). They generally define success in terms of recognition and extrinsic rewards (e.g., grades, the letter or number that determines their academic worth), yet often note the importance of diligence and personal pride in their work (Schoeffel et al., 2011). For students, their feelings of pride are often overshadowed by the overwhelming anxiety associated with writing assessment. Unlike other subject matter, writing has no definitive right or wrong; it is a subjective endeavor (Anderson, 2001). This subjectivity spawns anxiety as grades are, in

many cases, allegedly based on teacher discretion (Greene, 2016; Sanders-Reio, 2010; Zorbaz &Kayaturk, 2015).

As a means to assist students in lowering their writing anxiety, researchers have begun examining the benefits of variable levels of assessment (Elbow, 1997; Gentry, 2010). Elbow (1997) delineates five levels of assessment that he has identified for his students from low stakes to high stakes:

- No mark – allows the student to have his or her own voice without fear of judgment or failure.

- Minimal nonverbal, noncritical response – points out strong aspects of the student's writing with symbols.

- Minimal, nonverbal critical response – marks unclear or problematic areas in the student's writing to draw attention to areas of need.

- Supportive response without criticism – illustrates strategies used by the student while writing. These are typically in the form of praise or positive reinforcement. Elbow believes this does the most good for writing improvement with the least effort.

- Critical response, diagnosis, and advice. (Elbow, 1997, pp. 9-10)

Elbow (1997) also recommends having students turn in shorter, low stakes pieces throughout the process that are reflective, thereby asking students what they view as their strengths, weaknesses, or areas of concern (Elbow, 1997). He posits that having students reflect on their writing keeps writing assessment from focusing on the superficial, such as grammar, mechanics, or spelling. By doing so, assessment becomes a learning process in line with the teacher's learning objectives. Educators spend less time focusing on the

trivial and more time on examining substance within the writing, and students experience less anxiety throughout the process (Gentry, 2010; Sanders-Reio, 2010).

Writing Anxiety

Students' fears present themselves in the form of writing anxiety. In general terms, psychologists define anxiety as "anticipatory affective, cognitive, and behavioral changes in response to uncertainty about potential future threat" (Cocuk et al., 2016, p. 336). In writing, the "potential threat" is the grade and the perception of looming failure that accompanies it. Cocuk et al. (2016) define writing anxiety as "a general avoidance of writing and of situations perceived by the individuals to potentially require some amount of writing accompanied by the potential for evaluation of that writing [as well as] the worry a person feels toward a task of…writing" (Cocuk et al., 2016, p. 336). Simplified, students' reluctance to write fosters diminished confidence and decreased motivation based on the anticipation of negative consequences from what teachers may see in the composition. It must be noted that Cocuk. et al. (2016) did not find that students cannot write, but that they anticipate negative consequences; therefore, the key to alleviating writing anxiety is changing students' perception of their abilities.

Elbow (1997) explains that students anticipate negative consequences when asked to write because "writing feels like an inherently high stakes activity…[that] is virtually always evaluated…[and] tends to be used for…serious occasions" (Elbow, 1997, p. 6). This ideology led to his development of low stakes writing as he attempted to offset student perception and increase writing efficacy. As he describes it, low stakes writing is not meant for evaluation, but for practice (Elbow, 1997). Practice allows students to stumble and results in growth as a writer when conducted in a relaxed environment.

The environment in which writing occurs is of utmost importance as it tends to either enhance or assuage student anxiety. Since writing already "feels like an inherently high stakes activity" (Elbow, 1997, p. 6), anxiety levels increase exponentially versus other forms of assessment. Studies have shown that students who suffer from elevated levels of anxiety experience lower performance than their peers with low to moderate anxiety levels, particularly in writing where such anxiety can easily affect quality (Cocuk et al., 2016).

Self-Efficacy and Confidence

Writing anxiety (the fear of writing and evaluation) creates a mentality of defeat in students, often destroying their confidence and limiting their ability before they begin. Students with high writing anxiety "expect negative evaluations of their written work and thus avoid classes…that involve writing" (Sanders-Reio, 2010, p. 7). Sander-Reio (2010) has also found statistically significant inverse correlations between the level of writing anxiety and the level of performance that students exhibit: high anxiety equals poor writing performance. There is no tangible proof that such students cannot write effectively, rather their anxiety, derived from their perception and expectation of failure, is self-perpetuated.

As student confidence decreases, their low self-efficacy can be devastating to their ability to write. Research reveals that students with elevated perceptions of their writing ability (self-efficacy) demonstrate higher proficiency, quality, and performance than those with lower levels (Greene, 2016). As the purpose of writing is to record experiences thereby allowing the author to enter into formal discourse with others as an

expert, the latter cannot be successfully done with low self-efficacy and confidence, therefore that anxiety must be minimized by teachers (Payne, 1965).

Additionally, researchers have found compelling evidence that links confidence and occupational success; people with high levels of confidence at earlier ages tend to have higher paying occupations with more responsibility than did their counterparts who self-reported lower confidence (Greene, 2016). Some believe that confidence may not only evolve from self-perception and self-identity, but from academic success or failures (Bergen, 2002; Greene, 2016; "Writing: A ticket to work", 2004). If this is the case, the need to increase the self-efficacy of students is paramount to their success, and as writing is often identified as one of the most prevalent academic obstacles, students must learn that they can be successful, effective writers.

This may seem like a rather large step, but current occupational trends and research illustrate the need for writing in a variety of occupations (College Board, 2004; Greene, 2016). In fact, Greene (2016) states that

> [s]uccess in writing can…reasonably feed into other academic and, later, career success. If writers have confidence in what and how they write, whether this is in an important email, a report, or a proposal, then that confidence is likely to impact other aspects of communication, generating greater success. (p. 6).

Greene's (2016) premise is that if students have deficient levels of confidence in writing, they will struggle in the day-to-day world of business in which it is required, albeit as simple as composing an email.

Scaffolding and Modeling in the Teaching of Writing

To counteract the potential deficit that students may perceive in their writing, students should be writing with purpose throughout their educational careers. Hammann and Stevens (2003) believe that writing, particularly expository writing, is a vital part of the learning process as it constitutes learning how to present information and thoughts in a cohesive manner. However, students must be taught how to do this; such a process is not innate. Nor can it be taught once and assigned; it is imperative that the teaching of writing is undertaken by scaffolding assignments and modeling expectations of good writing (Hammann & Stevens, 2003). Teachers must work to close gaps that exist in student writing ability before they become deficits. To do so, teachers must identify the skills needed by students that cultivate the seeking of knowledge, creativity in writing, and ownership over their learning (Gentry, 2010). For students to be successful writers, the aforementioned skills must be explicitly taught, scaffolded, and modeled by their teacher over time to ensure students learn the needed structure (Fletcher, 1993; Hammann & Stevens, 2003).

Part of the scaffolding process must include organization on the part of the teacher and the student. According to Gentry (2010), students seek out structure in their classes to learn structure for their writing. Structure derives from what Woods-Groves et al. (2014) call strategic instruction. According to the researchers, "strategic instruction within the area of written expression should incorporate the use of explicit instruction coupled with…immediate feedback" (Woods-Groves et al., 2014, p. 249). This combination allows students to understand the requirements of an activity and to make changes before the process is forgotten.

Although strategic instruction can provide immediate scaffolds for students, other researchers believe that teacher-modeling is paramount for writing instruction. Cremin and Baker (2014) "prompt practitioners to use their compositions as teaching tools…[because] the value of teachers modeling the writing process" (p. 32) substantially impacts the writing process of students. Modeling for students also enhances teacher efficacy in their own writing which, in turn, improves their attitude about teaching writing. Research suggests that teacher enthusiasm for writing generates better student motivation to write because by sharing their struggles as writers, teachers demystify the process for students. For this reason, teacher-modeling throughout the tasks that they expect their students to perform is essential in writing education (Cremin & Baker, 2014).

Cremin and Baker (2014) acknowledge the difficulty in adopting such a modeling process as it requires the teacher's attention to be removed from students. However, teachers must be advisors for students and seek advice from them as they fully integrate the class into the writing process. Cremin and Baker (2014) go on to explain that the plurality of the teacher's position in the context of writer and teacher of writing requires that teachers work through the discomfort they initially feel as the benefits far outweigh the consequences.

As teachers model their expectations, they not only model the writing process, but they also model the cognitive aspects that students will face along their writing journeys. For this reason, teachers must remember that writing is both linguistically arduous and cognitively complex as it incorporates the critical thinking of students with verbal output (Abbas, 2016).

Guidelines for Scaffolding

While Pollington, Wilcox, & Morrison. (2010) caution that no one method assures effective writing, there are a variety of guidelines to be considered when providing scaffolding for student writers. Teachers must remember that "students must know…how to organize their writing for the purpose of the writing task" (Straub & Alias, 2013, p. 17) and model that behavior for them. Additionally, teachers should provide meaningful examples that model the expectation teachers have for the writing product (Gentry, 2010). Rather than assign and assess, teachers need to clearly define and illustrate what constitutes good writing (Elbow, 1997; Gentry, 2010). While this can be done in a variety of ways, the common suggestion from researchers and educators is that students be immersed in many examples of writing in the given genre so that they can ferret out similarities that define the genre and style they wish to pursue (Pytash & Morgan, 2013). Using mentor texts as models provides students with constructs from a "professional" that they can then borrow from (Straub & Alias, 2013). This ensures that students are familiar with attributes that are needed for their writing.

Gentry (2010) offers teacher-specific guidelines for writing instruction. Among these, the most beneficial is to "get away from the normal [stock] assignments so students give back better papers" (Gentry, 2010, p.9). Gentry (2010) recognizes that teachers often have "go-to" assignments and he cautions that in many cases, these are not indicative of the type of writing that will be conducted in the field of study or in the future of the student. For this reason, he suggests that teachers model assignments after the types of writing students will face in a given profession so that the assignments have meaning (Gentry, 2010).

Furthermore, teachers must conference with students to correct weaknesses and to reinforce strengths throughout the writing process so that students have a sense of accomplishment in what has been done accurately and a chance to revise areas of concern prior to turning in a final product (Pytash & Morgan, 2013). Additionally, Pytash and Morgan (2013) suggest that teachers and students "celebrate writing through publication" (p. 45), be it online or in print, to give students a sense of ownership that rarely accompanies the typical teacher-as-audience essay.

The Importance of Reflection

While shifting the audience may have a positive impact on student writing, perhaps the most influential aspect of writing is that of reflection. According to Gentry (2010), "writing is often a very personal venture where we begin to learn what we think, work with hunches, and write and rewrite for ourselves" (p. 3). Reflection enhances this process. Using advanced critical thinking skills, writers become metacognitive, examining their beliefs and knowledge in new ways and through a variety of lenses. Without reflection, many may never reach their true potential as the educative aspects of their experiences may be lost or forgotten. With this in mind, teachers must realize that reflection changes student disposition, enhancing their attitude, self-efficacy, and performance in writing (Abbas, 2016).

Given Elbow's (1997) concept of low stakes writing, the use of reflective journaling to generate metacognitive understandings of the processes students use benefits their performance without the pressures and anxiety of more tedious performance tasks. According to Zori (2016), "reflective journaling has been used as an educational strategy to support the development of critical thinking" (p. 321), therefore it would benefit students to engage in such an activity during and after the process of

writing. And, as Elbow (1997) asserts, this type of low stakes writing has significant

rewards simply because students are writing.

<p style="text-align:center">The Need for Modification of Writing Instruction</p>

The Effects of Standards on Writing

Unfortunately, few outside of education seem concerned with student efficacy as

they see education more as a factory that can replicate results than an artist's studio in

which each product is unique. Because of this outlook, Common Core State Standards

have increased the expectation for all students in English Language Arts (Straub & Alias,

2013). Gardner (2017) defines this shift as "schooling literacy" and explains that

"schooling literacy is politically controlled to the point where…teachers are micro-

managed by statutory requirements embedded in the national curriculum" (p. 4). And

although there is a need to enhance students' writing abilities, such mandates often do

little more than stifle the attempts of teachers to inspire students to actively write. These

mandates force students to become passive recipients of writing instruction in which they

learn to write mechanically and formulaically if they learn to write at all (Gardner, 2017).

In regards to such mandates, Sir Ken Robinson (2006) believes that "creativity

and curiosity are devalued in the educational culture where teachers labor and students

endure." Like many of these directives, schooling literacy removes creativity from

writing, the result of which is bland, unpersuasive writing that conveys no meaning or

explanation. Enos (1985) believes that educators must reexamine the concept of voice or

such standardized processes of writing will eventually inhibit human language. "In our

world of specialization and fragmentation with its 'objective' and 'technological'

language," says Enos (1985), "we're increasingly recognizing that rhetoric [particularly

ethos] can help form concentricity out of this fragmentation" (p. 2). As ethos consists of

the presentation of self, only by inserting the self into writing can writing be fully understood (Enos, 1985). In other words, enhancing one's self in writing can only be accomplished by enhancing one's voice.

Gardner (2017) concurs and worries that "if valued knowledge is framed within narrow conceptions of schooling literacy…then learners' identities, as writers, are constructed in relation to dominant values placed on secretarial skills and individualistic cognitive practices, not creativity or composition" (p. 6). Similarly, Enos (1985) finds it unsettling that "if form degenerates into formula [and] style becomes empty imitation, a whole number of conditioned responses…in which the person is the victim rather than the master" (p. 9) will follow. Her stance is that by focusing on what is objective in writing, grammar, mechanics, and the like, the subjective is lost, resulting in isolation for both reader and writer as both try to interact with something sterile, anonymous, and lifeless (Enos, 1985).

Bobbitt (1941) explained that "the school is not to 'make' a curriculum but to help the child or youth better to find his own" (as cited in Null, 1999, p. 39). Yet standards attempt to make the curriculum for the teacher and student alike and, according to Straub and Alias (2013), have all but rewritten what is to be taught in terms of writing by defining writing as only two primary forms: informative and explanatory. Under these circumstances, students are tethered to prescriptive writing practices that rob them of their own identity while giving them a negative attitude toward writing that continues to intensify throughout their education (Gardner, 2017). If this trend goes unfettered, Enos (1985) fears that it will create a society that emphasizes "conformity and depersonalization" (p. 2). As policy makers attempt to develop a standardized curriculum,

they must remember that methods vary among children and teachers; what is best for one is not always the best for all (Pollington, Wilcox, & Morrison, 2001).

Restrictive policies like those placed on students by CCSS often result in superficial learning based on rote memorization acquired through repetition as students sit passively in class, never fully understanding that which they are learning. They are but receptors of information within the banking system of education (Freire, 1968). Conversely, students who engage in active learning through metacognitive processes and high level critical thinking and analysis actively seek new insight into the unknown (Phalet, Andriessen, & Lens, 2004). These are the inventors, the thinkers, the artists. These are what society needs. These attributes, in addition to strong content knowledge and analytical skills, are necessary for students to be effective writers (Gentry, 2010; Hammann & Stevens, 2003; Straub & Alias, 2013).

Enhancing the Quality of Writing

For too long, effective writers have been repressed because of the misidentification of what constitutes quality writing; writing has often been deemed quality based on superficial aspects such as handwriting and spelling (Straub & Alias, 2013). Gardner's (2017) findings mirror this notion as he found that students see spelling errors and poor handwriting as indicative of poor writing; however, these, or the lack thereof, equate neither to success nor to quality. In fact, Straub and Alias (2013) identified four aspects of writing that students need for success: writing skills, knowledge of writing, strategies for writing, and writing motivation. Each of these can be taught or enhanced in the appropriate environment with the appropriate guidance.

Yet many school factors, such as processes and practices of assessment, inhibit successful writing for students and must therefore be changed and influenced by teachers (Rumberger, 2001). Gentry (2010) suggests that teachers re-evaluate the types of writing they assign as there are many possible types of writing in each discipline. Educators should strive to implement atypical methods of assessment based on new writing assignments in an effort to detract from the anxiety that students experience by creating assessments that focus on creativity (Wood, 2016). That is, writing instruction – assignments, teaching, and assessment – should move away from product-based approaches that stress correctness to process-oriented writing that concentrates on stages (Abbas, 2016). Abbas (2016) discovered that students often used new techniques and variety in their writing when the process, not the product, was the focus of instruction and assessment; process instruction provides students with opportunities to practice language construction using new vocabulary and syntactical structures in a non-threatening environment. When incorporated into a facility with a caring and committed staff, the environment created helps to initiate effective writing programs for students (Rumberger, 2001).

Process-based writing instruction also lends itself well to formative assessment because each process can be used to correct potential problem areas. This alleviates the stress many students feel in regards to writing. According to Rook (2012), "evidence…suggests that the focused use of formative assessment by teachers with children and by children with peers can make a major difference to children's writing progress in terms of attainment, engagement and confidence" (p 8). Progress in these areas translates into students with greater self-efficacy in writing and higher proficiency

regarding writing skill. Researchers have also noted that "proficiency in the academic skill of expressive writing allows one to access and participate in many aspects of life" (Woods-Groves et al., 2014, p. 248) that would otherwise be unattainable.

While many educators understand the difficulties that accompany writing, they also understand the benefits that accompany students who can accurately undertake such dialogue (Pytash & Morgan, 2013). Students may view writing as unnecessary and something that only a select few can master, but this is not the case (Enos, 1985; Gardner, 2017). Writing may be an acquired skill, but it is a mandatory skill that can and must be taught if teachers are adequately prepared for the challenge (Gentry, 2010).

The Role of the Teacher

Although much can be done at the instructional level to help students become more proficient writers, there is an overwhelming need for better teacher training concerning writing. Several researchers have identified teachers as a part of the problem facing the teaching of writing (Abbas, 2016; Gardner, 2017; Thompson, 2011). Gardner (2017) is highly critical of teachers as his study indicated that, in a majority of interviews with pre-service English teachers, their primary reason for entering the field of English education was due to an affinity for reading, not writing. This sentiment was illustrated by the focus participant of Cremin and Baker's (2014) study who explained that even though she found "real pleasure in writing…her memories of reading as a child were more positive" (p. 39). The fact is many English teachers have affection for reading that is not shared with writing; they will spend hours digesting a novel, yet write little more than a grocery list (Cremin & Baker, 2014). Gardner (2017) believes that this creates teachers who often struggle with, or retreat from, the teaching of writing because they

themselves are not writers. These teachers "tend to have restricted views of writing…low confidence and negative writing histories, [making] the teaching of writing problematic" (Gardner, 2017, p. 2).

State curricular demands that focus on key skills in writing do little more than exacerbate teachers' lack of efficacy (Gardner, 2017). Gardner (2017) also found that for

> those teachers lacking the confidence to seize control of the teaching of writing, from the perspective of the writer, there is perhaps a tendency to inflexibly follow programmes of study based on a prescribed set of atomised writing skills and formulaic pedagogy situated in an autonomous paradigm, reinforced by high stakes testing. (p. 2)

This dependency, Gardner (2017) worries, will result in a mechanical approach to writing that nullifies its power, "positioning [the writer] not as a creative actor but as a compliant scribe" (p. 2).

Other researchers have come to similar conclusions. Abbas (2016) believes teachers must receive explicit instruction on how to assist students throughout the writing process to ensure positive outcomes. Thompson (2011) concedes that teaching students to write is tedious and abstruse, in many cases, because teachers themselves were never taught effective strategies for writing or for writing instruction, and due to the neglected education such teachers acquired, these often confound them. The lack of substantive, adequate training results in "a dependency on instructional templates such as writing frames, fashionable mnemonics…and buzz codes" (Gardner, 2017, p. 2).

The Need for Instruction of Writer's Voice

Although much has been written that relates to writer's voice, most focuses on voice in terms of fiction and narrative; very little research has been conducted as to how to help students enhance voice in academic essays. The dearth of material is due to the shifts in writing that have occurred as standards and high stakes testing has been implemented. Sadly, such tests drive instruction because they are often used to determine money allocations and teacher value (Tran, 2019). When compiled with the limited nature of composition of such assessments, a great deal of writing instruction has focused on narratives as these have been the types of writing used, historically (Ravitch, 2010).

Contrary to popular belief, instruction in writer's voice is possible, though it must be developed over time and explicitly taught (Hammann & Stevens, 2003). Enos (1985) found that very little instruction was given on voice in textbooks, and that which was offered had no models for students as to how to incorporate voice into their writing. When combined with teachers who suffer from low writing efficacy, the result is a paucity of education concerning writer's voice, even though for many readers, voice is what establishes writing as effective (Enos, 1985). The readers in Enos' (1985) study expressed a positive correlation between writer's voice and the writer's ability to execute their purpose in a rhetorical sense. What she realized is that the writers' voices revealed an awareness of the audience as a real being rather than a superficial entity (Enos, 1985).

Through statistical analysis, Enos (1985) found that those deemed the "best" writers:

- had considerably shorter clause length regardless of sentence length

- [used] more simple and compound sentences than complex or compound-complex

- [had writings that] contained more figurative language than the others…

- [and] used considerably more active voice verbs than the others. (p. 7)

She also discovered a statistical significance to suggest that "oral elements" in writing lead to higher positive responses, thereby solidifying her theory that by enhancing voice writers can be more effective (Enos, 1985). Simply put, voice is not a pedantic skill, but rather one that reveals the persona through skillful use of language. Teachers can foster this type of language acumen through "frequent, planned and focused opportunities for talk about texts" (Wood, 2016, p. 132), particularly when assisting emerging writers.

Gentry (2017) uses a technique that forces students to focus on the importance of what they have stated. By allowing students to determine what is of value in their critical thinking and analysis, students develop metacognitive skills that lead to discovering their own voice as they determine how their ideas are original to the subject matter (Gentry, 2010). Gentry (2010) believes that "voice is found within these moments where the students are able to articulate differences between what they understand and believe and what the author does" (p. 13).

Furthermore, Leake (2016) posits that empathy was central to rhetorical studies prior to the advance of sterile writing. He argues that "you persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his" (p. 4) as he speaks of writer's voice in terms of empathy. His research concluded that empathy has not yet been incorporated into rhetoric and composition, but there is reason to believe that it soon will be given a strong correlation

between the two (Leake, 2016). He believes that "teaching empathy as rhetoric has broad application as a suitable means of more closely examining the personal, social, and rhetorical functions of reason, emotions, and judgments" (Leake, 2016, p. 5), thereby creating voice through a connection with others.

Conclusion

Writing continues to be at the center of an educational storm as policy makers and boards of education desire increased writing ability under stifling conditions. Yet the only way in which writing can be enhanced is by using learner centered instructional theory. Rousseau (1762) explained that "education's purpose is to nurture children's…powers of constructive development…to keep them free from corruption by society's evil ways" (p. 128). Similarly, Pestalozzie (1801) believed that children should be allowed to follow their own interests in education through spontaneity and play, understanding that these "affect self-regulation, narrative recall, divergent problem solving, and rule understanding" (Bergen, 2002, p. 3). Similarly, Dewey (1938) explained that children learn through participation in the action and by solving problems they encounter along the way using their own means.

Clearly, this is the case with writing. Learning is believed to "occur as a natural response to people's interaction with their environment" (Schiro, 2013, p. 135). This speaks to the importance of environment and the communicative nature of writing. Creating this environment is the responsibility of the teacher as is teacher intervention in facilitating communication skills both written and spoken. Additionally, teachers must offer students individualized instruction to the needed degree, a task easily attained through conferences with students (Schiro, 2013). Thus, teachers must view writing

education through the lens of student-centered ideology in an effort to help students understand the significance of writing in their futures.

Writing has always been important in education as it is one of the primary communicative methods of humans. Although it has often "been overshadowed by reading [in recent years]…[writing] is making a rise in importance" (Gardner, 2017, p. 1). Much research has established that students who cannot write sufficiently restrict their ability to learn and often become adults that must face impediments as they seek to better themselves through higher employment or additional education (Woods-Groves et al., 2014). Therefore, knowledge of writing and a change in writing pedagogy is needed to foster students and prepare them to be 21st Century Learners (South Carolina College and Career Readiness Standards, 2016).

Although writing is a complex task to initiate and to teach, the benefits of teaching students to write and of modeling that writing far outweigh the difficulties. As "the writer discovers ideas by working over words, [he or she must pay] attention to both the real and oneself" (Enos, 1985, p. 15). In this way, writing is a metacognitive process that requires superior cognition and critical thinking to support analysis and creative thinking as the writer appeals to his or her audience (Hammann & Stevens, 2003).

The complexities of writing can be overcome with diligence. Teachers must work to develop an environment that is conducive for writing since environmental factors contribute to effective creative expression (Wood, 2016). Through creative expression and metacognition, writers find themselves and develop their own persona, their voice (Enos, 1985).

CHAPTER THREE: ACTION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter addresses both the reason for choosing action research as the design and the reason for the choice of treatment (direct instruction, paired practice, and individual practice) for the study. Participants' information (including demographics, rationale, and justification for selection) follows, as does a detailed explanation for data collection instruments (surveys, group and individual interviews, observation notes, participants' journals, and rubrics for analyzing participant writing) to be used. Procedures constitute the bulk of the information presented, and the chapter concludes with the planned actions for data analysis and methods to be used in doing so.

Problem of Practice

Perhaps one of the most elusive, yet most desired, aspects of essay writing is voice. As emphasis in writing instruction has often focused on conventions, writer's voice has become something that students either do or do not have; as a result, they struggle to perform well when writing is assessed (Atasoy & Temizkan, 2016; Cocuk et al., 2016; Enos, 1985; Hasani, 2016; Saidy & Early, 2016; Rook, 2012; Schoeffel et al., 2011; Wilcox, 2015). Students must be shown how to develop age-appropriate voice in their writing, and teachers must provide time and focused instruction on the myriad of components of writing that develop a writer's voice. Both teachers and students must also realize that writer's voice is created over time and must be nurtured in a manner that builds confidence in students' writing abilities.

Research Question

What impact will the Embedded Voice Technique have on the improvement of one's writer's voice in a 10th and 11th grade English 3-Honors class at Riverside High School?

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of the Embedded Voice Writing Technique on one's writer's voice in a 10th and 11th grade English 3-Honors class at Riverside High School.

Action Research Design

The problem of practice on which this study focuses is one of great concern for the teacher-researcher. The difficulty students face as they sit to write an essay has appeared repeatedly in his classroom over the last 12 years with minimal change. Given the significance of the topic, this study fits the criteria needed for mixed-methods action research. By definition, action research is research conducted at a local level to solve a problem of personal interest for the researcher (Efron & Ravid, 2013; Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2014; Herr & Anderson, 2015; Tracy, 2010). Such studies are not simply short-term "fixes" for a teacher's curriculum; they are "investigations [carried out] systematically, reflectively, and critically using [appropriate] strategies" (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 4).

Unlike traditional research, action research focuses more on contextual knowledge generation than theory alone, thus changing the role of the researcher from that of a passive observer to that of an active participant (Efron & Ravid, 2013; Herr & Anderson, 2015). As such, the desired outcome for this study is not to discount current

educational theory, but rather to "improve *[the teacher's]* practice and foster *[his]* professional growth by understanding *[his]* students, solving problems, or developing new skills [since] changes in education [are] led by practitioners" (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 4). With this in mind, the teacher-researcher conducted research with volunteers from his English 3-Honors class at Riverside High School. To protect the identities of all parties involved, names have been changed and pseudonyms used in their place.

School Setting

This study was conducted at Riverside High School, a middle-sized "rural-suburban" school located in the suburbs of Columbia, South Carolina. Riverside consists of students from primarily blue-collar families. At the time of this study, Riverside High School had just under 1400 students who were served by approximately 80teachers. The student body consists of roughly 50% white students and 50% minority students, the largest minority ethnicity being African American. Half of the students enrolled qualify for free lunch, and approximately half of the student body is female.

Time of the Study

This study was conducted for eight weeks during the spring semester of 2019. Riverside High School operates on a four-by-four schedule (four classes in the fall, four classes in the spring) that mimics a college schedule. The class studied was a fourth block class, meeting for 90 minutes a day from 1:55 – 3:25. The treatment was conducted on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays due to the school's schedule.

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Participants

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This study focused on students in English 3-Honors, the precursor to Advance Placement English Language and Composition, in which writing is crucial and time is

limited. Historically, students have the intellect and the desire to be successful at such an accelerated level, but they have not had sufficient writing instruction regarding the skills necessary for success, and their confidence in their abilities has waned. Their desire makes them an excellent source of data for this study.

Nine participants were chosen randomly from a class of 20 students. Within the sample of nine, five were sophomores and four were juniors. Additionally, six were female and three were male. Two were African American (both female), three were Hispanic (two female, one male), and four were White (two female, two male). The Average GPA for participants is 3.72/4.0. Please note that the names that follow are pseudonyms to ensure anonymity among participants.

Allana is a 17-year-old, 11th grade, African American female that was promoted to honors by her sophomore English teacher. Her GPA is 3.1/4.0, and she is ranked near the middle of her class.

Anna is a 17-year-old Hispanic female in the 11th grade. Her GPA is 3.6/4.0 and she is currently ranked in the top 25% of her class.

Chris, a sophomore, is a white male. He is the youngest of the sample, but he is quite advanced for his age. His current GPA is 4.0, and he is among the top five of his class.

Dorothy is also a 17-year-old Hispanic female in the 11th grade. She has a GPA of 3.4/4.0

Dustin is a 16-year-old Hispanic sophomore and has a GPA is 3.6/4.0. He is ranked in the top 20% of his class. It should be noted that he receives ESOL services and is often concerned about his pronunciation of words and his vocabulary in his writing.

Judy is a 16-year-old African American female in the 11th grade. She has a GPA of 3.8/4.0 and is ranked in the top 15% of her class.

Linda is a white female, the youngest female of the group at 15-years-old. She is a sophomore and has a GPA of 4.0. She is listed among the top 5% of her class.

Robert is also a 16-year-old White male with a GPA of 4.0. He realizes his strengths and weaknesses and has expressed his desire to overcome deficits within his writing.

Susan is a 16-year-old White female. With a GPA of 3.97/4.0, she is ranked in the top 10% of her class.

All of the participants indicated their need for additional instruction in writing as it is one thing that they believe they struggle with. Their perceived problems range from the ability to use strong vocabulary (particularly for Dustin) to the need to be more concise and organized (Robert). All participants indicated that they were very willing to work diligently to improve their writing ability.

Research Methods

In an effort to address the problem of practice, this action research study implemented the Embedded Voice Technique as a treatment to enhance participant writing and writer's voice. Prior to the treatment, participants completed a diagnostic essay on which they were instructed to compose their best writing. As treatment began, various aspects of writing were disaggregated into "stand-alone" components so that participants could build a new, solid writing foundation.

For each phase of the instruction, the treatment began with reconstructing the prior knowledge of participants in an effort to enhance the foundations that they have

been taught while removing extraneous information that may inhibit their growth. This was followed by direct instruction of new writing techniques with specific practice that focused on writer's voice and culminated with in-depth practice (paired and individual) of what was instructed.

The Embedded Voice Technique begins with an overview of essay writing and outlining for students. Outlines are practiced as these are believed to help organization. However, students must be told that outlines are malleable. Using the idea of travel, the teacher-researcher explains that they must expect detours, re-routing, and sometimes, a new destination.

The second part of EVT examines introductions and the IIA thesis statement. Students are instructed that the first step of writing is to determine their thesis as this dictates the purpose of the essay. From here, they must figure out why the claim in their thesis is relevant to others in a broad spectrum. This helps them to develop their first sentence (or hook) for their introduction. They are then shown how to work their way from the broad opening to their specific thesis. Practice follows.

The third part of EVT explains body paragraph construction using embedded quotes. Examples are given of how to do this. Once this has become familiar for the students, the teacher-researcher introduces them to transition writing that uses ideas from the previous paragraph to move from one topic to the next for a more fluid essay.

Part four examines conclusions and how they can be written. This, however, is difficult; conclusions depend on the essay itself, therefore there is no formulaic manner or structure for students to begin with. It is a personal endeavor between the writer and the writing.

Part five looks at proofreading and revision using student examples from previous classes. This allows students to practice and to see common errors that they may have in their writing. This practice builds close-reading skills that are necessary for editing their own work. Students are instructed to read the samples out loud to show them that most errors can be heard even when they are not seen.

After this instruction and practice, students write an essay, going carefully through all of the steps with a peer. Initially, the essay is handwritten. Students then edit the handwritten essay, then they type it. This act forces students to read their writing twice before anyone else sees it. From here, students peer edit their essays and submit a copy that has annotated comments but that is not yet corrected. After the submission, students make corrections and submit a final draft.

Data Collection

To ensure the validity of the results, data for this study were collected using a variety of instruments and methods to ensure the quality of the findings. Formative data were collected during participant practice and at the completion of each phase through participant journal entries, practice items, and teacher-researcher observations. Additional data (based on Likert scale responses, questionnaire responses, and interviews) were collected at the beginning and end of the study to determine changes in participants' perceptions of their writing ability. Other data collection instruments used throughout were diagnostic essays (pre/post) using a teacher-researcher designed rubric and peer evaluations.

The Essay Rubric

Rubrics are seen as the most efficient means currently utilized to make the subjective aspects of writing objective (Green & Johnson, 2010). Although critics believe that rubrics may hinder true writing engagement, rubrics allow specificity in regard to what performance criteria will be assessed (Kohn, 2006; Wilson, 2006). Additional comments, when needed, were included either on the rubric or on a separate document, thereby allowing participants to gain further clarification as to how his or her writing may be improved (Green & Johnson, 2010).

The rubric used for writing assessments was initially developed from the holistic 2006 SAT six-point writing rubric. The SAT rubric was difficult for students to understand as it offered a holistic score rather than separating areas for students to work on. By changing from a holistic rubric to an analytic rubric, students were able to see what areas of their writing needed the most attention and improvement as rubric categories offered insight into how students can improve their writing. The categories are introduction, thesis, body paragraphs, conclusion, transitions, organization, flow, on topic, evidence, critical thinking, diction, grammar, sentence structure and variety, MLA formatting, and voice (for a detailed explanation of each component, see the rubric descriptors in Appendix A).

Initially, voice was isolated as its own entity; now, voice is a calculated measure based on all aspects of writing. By using an average of the component scores on the rubric, voice is more accurately determined throughout student writing rather than subjectively assigned based on teacher discretion. The rubric underwent testing by the teacher-researcher and two peers to ensure its validity and reliability for this study.

Likert Surveys

Two surveys which measured parameters using a Likert scale were used to examine participants' beliefs about writing. The first was the teacher-researcher created Likert scale survey that was created after several years of student discussions in an effort to better understand the feelings students have regarding their writing ability (Appendix B). The teacher-researcher also attempted to determine the areas that participants identify as causes for writing stress. This survey was on its third rendering as the teacher-researcher modified it to measure specific areas in which students experience either success or struggle. Changes included the addition of more focused questions, the removal of questions that seemed ambiguous or redundant, adjustments to verbiage in an effort to clarify questions, and revisions in the scales used to measure participant responses.

The second survey instrument used was the Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Test, or WAT (Appendix C). This twenty-six question test uses a Likert scale format to allow participants to rate themselves on each question. Thirteen of the questions have a negative connotation, thus responses form an inverse correlation to the others. This test was developed in the mid-1970s in an effort to create a method to determine which students in college composition classes had writing anxiety (Daly & Miller, 1975).

Questionnaires

Questionnaires were given to address some similar concerns of the initial Likert survey, but rather than having participants assign a numeric value to each statement, participants explained in detail their thoughts and feelings about various components of writing both pre-treatment (Appendix D) and post-treatment (Appendix E). The reason

for the two teacher-researcher created surveys was to allow the teacher-researcher to compare data and look for possible discrepancies in participant responses.

Interviews

While the survey data were highly beneficial for initial analysis, such data led to additional questions that were transformed into formal interview questions for interviews conducted both before (Appendix F) and after (Appendix G) the treatment. Interviews are extremely beneficial tools that enable researchers to verify data obtained through other means (e.g., surveys) and provide an additional level of credibility (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Huyn, 2014; Tracy, 2010). In other words, the teacher-researcher verified the data with participants for clarity during formal interviews. Although questions were generated prior to the interview, the teacher-researcher also advanced the conversation organically as other questions or insights arose. This format allowed the teacher-researcher access to further insight that may have been lost without conversation (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Huyn, 2014).

Participant Work

Essays. At the beginning of the study, participants wrote an essay in which they discussed the theme of Robert Frost's poem "A Brook in the City" (Appendix H). This initial essay was used to gather baseline data for comparison with the essays assigned throughout the study. The second essay was an AP synthesis style essay in which participants synthesized information garnered from three poems – "A Brook in the City" by Robert Frost, "Chicago" by Carl Sandburg, and "The Great City" by Walt Whitman (Appendix H, I, and J, respectively) – into a coherent, well-developed essay that argued a clear position on whether industrialization is beneficial or detrimental for society. The

third asked participants to write a rhetorical analysis of Mary McCleod Bethune's speech "What Does American Democracy Mean to Me?" (Appendix K), and the fourth was a comprehensive essay that asked participants to identify the theme of American Literature based on in-class readings and defend their position. All essays were assessed by both the teacher-researcher and a colleague to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the results (Efron & Ravid, 2013; Fraenkel, Wallen, & Huyn, 2014; Herr & Anderson, 2015; Mertler, 2014).

Participant Journals. Participant journals were used by the teacher-researcher as a place for participants to keep their work so that it was readily available for data collection. In their journals, participants kept a journal that chronicled their reactions and thoughts as the process progressed as well as all practice activities done in class. This allowed participants to have models of structures to review as they needed when practicing and helped to keep them organized so that all notes and information was accessible for them and the teacher-researcher.

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Research Procedures

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This study was conducted in seven phases over eight weeks. After establishing a base of shared knowledge regarding a variety of poems and rhetorical essays to be used in conjunction with this study, participants were ready to begin the actual writing process. The study took place in the teacher-researcher's fourth block class (1:55 – 3:25) three days a week (Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday) from February 25 – April 5, 2019. Although the block consists of 90 minutes, only 65-70 minutes per day was spent on the treatment on any given day due to other activities.

Phase 1 – Diagnostics

      Friday, February 15, 2019: Although not part of the actual study, this date was chosen to provide the teacher-researcher enough time to assess the initial writing sample and to analyze initial survey data before beginning the treatment. This time also allowed potential participants to return parental consent forms.

      For this study, the initial writing assignment was based on the poem "A Brook in the City" by Robert Frost. This poem had been previously discussed in class, thereby taking pressure off of the participants to develop the "right" answers so as to allow them to focus on their actual writing. The writing surveys and the WAT were also conducted so that initial participant data could be analyzed. Participants were randomly selected for the study, and they selected their partners rather than having them assigned in an effort to create a more comfortable atmosphere in which to work. By doing so, participants were more confident in what they were working on and were more willing to try new methods (Abbas, 2016; Elbow, 1997; Rumberger, 2001).

Phase 2: Background (Appendix L)

      Monday, February 25, 2019 – Tuesday, February 26, 2019: The initial phase of the treatment consisted of collecting multiple data sets. First, essays and comments were returned to participants and a short discussion ensued in which the teacher-researcher explained the results of the diagnostic essays.

      Following the discussion, the treatment began. Necessary background information was provided to participants regarding various types of writing that they will likely encounter in their academic futures along with explanations of how each type of essay

impacts voice. Then, participants were shown the basic structures of outlining. Connections between adequate planning and the ability to integrate voice were explained.

After this instruction, participants created outlines for three writing prompts based on poems previously discussed in class. Once their outlines were completed, pairs exchanged their work with other pairs to critique, offering suggestions for improvement and pointing out areas that were exceptional. This allowed participants to learn quickly from not only their successes and mistakes, but from those of their peers. As participants worked, the teacher-researcher observed and noted behaviors and questions that arose.

The last practice item used was the original prompt for "A Brook in the City." Participants were able to see how they could have set up their diagnostic essay in a format that would have allowed them to create longer, more complex writing with enhanced writer's voice. Participants were then given time to journal regarding the experience.

Phase 3: Introduction and Thesis (Appendix M)

Thursday, February 28, 2019: After participants demonstrated the ability to outline, instruction began on introductions and thesis writing. The instruction started with an overview of the importance of having a good introduction (it is the first impression the writer makes on the audience) using the first date analogy. An explanation of what can be included and what should be excluded from the introduction was also provided. (Here, it was crucial that participants understood that although what was presented is the desired "form" for an introduction, writing is a living creation; therefore, there is no one correct way to format an introduction.) The rationale behind this structure was further explained so that participants could see that using this format can enhance their voice from the

onset of their essay. Examples (written by the teacher-research) were provided and critiqued by participants to illustrate how introductions either enhance or detract from voice.

Once this was completed, the IIA Thesis Format (Introductory clause, Independent clause, Appositive) was introduced to provide a replacement for the three-part format with which participants were most familiar. Instruction consisted of examples of each component, examples of how the components fit together, and an explanation as to how this format can enhance their voice and ultimately the ease with which they write their essays.

Monday, March 4, 2019 – Tuesday, March 5, 2019: After a short review, the next step was to walk participants through the creation of an introduction from inception to its completion. This was done using a teacher-researcher created example followed by asking participants what should be done to create the introduction to illustrate how to integrate what they had learned into a cohesive piece. Pairs then practiced writing introductions and thesis statements with the new formats, again using prompts based on poems previous used in class. Prompts were generated and themes provided so that participants could focus exclusively on building their ability with the new introduction and thesis formats.

At the end of each practice exercise, participants exchanged their work with others to critique using questions established to guide them through the process. The exercises were collected and examined using the pertinent aspects of the rubric to determine potential growth. At the end of the practice session, data were collected and

participants were given time to journal regarding the experience. The teacher-researcher

noted behaviors and questions that arose as participants engaged in the treatment.

Phase 4 – Body Paragraphs (Appendix N)

Thursday, March 7, 2019: As with previous sections of the treatment, this

section began with direct instruction as to the typical format of a body paragraph. This

paradigm includes a transition statement that is connected to the preceding paragraph, the

claim that the participant wishes to make, a quotation from the text or a source that

supports the claim, and an explanation of the quotation that connects back to the thesis.

Once participants were familiar with the paradigm, instruction was given as to

how to incorporate quotations from texts by embedding them into their writing.

Additionally, participants were taught to use ellipses and brackets to modify quotes as

needed for better blending them into their writing. Teacher-researcher examples were

provided to demonstrate the benefits of this approach.

Monday, March 11: Participants created body paragraphs that related to a series

of provided thesis statements based on poems previously discussed in class. After these

exercises, the teacher-researcher instructed participants on transitions, carefully

explaining the importance of moving away from trite transitional phrases to authentic,

original transitions. Rationale for such structures explained how these new transitions

enhance writer's voice. Samples were used and critiqued by participants for their

effectiveness. The teacher-researcher continued to observe participants as they worked on

the tasks, noting interactions among one another.

Tuesday, March 12, 2019: Participants engaged in a transition activity in which

the class co-authored a piece based on prompts provided by the teacher-researcher

(Appendix O). To ease participant concern, prompts were generic and fiction-based to allow participants to focus on creating transitions rather than incorporating content that may cause struggle. During the activity, participants addressed one of four prompts for a predetermined amount of time that incrementally increased (from five to eight minutes) with each additional prompt, thereby allowing them to read the previous sections and create appropriate transitions. At the end of the activity, participants had composed a "story" with transitions that flowed as the content shifted. Participants then critiqued the transitions for their effectiveness in blending disjointed, and sometimes conflicting, ideas in the piece they had written. The teacher-researcher did not participate but rather monitored participants as they moved about and commented on the pieces they were reading.

> **Thursday, March 14, 2019:** Participants practiced writing multiple paragraphs with appropriate transitions for supplied thesis statements and prompts. Transition and body paragraph practice concluded with paragraphs written for "A Brook in the City." Participants were given time to journal regarding their experiences and their feelings towards the new methods provided, and data were collected. The teacher-researcher continued to observe participants as they interacted with one another within their pairs.

Phase 5 – Conclusions (Appendix P)

> **Monday, March 18, 2019:** This portion of the treatment began with a discussion of what participants had been previously instructed to do for conclusions. It is imperative to explicitly state that there is no formulaic method for writing conclusions; each is unique to its piece and cannot be duplicated formulaically. Again, the date analogy was used to explain why it is difficult, if not impossible, to give an "exact method" for

conclusions. Nevertheless, there are features that high-voice conclusions share. These were imparted to participants and examples were supplied and discussed to enhance participant ability.

Tuesday, March 19, 2019: Participants created a variety of conclusions based on the introductions written at the beginning of the treatment. These were shared with other peer groups for critiquing to help participants understand how to frame their conclusions. Data were collected, assessed using the pertinent aspects of the rubric, and compared to initial data. Participants were then given time to journal regarding their experiences and their feelings towards the new methods provided. Data were collected by the teacher-researcher as participants worked as well as from their journals upon completion of the assignment.

Phase 6 – Revision and Proofreading (Appendix Q)

Thursday, March 21, 2019: Participants were instructed on revision and proofreading and the differences between the two. The teacher-researcher then advised participants as to words and phrases that are commonly used but that often detract from writer's voice. By learning to omit the cliché and replacing it with specifically chosen diction, voice is greatly enhanced. At this point, participants revised and proofread their new essays on "The Brook in the City" to correct any issues in regards to revision, proofreading, and the elimination of trite expressions and verbiage. Finalized drafts were shared with peers for additional insight into how their writing could be enhanced. Data were collected, assessed using the pertinent aspects of the rubric, and compared to initial data. Participants journaled about their experiences. The teacher-researcher monitored the

class as they worked, fielding questions about various aspects of the process and noting important comments as participants worked together.

Monday, March 25 – Tuesday, March 26, 2019: Participants used the rubric to evaluate sample essays (Appendix R) from the teacher-researcher's previous classes in an effort to score them, thereby allowing participants to see common mistakes that students often make in their writing. This gave participants a better understanding of the types of errors that are typically made as they learned how the rubric works. Additionally, participants were able to identify their own troubled areas easier after looking at several student examples and seeing commonalities between errors in student writing and their own. Once participants were comfortable with the rubric, they assessed their co-written essay on "A Brook in the City" and those composed by their peers. Participants recorded their experiences in their journals, and data were collected. The teacher-researcher continued noting behaviors in which participants engaged.

Thursday, March 28, 2019: At this point, it was necessary to review the information presented in order to clarify anything that participants found "murky." Additional practice ensued on individual components that pairs identified as areas of confusion as needed.

Phase 7 – Post Treatment Assessment

Week Six, April 1 – 5, 2019: Participants were assigned a new (synthesis style) essay based on three poems previously discussed in class. This essay was used as an intermediate indicator of the success of the treatment as writing improvement takes practice and time (Fletcher, 1997; King, 2001). However, this data revealed where change occurred. Essays were assessed using the same method as the diagnostic

assessment. Post-treatment surveys were given and data were compared with initial data during analysis. Intermediate interviews were conducted with participants.

Week Seven, May 13 – 17, 2019: Four weeks after completing the second essay, another essay was assigned to determine the level to which changes between the initial and intermediate essays had remained. This break period was necessary given the intensity of the treatment and allowed the teacher-researcher to determine if transformation had actually taken place, and if so, by what measure. During the interval, participants had been assigned various low stakes assignments that allowed them to practice their skills (Elbow, 1997). The essays were assessed with a peer using the teacher-researcher created rubric. One final interview was conducted as well to determine the effect of the treatment on participant efficacy.

Week Eight, May 24 – 29, 2019: The final essay was assigned on May 24, 2019, as the final assessment for the class. Again, respite was necessary to allow the teacher-researcher time to assess participant writing and to allow participants to examine the feedback provided. Although previous essays were composed in class, much of the work for this essay was conducted outside of class. Final drafts of the essays were submitted Wednesday, May 29, 2019.

<center>**Data Analysis**</center>

Upon collection of data, cursory analysis of the particular aspect on which participants were working offered initial insight as to how well they were able to demonstrate new techniques. However, the majority of the data analysis was conducted after the treatment ended. In an effort to efficiently enter and analyze data, both the teacher-researcher created Likert scale survey and WAT were given using surveying

software (Google Forms). This software allowed data to be downloaded into a spreadsheet for additional analysis, thereby removing the need for data entry and allowing data to be easily analyzed. Additionally, spreadsheets were used for the questionnaires and interviews as it simplified the coding process for opened-ended responses by allowing all responses to be seen at once for easy comparison.

Since "coding is a way of indexing or categorizing the text in order to establish a framework of thematic ideas" (as cited by Mountain, 2016), it is necessary that qualitative researchers seek to identify "categorical, analytic and theoretical level[s] of coding" (Mountain, 2016) while analyzing qualitative data. Saldana (2009) posits that "participants construct the meanings of what the researcher is trying to explore: 'the interviewer does not uncover some preexisting meanings, but supports the interviewees in developing their meanings throughout the course of the interview'" (p. 140). Thus, themes and their meanings emerged as a result of the information passing between the interviewer and interviewee rather than being determined a priori.

Themes were used to create theoretical constructs for analysis. Once established, thematic codes were discussed and verified with a peer to ensure that they were logical and accurate. Data were thematically coded by the teacher-researcher and validated by the same peer to enhance validity of the findings.

Additionally, quantitative data were recorded in a spreadsheet for analysis as each performance task was completed. The teacher-researcher and a peer ensured the validity of the results by comparing their findings, and in the event of significant differences (differences of more than one point), scores were discussed in detail so that both the teacher-researcher and his peer agreed on the score. This was done for all essay

assessments. Other assessments conducted during the treatment were analyzed only by the teacher-researcher as these were formative in nature.

Once data analysis was complete, data from all collection tools was analyzed to determine the results of the treatment. Data were compiled to look for correlations between the treatment and the data collection findings. Multiple data sources, along with a peer review of the data, helped triangulate the findings and ensured the quality of the study. Findings were shared and discussed with participants.

Action Plan

Currently, a cyclical action plan is the most beneficial plan to develop. Since writing instruction occurs with each new class, it must continue to develop as students enter with unique needs and previous knowledge. However, if that knowledge can be augmented and enhanced throughout students' high school education, students will experience more growth in terms of voice.

Based on the results of this study, the teacher-researcher developed a plan to illustrate how voice can be enhanced with time and practice so as to help other teachers within the department complement their current writing instruction practices. By developing constructs that begin building voice earlier, students can have greater success in their writing as they progress academically. Data from the study and this plan were distributed and presented during a department meeting.

Summary

Chapter Three detailed the methodology of this study to determine the impact of explicit instruction using the Embedded Voice Technique on the writer's voice and the overall writing ability of participants. Participants and the participant selection process

were described to maintain transparency of the research and findings. Participant data were also included to accurately portray the participant group. Data collection instruments, both preexisting and teacher-researcher developed, were detailed to reveal their reliability and validity.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS FROM THE DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

This study found that the Embedded Voice Technique (EVT) approach positively impacted participant writing ability and ultimately led to increased writer's voice. The nine participants for this study were randomly selected volunteers in a suburban high school in South Carolina. During the eight-week research period, data were collected using several sources. Pre and post-treatment Likert scale surveys were administered, as were pre and post-treatment questionnaires. Pre and post-treatment formal interviews were also conducted for additional data. Student artifacts consisting of a diagnostic essay, two formative essays, and a final essay were obtained, as were practice items, and were assessed using the teacher-researcher created rubric, and additional data were taken from participant journals. This chapter presents the synthesized findings of this study and offers an interpretation of the data.

Historical trends at Riverside High School support research that explains that voice, though desired, is often seen as intangible and unteachable (Enos, 1985; Gentry, 2010; Hammann & Stevens, 2003). In response to the need for voice instruction, the teacher-researcher developed the Embedded Voice Technique (EVT) to assist participants in developing their writer's voice. By offering instruction and practice in small, manageable modules that, when assembled, add voice to writing, participants

began to understand that they can write with a sense of voice that they believed had been missing from their previous writing.

Research Question

What impact will the Embedded Voice Technique have on the improvement of one's writer's voice in a 10th and 11th grade English 3-Honors class at Riverside High School?

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of the Embedded Voice Technique on one's writer's voice in a 10th and 11th grade English 3-Honors class at Riverside High School.

Findings of the Study

Over the course of the study and after the study's conclusion, the various data sources were carefully and critically analyzed. Using a spreadsheet program that allowed data for each participant to be viewed side by side for comparison, the teacher-researcher looked for similarities and trends throughout the data. After careful and repeated analysis, three notable themes emerged: 1) the enhancement of writer's voice, 2) the increase of participant confidence and efficacy, and 3) the benefits of group work with essay instruction.

Theme One: The Enhancement of Writer's Voice

Immediately following the treatment, participants were instructed to write an essay (Essay 2) for comparison with the diagnostic essay (Essay 1). Each was assessed using the rubric designed for this study (Appendix A). Data comparison from the rubric scores revealed an increase in participants' writer's voice by an average of .82 points (14%) from their writing for Essay 1, on which they averaged 2.19, to their writing on

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Essay 2 which averaged 3.01 (see Table 4.1). Interview data from follow-up questions

corroborated this increase as eight of nine participants indicated that they felt their

Table 4.1 – Comparison of Essay 1 and Essay 2 scores and changes

	Essay 1	Essay 2	Change 1-2
Introduction	1.00	2.89	+1.89
Thesis	0.89	2.22	+1.33
Body Paragraphs	2.00	3.00	+1.00
Conclusion	1.00	2.44	+1.44
Transitions	0.89	3.11	+2.22
Organization	2.33	2.67	+0.34
Flow	2.67	2.78	+0.11
On Topic	3.00	3.00	0.00
Evidence	2.56	3.11	+0.55
Critical Thinking	3.00	2.33	-0.67
Diction	3.44	3.44	0.00
Grammar	3.11	3.11	0.00
Sentence Structure	3.56	3.33	-0.23
MLA	1.22	4.67	+3.45
Voice	2.19	3.01	+0.82

writer's voice had increased significantly. Dustin, the one participant that did not feel as

though his voice had changed, believed that "[he] need[s] additional work with diction

and tone to really develop [his] writer's voice." However, he did indicate that he believed

his writing had improved overall.

The participants who exhibited the highest initial changes were Robert from 2.71

to 5.71 (+3) and Dorothy from 1.14 to 3.50 (+2.36). Chris experienced a moderate change

to his writer's voice immediately following the treatment from an initial score of 1.93 to

3.71 (+1.79), as did Judy who increased from 1.79 to 3.21 (+1.43). Dustin and Susan

showed the smallest initial increases in writer's voice, increasing from 1.64 to 1.79 (+.14) and 2.93 to 3.00 (+.07), respectively. Three participants experienced a decrease after initial instruction. The largest decrease was seen from Allana whose writer's voice decreased from 1.21 to .71 (-.50). Anna's writer's voice also declined from 3.14 to 2.71 (-.43), and Linda saw a decline from 3.21 to 2.86 (-.36). (For details, see Table 4.5 on page 111.)

Surprisingly, decreases in writer's voice were common among participants with higher initial writer's voice based on their Essay 1 scores. Data analysis revealed that those with initial scores that approached 3.0 showed either lower growth or a decrease in their voice immediately after the treatment. The two exceptions were Allana, whose initial writer's voice 1.21 and declined to 0.71 on the second essay, and Robert, whose writer's voice was initially 2.71 and increased to 5.71 after instruction.

Some of the participants were also surprised by this phenomenon. Susan, whose initial writer's voice on Essay 1 was a 2.93, felt like she had worked hard for nothing, scoring a 3.0 on Essay 2. In a conversation about her scores, she said "I just don't understand why my [scores] didn't improve more!" She explained how much time and energy she had put into her writing, corroborating the same idea from the teacher-researcher's observation notes, but she was upset by the results.

Similarly, Anna was disheartened by her scores as well. Her score for writer's voice on Essay 1 was among the highest at 3.14; on essay two, however, it had fallen to 2.71. When asked if she believed they were not representative of her ability, she replied "I thought we were only supposed to [have] four to five sentences per paragraph." The teacher-researcher explained how this would have affected her writer's voice and

clarified that what had been shared was a minimum, but that paragraphs would be significantly longer in most cases.

Typically, the initial change in writer's voice corresponded with the significant increase of participants' introductions (+1.89), thesis statements (+1.33), body paragraph development (+1.00), transitions (+2.22), and adherence to MLA conventions (+3.45). Information attained from participant journals supported three of these findings, revealing that participants had heightened understandings of how to construct strong introductions, thesis statements, and transitions.

However, not all areas that were addressed during the treatment showed immediate, short-term increases. Two areas showed negative average growth following the initial treatment. These were critical thinking, which declined by -0.67 points, and sentence structure, which declined -0.23 points. Three others areas, grammar, diction, and the ability to write on topic, showed no change from the diagnostic essay (see Table 4.1).

Participant responses regarding areas of decline or latency offered little insight into what may have occurred. None of them were sure what led to a decline in their scores, but most explained that they felt that they had run out of time to complete the essay. No journal entries offered insight into these occurrences.

Similar growth was exhibited on the formative essay (Essay 3), though not as profoundly as the increase immediately following instruction (see Table 4.2). The highest growth was seen in organization as it increased by +1.33, followed by the appropriate inclusion of evidence (+0.77) and stronger conclusions (+.69). Moderate gains were seen in flow (+0.47), thesis statements (+0.45), and critical thinking (+0.42). Minimal gains were recorded for introduction (+0.33) and sentences structure (+0.17), no significant

gains were seen for grammar (+0.02), and both body paragraphs and on topic writing showed no change. As with the previous essay, three categories decreased. These were transitions (-0.11), MLA adherence (-0.29), and appropriate diction (-0.56). As with the previous essay, the only common detractor was timing.

Table 4.2 – Comparison of Essay 2 and Essay 3 scores and changes

	Essay 2	Essay 3	Change 2-3
Introduction	2.89	3.22	+0.33
Thesis	2.22	2.67	+0.45
Body Paragraphs	3.00	3.00	0.00
Conclusion	2.44	3.13	+0.69
Transitions	3.11	3.00	-0.11
Organization	2.67	4.00	+1.33
Flow	2.78	3.25	+0.47
On Topic	3.00	3.00	0.00
Evidence	3.11	3.88	+0.77
Critical Thinking	2.33	2.75	+0.42
Diction	3.44	2.88	-0.56
Grammar	3.11	3.13	+0.02
Sentence Structure	3.33	3.50	+0.17
MLA	4.67	4.38	-0.29
Voice	3.01	3.47	+0.46

After comparing data from the final essay in the study (Essay 4) with data from the diagnostic essay (Essay 1), analysis revealed that participants' writer's voices increased by an average of 1.94 points, a 32% increase from the beginning to the end of the study (see Table 4.3). Additionally, data revealed that categories with the highest change from the beginning of the study to the end mirrored those of the pre/post assessment. MLA formatting was scored the highest (+3.67), followed by transitions (+3.55), introductions (+3.22), conclusions (+3.00), and thesis statements (+3.00). Comprehensively, each category of the rubric experienced an increase (see Tables 4.3 & 4.4).

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Table 4.3 – Comparison of Essay 1 and Essay 4 scores and changes

	Essay 1	Essay 4	Change 1-4
Introduction	1.00	4.22	+3.22
Thesis	0.89	3.89	+3.00
Body Paragraphs	2.00	4.00	+2.00
Conclusion	1.00	4.00	+3.00
Transitions	0.89	4.44	+3.55
Organization	2.33	3.67	+1.34
Flow	2.67	3.67	+1.00
On Topic	3.00	4.00	+1.00
Evidence	2.56	4.11	+1.55
Critical Thinking	3.00	4.11	+1.11
Diction	3.44	4.44	+1.00
Grammar	3.11	4.22	+1.11
Sentence Structure	3.56	4.11	+0.55
MLA	1.22	4.89	+3.67
Voice	2.19	4.13	+1.94

Table 4.4 – Comparison of changes by essay

	Change 1-2	Change 2-3	Change 3-4	Change 1-4
Introduction	+1.89	+0.33	+1.00	+3.22
Thesis	+1.33	+0.45	+1.22	+3.00
Body Paragraphs	+1.00	0.00	+1.00	+2.00
Conclusion	+1.44	+0.69	+0.87	+3.00
Transitions	+2.22	-0.11	+1.44	+3.55
Organization	+0.34	+1.33	-0.33	+1.34
Flow	+0.11	+0.47	+0.42	+1.00
On Topic	0.00	0.00	+1.00	+1.00
Evidence	+0.55	+0.77	+0.23	+1.55
Critical Thinking	-0.67	+0.42	+1.36	+1.11
Diction	0.00	-0.56	+1.56	+1.00
Grammar	0.00	+0.02	+1.09	+1.11
Sentence Structure	-0.23	0.17	0.61	0.55
MLA	3.45	-0.29	0.51	3.67
Voice	0.83	0.25	0.86	1.94

Mirroring these data, responses to participant post-treatment questionnaires (Appendix E) indicated that the areas in which participants felt they evolved the most were their ability to write introductions, thesis statements, and conclusions. Linda stated "My introduction skills have greatly improved. I am now able to get my essay started with a good hook and thesis." Similarly, Anna explained "I think I've really improved writing introduction and conclusions now because I know now what is suppose[d] to be stated in them." Robert and Dustin indicated that they had become better at organizing their essays, another area that saw substantial improvement throughout the study, and both Dustin and Judy believed their ability to incorporate higher level diction had increased. Judy explained "I believe my word choice has improved because I now use stronger more impactful diction."

Interpretation of Results of Theme One: Enhancement of Writer's Voice

The data analysis indicated that with guided instruction, writer's voice can be augmented by teaching students how to enhance specific aspects of their writing. When participants were offered direct, specific instruction with guided, purposeful practice on each component, overall participant writing ability and writer's voice increased in a relatively short time. Data also suggested that with more time for practice, additional growth will continue at a relatively steady pace for most categories as the average increase per category was 0.65 points per essay.

Although each component works to increase voice in writing, data from this study shows that introductions, thesis statements, body paragraph development, and transitions experienced the highest growth. This suggests that these categories may be the quickest

way to initiate the highest impact on writer's voice. While these areas offered the highest initial gains, growth slowed over time for each, although there was consistent improvement between essays 2-3 and 3-4 (see Table 4.4).

Data analysis also indicated that growth in the five preceding categories correlated to both the amount of direct instruction that participants received and the amount of engagement participants were offered over the course of the study. With each practice exercise, small increases were noted. Practice activities enabled participants to work on various aspects of their writing in small, stand-alone pieces that offered repetition of the action. It can be inferred that with each repetition, participants became more comfortable with the process.

Practice also took place in class which allowed participants to ask questions and receive immediate, specific guidance from the teacher-researcher. This allowed the teacher-researcher to refine generalities from component instruction (e.g., how to embed a quote) to show participants how to apply the strategies taught to their specific context so that participants understood how to manipulate the components for their specific needs. Ultimately, practice led to substantial growth in each of the elements (see Tables 4.3 and 4.4).

Although the five previously mentioned areas increased the quickest, data analysis indicated growth for all measured components over the course of the study; however, the remaining (organization, flow, on topic, evidence, critical thinking, diction, grammar, sentence structure, and MLA formatting) needed time to develop. These were not addressed via group instruction but were addressed through commentary on each individual essay as these are typically essay-specific.

As participant essays were assessed, the teacher-researcher offered comments on areas that were awkward, that were incorrect, or that could be strengthened with slight changes to diction or syntax. When a potential issue was noted, the teacher-researcher offered possible revisions so that participants could see how the writing could be bolstered, thereby allowing the teacher-researcher to instruct participants individually through assessment as these are often "teachable moments" (Glasswell & Parr, 2009).

Some participants indicated in interviews that they went through the comments to better understand how they could improve their writing performance. Many also explained that they used previously assessed essays as guides for the one on which they were currently working. These are the participants that demonstrated the most growth between Essay 1 and Essay 4 (see Table 4.5 on page 101).

Data analysis also revealed that fluctuation occurred in many categories and created unexpected lapses in organization, evidence, and sentence structure, particularly between Essay Three and Essay Four. Given the understanding that all writing components affect voice, it was imperative to determine the cause of the decline. Therefore, participants who exhibited declines in these areas were asked to explain why they believed the declines occurred in their post-treatment interviews.

Three participants (Chris, Judy, and Susan) experienced a decline with organization between Essay Three and Essay Four. Chris' struggles were unique as they were caused by his initial plans to write his essay use 11 sources when he was only required to use six. However, he spent a great deal of time explaining each poem rather than synthesizing the similarities. Unfortunately, he had to readjust his concept and essay

half way through because he was running out of time and this affected his organization significantly.

Judy and Susan offered different explanations. Judy explained that her "outline was not as thorough as it could have been" because she spent very little time initially setting up her ideas. Susan had a similar issue, but she explained that she was "confused by the prompt initially [and that] made it hard for her to start at first. Once [she] got an idea of what [she] was going to do, [she] made a quick outline and began." Susan went on to explain that she "needed more time to revise" because she realized that she could have arranged it in a more beneficial manner.

This information suggests that additional focused instruction about organization should be included into any future studies to ensure that participants have a better understanding of how to organize their writing and how organization affects writer's voice. Based on participant statements, this connection was not explicit and may have detrimentally altered their writing and their writer's voice. With an approach that offers more examples and practice opportunities, future students will be able to alleviate some of the difficulties that hindered participants' performance in this study.

Data also revealed that most participants remained unchanged in terms of selecting appropriate evidence. Only Chris and Linda declined, each dropping one point. Again, Chris' was due to the nature of his initial essay concept. He explained that he "was trying to do too much in [his] essay," so his selection of evidence was not optimal and often "didn't seem to really fit" when he looked back over what he had written. Linda experienced similar issues, but because she writes in a minimalist nature; she uses

fewer words to get her point across. She explained that her "choices were pretty good, but [she] didn't fully develop them in the paragraph like she should have."

The other two areas of decline, MLA formatting and sentence structure, were attributed by participants to haste with their work due to a looming deadline. All who experienced a decline explained that they were in a hurry and ran out of time to fix their formatting. However, the data suggests that lower scores in these two areas had no significant effects on participants' writer's voice based on the writer's voice calculation. Clearly, conventions must be adhered to in order for any communication to be performed; however, strong conventions or the lack there of do not directly equate to writer's voice as long as the meaning is not affected.

Theme Two: The Increase of Participant Confidence and Efficacy

As participants were chosen, they were asked to complete the pre-treatment survey (Appendix B) to help the teacher-researcher better understand their beliefs about their writing ability. On this survey, participants indicated that they often experience apprehension and anxiety when presented with a writing task. Participant responses indicated that none believed that they were good writers as participant responses averaged 3.15/5.0; in other words, participants ranked themselves as moderate writers at best.

This was confirmed by participant responses on the pre-treatment questionnaire (Appendix D). Although the questions were open-ended, each participant assigned themselves a numeric value when asked to rank themselves as writers and to explain their ranking. When averaged, this value was 3.21/5.0, slightly above the composite score of the Likert survey. Judy responded by explaining that she is a "3 1/2 because [she is]

competent with [her] writing but it can greatly be improved." Others concurred, adding caveats in their explanations. Susan stated that "[she is] a decent writer without time limits," and Linda believed that she ranks a "6, because [she has] trouble writing a lot about one thing. [She] often struggle[s]with writing [and cannot write] very much on just one subject or question." Both indicated that they were not very confident in their abilities during interviews.

The same trend continued for most items on the survey. Participants scored themselves just below the average of 3.0, particularly in regards to those items which, according to participants, are not typically taught using explicit examples and practice. These include voice (2.63), transitions (2.88), and thesis statements (2.38). (The ability to write a strong thesis was the only area to receive a score of 1.0, given by Dorothy.) Conversely, items which participants ranked the highest on surveys were those that are often taught, such as the ability to produce strong body paragraphs and the ability to incorporate meaningful information, both of which scored an average of 3.5. No participant indicated that he or she displayed exceptional ability as no 5 was selected for any survey item.

This data were reflected in pre-treatment questionnaire responses as well. Linda's concise explanation shows her beliefs: "I am very good at incorporating important information in my body paragraphs." Other areas that were specifically mentioned as strengths by the participants were spelling, writing introductions, the ability to create flow in writing, and attention to details such as grammar.

Data also indicated that participants' low self-rankings could be categorized according to conventions, confidence, and organization. Interestingly, of those who

responded, four did not feel that they were good writers, two believed they were average, and only one had confidence in his ability, particularly for essay writing. In interviews, answers varied but resonated around one theme: they had received no new instruction for writing in years. Linda explained, "As I went into middle school, my teachers started to teach all about how to write and form a basic essay." She elaborated: "I feel like my middle school teachers did not do a very good job of helping me improve on my essay writing and I mostly just remained the same in my techniques." Anna also indicated that no real instruction had occurred for her, saying "My writing didn't feel like it was improving until I joined my current English class…"

Data did not reveal any correlations among participant strengths. However, several participants indicated a weakness beginning an essay, particularly in terms of their thesis. No other connections within the data were discovered.

Further analysis revealed a perceived contradiction as well. Initially, only two participants mentioned that grammar/mechanics were important to writing a "good" essay; the rest perceived the "intangibles" of writing, such as voice, flow, diction, etc., to be of greater importance. However, a subsequent question as to which is more important, grammar or writer's voice revealed a split in data (43%/57%, respectively). The teacher-researcher followed up on this in interviews. Linda explained that "Good grammar, spelling, and mechanics is important…because it can help your writing sound more intelligent and well put together." Similarly, Dustin felt that "you need to have good mechanics so that the reader doesn't misinterpret what you are saying."

In regards to essay writing, participants indicated that they see it as tedious and pedantic; for them, it is only a function of education. Dustin clearly expressed that "essay

writing is helpful in school. I have not seen how it can be useful other than education."

Yet participants see a benefit in writing, though most see it as unenjoyable due to limitations such as timing and topics that are focused on in school.

Many expressed feeling as though they lack some hidden skill, but none had sought to improve their overall ability, particularly in terms of essay writing. The only exception mentioned was from Dorothy who explained that she "[tries to] get help from teachers if [she has] a paper or something" that is due. For them, writing is a pedagogical endeavor, as Dustin sees "Writing [as] just another basic asset…" Others indicated that they have little confidence regarding their writing ability. While reasons for this vary, the common idea that permeated the conversations was the fear of producing what Robert referred to as "ordinary writing."

Over the course of the treatment, a number of changes occurred in participant perception. The average score on the survey after treatment was 3.67/5.0, indicating a 10% increase in participant perception of their writing ability from their initial score of 3.15/5.0. Based on the post-treatment survey responses, participants felt that they could now write strong introductions and thesis statements (ranking their ability at 4.29 and 4.18, respectively). These two areas showed the highest amounts of growth based on the data from the survey regarding perceptions of participants' abilities.

Increases were also noted for the ability to write strong transitions (increased by +0.36 from 2.88 to 3.24), understanding of the importance of voice (increased by +0.37 from 2.63 to 3.0), and the ability to utilize an effective tone (increased by +0.09 from 3.38 to 3.47). Other areas, however, remained unchanged. Participants felt very little change in their ability to analyze and explain meaningful text in body paragraphs

(slightly decreased by -0.03 from 3.38 to 3.35) and in their ability to select an appropriate tone for their audience (slightly increased by +0.05 from 3.13 to 3.18). Participants indicated during interviews that they believed this is due to the manner in which they were instructed with notes and guided practice.

The remaining categories scored lower than they had prior to the treatment. The largest decrease was in regards to participants and their perceived ability to write strong body paragraphs (decreased from 3.50 to 3.12), followed by conclusions (decreased from 3.38 to 3.12), the ability to incorporate text into their writing (decreased from 3.50 to 3.29), the ability to vary sentence structure and punctuation (both decreased from 3.38 to 3.24), and their ability to utilize strong diction in their writing (decreased from 3.0 to 2.88). In interviews, participants explained that this decline was due to their knowledge of what can be done when writing; it was not indicative of the treatment. Linda explained that since the treatment, "[she has] been using better word choice than before [the treatment] and [she is] explaining [her] topics more thoroughly." Robert echoed her beliefs when he said "I've learned to use more advanced techniques for structuring my writing and how to properly adjust my diction so as to make my writing sound more intelligent."

Data retrieved from the questionnaires provided further insight into participant perceptions from the survey. Again, some seemingly conflicting data were obtained. All participants reported that their confidence increased on both the survey and the questionnaire; however, participants also noted increased anxiety towards writing on questionnaire responses. During follow-up interviews, participants whose scores had declined explained that they were far more confident in their ability, but based on what

they had learned, each realized how much additional growth was needed. As Dorothy stated, "I have done well in applying [what I learned, but I realize] there is always room to grow." In other words, this experience both enhanced and enlightened participants as to the ability they have and their need for additional growth.

In follow-up interviews, participants also revealed a perceived improvement regarding writing ability. Unanimously, they agreed that the instructional method used made writing "easier" than they had previously thought it to be. Many, such as Dorothy, "really appreciated the notes and the outlines that were given" during instruction as well as the small practice assignments that allowed them to work on what they had just learned.

Robert explained that the "comprehensive [method] provided a good template for [future] improvement." In his questionnaire, he had stated that the process was strongly formulaic, but during the post-interview, he explained that he meant nothing negative by his comment. He believed that even though he thought the methods were formulaic, they provided "a structure that [he] can build off of" with future writing assignments. He also explained that the "structure was great for [him] because [he] needed a system to help [him] be better organized" in his writing. He went on to say "I have gained confidence in my ability to write clearly and incisively."

A similar increase in confidence was found in data from the questionnaire as well. In their responses, participants indicated that they had become more confident and comfortable writing because of the nature of the instruction. Dustin explained "My comfort level has risen somewhat in essay writing. At first, I was uneasy in writing essays since I really didn't know how to write an extraordinary essay. Now, I understand

and have learned more requirements for writing one. " However, he further explained that he now realizes that "[writing] requires more thinking which can make [him] uneasy."

Similar statements were offered by other participants as well. Susan explained that her "confidence and tone in [her] essay [writing] has improved. Not only [does she] feel more confident writing the essay, but when [she] read it over, [she] sounded more confident." She continued "I am much more relaxed when writing an essay. Of course I'm still nervous because I want to make a good grade, but I understand how to write a good essay." In her interview, she further explained that she "was excited to turn [her essay] in" because she had worked harder on it than on any essay prior. She later attributed her increased effort to her increased confidence in her ability.

Dorothy echoed Susan's initial sentiment, stating that her "writing seems to be more 'professional' in a way." She explained that "[she is] proud of the ideas [she] put[s] on a paper." Similarly, Robert, the one participant who initially saw himself as a good writer, stated that he was "actually proud [of his essay] for once." He went on to explain that he believes his writing "definitely shows a much clearer direction and can more easily be comprehended now than it did at the [start of instruction]."

Interpretation of the Results of Theme Two: The Increase in Confidence and Efficacy

Although data did seem to be contradictory at times, clarification from participants explained why such issues occurred. For example, the teacher-researcher's initial assumption regarding the decrease on some items in the survey scores from pre to post-treatment was that participants did not remember where they had previously scored themselves. However, participants explained in follow-up interviews that they felt that they realized how much room remained for individual improvement, and, as a result, they

scored themselves lower when the post-treatment survey was conducted. Their explanations indicate that the decline was actually a positive change for them as it shows that the participants metacognitively realized their future writing potential. These data suggest that participants desire to continue enhancing their writing ability because they see a need for additional improvement. Participants also indicated that they now realize that they have the capacity to enhance their abilities with proper instruction and time.

Another example of alleged contradiction occurred when participants identified grammar as more important than writer's voice. However, they explained that better grammar and mechanics enhances the smoothness of the writing and the interpretation of the ideas, which then enhances one's writer's voice. Dustin put it another way: "[g]ood grammar, spelling, and mechanics is most important…because it can help your writing sound more intelligent and well put together." In other words, participants realized that voice is not a stand-alone component of writing; it is interconnected with all other aspects as well.

Initial survey data revealed that participants ranked themselves with minimal ability in terms of writing prior to instruction. Their perceived ability was based on their previous instruction in writing, and for most of the participants, this perception led to lower confidence and overall efficacy regarding their ability to write well. Their perceived inability was reflected in their initial writing sample as both the teacher-researcher and his peer reviewer noted that essays were "missing confidence." Many participants had statements such as "I think…" and "it appears…" as they attempted to remain neutral in their claims. Issues such as these combined in an adverse manner, and

voice was negatively affected. Participants found themselves trapped in a cycle that they were unable to escape.

However, post-treatment data revealed that writing instruction is paramount to increasing efficacy in writing. Participants overwhelmingly cited the instructional method used during the treatment as being the reason for their increased perceptions and renewed confidence. All participants explained that the time spent working on small, manageable exercises greatly helped them understand how they could alter their writing. Additionally, participants stated that the in-depth notes were very beneficial and provided a guide to reference as they were writing. In other words, the increase in specific instruction led to greater writing ability or the perception thereof.

Data suggests that as participants saw short-term growth in their ability, they perceived the difference and their confidence grew. By the end of the study, their confidence had slowly manifested as increased efficacy. Their increased efficacy in their writing ability was ultimately seen and measured in their essays as their increased confidence led to enhanced writer's voice for most participants.

Theme Three: The Benefits of Group Work with Essay Instruction

Over the course of the study, the teacher-researcher observed changes occurring among the participants in terms of their comfort with one another. Initially, he noticed a sense of tension that permeated the room as participants began working on practice items. Often they would call him over to ask questions rather than asking their partner, even when the partner knew the answer. Similarly, participants were reluctant to offer answers to their partner's questions, fearing that they would be wrong. The teacher-researcher noted these occurrences and attributed them to participants' insecurities and inhibited

confidence, especially since the processes being taught were new. These observations continued through week one and into week two.

The observations were confirmed when the teacher-researcher examined the practice items that participants had completed during week one. Although participants were instructed to complete the activities with their partner so that both had the same information, most did not do so. Rather than having five pairs with the same information, he found that participants had turned in one artifact each and that artifacts did not align with the one from their partners.

Towards the end of week two and throughout week three, the teacher-researcher began noticing changes in participant demeanor. It was apparent that the previous tension had begun to diminish. Although most participants were still reluctant to depend on one another for answers to questions, several were becoming comfortable expressing their ideas to their partners. At one point, Chris and Linda were observed debating their word choice. The two were trying to find a stronger word, but they were having trouble agreeing on one that had the proper connotation for what they were writing. Similarly, Dorothy and Anna appeared more comfortable with one another and seemed to be having fun as they worked. They had begun to laugh at their mistakes when the other pointed them out rather than retreating into silence when the other expressed a concern for what was written.

Practice items collected did not illustrate this observation for all groups. Chris and Linda had the same work, and Dorothy and Anna's work was similar but not consistently the same. These were the only two groups that did not turn in completely different artifacts although observations had suggested a greater change.

By week four, tensions had abated overall for most participants. This week was just after participants had completed the transition activity (see Chapter Three for explanation). This activity seemed to have inadvertently helped to ease participants' anxiety as they were able to examine peer writing. After the activity, participants were observed joking with one another as they worked. Susan and her partner (who was not a participant in the study) would laugh at one another when a sentence was unclear before helping each other to correct it. All seemed open to critiquing the work of and receiving criticism from others without the worry of belittlement, particularly Robert; he appeared to welcome criticism. The teacher-researcher also noted several instances of participants debating nuances of their writing, from punctuation and word choice to organization and syntactical structure. It was during week four that the teacher-researcher began to notice parallels between the participants' comfort level with one another and their writing performance; it appeared that as one increased, so did the other.

Practice responses this week indicated a change. Most showed edits that were made to artifacts during practice; edits had not previously occurred. This indicated that there had been discussions during the exercises. Additionally, most were quite similar to the responses of their partner. When asked why there were minor differences, participants explained that they were still reluctant to write the same exact wording for fear of looking like they had cheated. They also preferred to put their own individual slant on their response.

The dissimilarities were minor and appeared to reflect personal style choices rather than entirely different approaches to the problem. For example, Robert wrote the following as a transition from "Chicago" by Carl Sandburg to "A Great City" by Walt

Whitman (Body Paragraph Practice 3): "Whitman further develops Sandburg's notion that a city focused on greed can never be deemed 'great.'" His partner's transition was similar, but reflected a different style: "Whitman goes on to say that a city like Chicago that is focused on money will never do what it takes to become great." Although the wording is different, the similarities in the subtext suggest that participants worked closely on developing the ideas presented.

By week five, participants were very comfortable with one another. As they critiqued anonymous essays written by previous students, they again seemed to be jovial. In several cases, they were noticed not only critiquing the essay, but realizing that they made similar mistakes in their own writing as the teacher-researcher had hoped. At this point, participants were fully comfortable with their partner and several were similarly comfortable with others in the class. They would often ask those outside of their pair group questions when they could not figure things out themselves as their reliance on the teacher-researcher diminished. Allana was not one of these. She would work with her partner, but she was very reluctant to work with anyone else.

Weeks six through eight were spent writing. Initially, participants were instructed to help one another, and various critiques and revisions were built into the assignments. Most participants exhibited what appeared to be excitement as they wrote; they engaged in the activities and instruction seriously and often sought out critiques from other participants and students as well as critiqued others who were not their partners. Week seven saw similar interactions, though instruction regarding peer review was minimized. Participants continued to seek guidance from one another as they wrote their next essay. Scores for their writing improved with each essay (see Table 4.5). Artifacts from these

activities supported the observations (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2). Critiques were direct and participants were respectful to one another; they understood that the reason for the activity was to help each other get better.
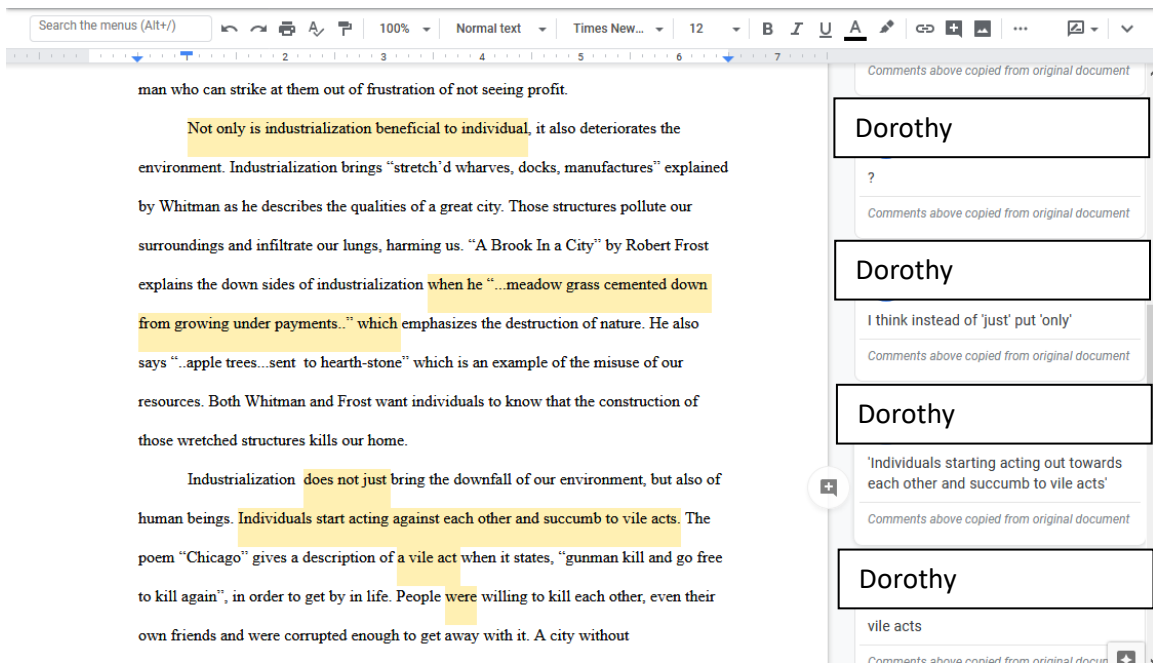
Figure 4.1 – Sample artifact of participant interactions during critique of Essay 3.
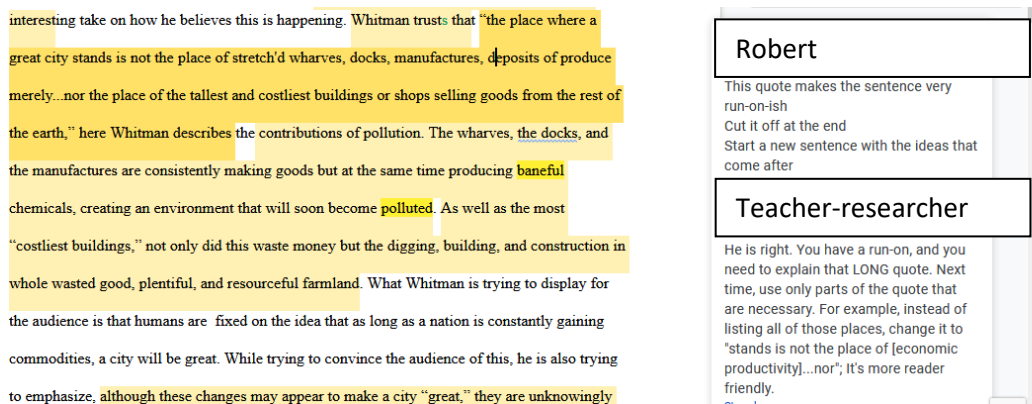
Figure 4.2 – Sample artifact of participant interactions during critique of Essay 4.

Week eight was perhaps the most unique. As this was the final assessment for the study, participants were separated from one another so as to work on their own, thus allowing the teacher-researcher to observe the individual abilities of each participant. However, participants took it upon themselves to find others with whom to work. For example, Chris, Robert, and Susan, all of whom came in to work on their writing outside of class, created their own group to assist with editing and critiquing one another.

Similarly, other participants in class formed their own groups with one another in an effort to produce their best writing. Although this was not intended, the teacher-researcher, watching as a passive, rather than as an active, observer, allowed participants to compose their writing either with or without assistance from their peers. As he had previously noted the correlation between participant comfort with one another and an increase in writing ability, he deemed it more beneficial to allow the organic development of groups rather than deterring participants from working together. As with the two previous essays, participants' scores increased.

Interpretation of the Results of Theme Three: Benefits of Group Work with Essay Instruction

Based on the data presented, writing instruction and practice with partners greatly enhanced participants' writing abilities. On both Essay 3 and Essay 4, participants' writer's voice scores increased each time, particularly on Essay 4 when participants were not relegated to specific partners but created their own groups with others who shared their dedication to the task. This resulted in the greatest gains for writer's voice between any essay in the study as voice increased by an average of +0.86 points. (The previous high was +0.83 between Essay 1 and Essay 2.)

In many cases, writing is a solitary endeavor, and writers can (and should) feel isolated from those around them (King, 2001). Nonetheless, data from this study suggests that if writers have peers nearby with whom they are comfortable enough to ask questions and receive criticism, their writing ability and voice increases. Additionally, participant comfort was closely aligned to increases in participants' confidence in their writing abilities, yet another aspect of the study which takes time. Put another way, once a rather significant amount of time had passed, participants not only felt relatively confident in their abilities, they began to feel more comfortable allowing others to see and critique their writing.

Another possibility as to how comfort emerged may not have been due to an increase in participant confidence but rather as a result of seeing others engaged in similar struggles. This realization created a commonality between participants and their partners that then led to a sense of belonging; participants no longer saw themselves as isolated individuals struggling with a problem. By realizing that they were both struggling in similar manners, participants found "comfort in [the] knowledge…[that they were] not alone" (Hall, 2014).

Although it is unclear from the data which occurred first, what materialized throughout the study was a recipricol relationship between confidence and comfort (with their writing ability and with their peers) that influenced participant writing (see Figure 4.3). Regardless of the order, it was clear that as participants gained confidence, they felt more comfortable with their ability, which led to greater comfort with their peers, which led to increased confidence, creating a cycle that seemed to optimize their writing and

their writer's voice. Researchers have established the need for student comfort regarding writing ability, but none as of yet have linked comfort to peer influence (Lannin, 2014).

Prior to the treatment, some participants expressed their discomfort with writing essays. For example, Chris explained that "[he has] never liked essay writing and [has] never felt comfortable doing essays." Following treatment, participants indicated that their sense of comfort in writing essays had increased. Chris concisely indicated that now "[he does] feel more comfortable with writing essays" on the post-treatment
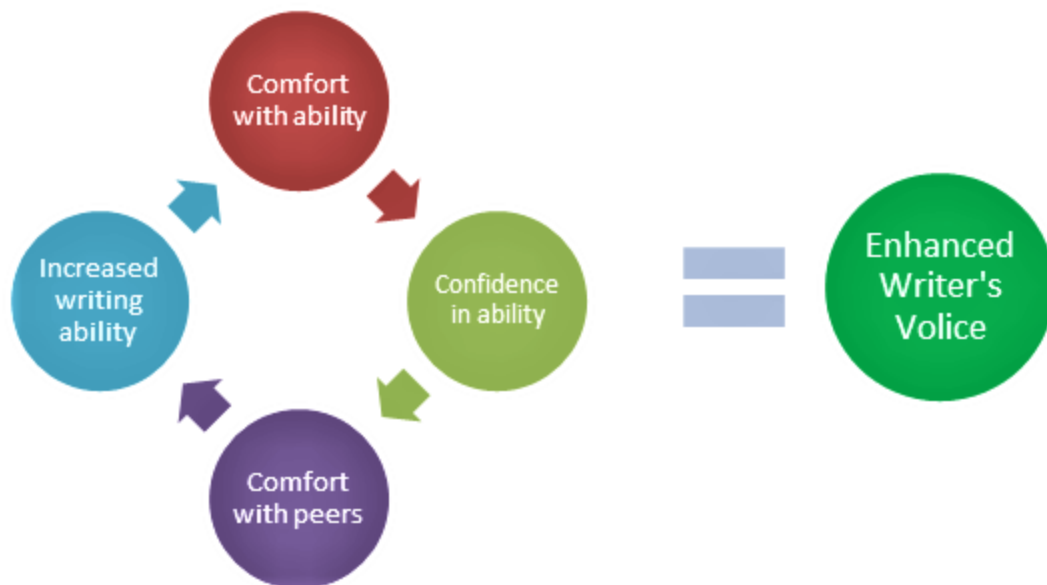
Figure 4.3 – The reciprical relationship of comfort, confidence, and ability that affect writer's voice.

questionnaire. Dustin also found essay writing more comfortable because "this [experience] has given [him] a clear view on how essays are supposed to be written." Allana had similar perceptions, explaining that "[her] comfort level with essay writing has changed but in a good way," as did Robert who stated that "[he has] become more comfortable writing compositions and expressing [his] ideas, and even feel[s] proud after having done so."

With one exception, each of the participants experienced growth in his or her writing ability and writer's voice. However, growth did not increase the same for each; it increased relative to the level of dedication that the participant exhibited and relative to the dedication of their partner or group. In other words, when all parties were equally invested in enhancing their ability, each saw an increase that was more substantial than the increases of their peers who selected less dedicated partners or who had no partner at all.

For example, both Allana and her partner exhibited indifferent attitudes throughout the treatment. As a result, she is the only participant that showed negative growth after the study. Conversely, Susan shifted for the final essay from a partner that was not particularly focused to Robert and Chris (both of whom exhibited a three point increase in voice over the course of the study) for the final essay. With them as her partners, she experienced an increase of +1.79 points over her diagnostic and +1.71 over her score for essay two, both of which she had composed with her initial partner. Put more concisely, participants experienced a change in their scores that was directly correlated with the change of their partner.

In some studies, beginning writers are often urged to find a place away from others and from distractions to write so that they can focus their energy into what they are writing (Enos, 1985; King, 2001). However, the findings of this study suggest that isolation is not optimal for emerging writers. Although they may appear to be synonymous, the teacher-researcher posits that there is a difference between beginning and emerging writers. Beginning writers have a fundamental understanding of the writing

process. That is, they know what they should do and how to accomplish their desired outcome; they simply need practice.

Emerging writers, by contrast, are those that have not developed into beginning writers yet. They are just beginning to learn the craft, to practice the fundamentals, to try new techniques. They have not yet embraced their ability, nor have they acquired the desire to write that beginning writers have. While it is clear that the participants knew "how to write," they were still emerging into their own ability at the onset of the study; therefore, observational data from the study suggests that by working with a peer, they were able to begin the transformation from an emerging writer to a beginning writer.

Conclusion

In this study, the Embedded Voice Technique (EVT) was used to focus instruction on particular components of writing. The technique produced an increase in the writer's voice and both the confidence and comfort of participants with respect to their writing. Additionally, participants developed a level of comfort with their writing ability that was unforeseen. Whether confidence generated comfort, or comfort generated voice, was undetermined based on the findings of this study. What was clear, however, is that both attributed to participants' perceived ability and the generation of enhanced writer's voice.

Interpretations derived by comparing pre-treatment data with post-treatment data indicated that writer's voice can be taught and enhanced. However, to build writer's voice, teachers must foster an environment that allows mistakes to be learning endeavors rather than detriments to student esteem (Gardner, 2017; Greene, 2016). Findings from this study suggest that such increases can be achieved by using strategies that offer quick

boosts in ability to generate short-term results that then yield long-term growth. One must first build his or her writing ability and writing confidence to enhance his or her voice; then, time must be allowed for growth in order to achieve the desired results: enhanced writer's voice.

Table 4.5a – Individual participant scores for all essays

		In	Th	BP	Co	Tr	Or	Fl	Ot	Ev	CT	Di	Gr	SV	MLA	Voice
Allana	Essay 1	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	3	3	0	1.21
	Essay 2	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0.71
	Essay 3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Essay 4	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	4	0.79
	Average	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	0.96
	Change	1	0	0	-1	-1	0	-2	0	-1	0	0	-2	-2	1	-0.50
	Overall Change	1	-1	0	-1	-1	0	-2	-1	0	0	-1	-2	-2	4	-0.43
Anna	Essay 1	1	1	4	2	1	3	3	5	5	5	3	3	5	3	3.14
	Essay 2	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	1	5	4	4	5	2.71
	Essay 3	2	4	3	3	4	5	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3.71
	Essay 4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Average	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3.19
	Initial Change	1	0	-2	0	1	-1	0	-3	-2	-4	2	1	-1	2	-0.43
	Overall Change	1	3	-1	1	3	2	1	-1	-1	-2	1	1	-1	1	0.57
Chris	Essay 1	0	0	1	0	0	3	3	2	3	4	6	2	2	1	1.93
	Essay 2	3	1	3	4	3	2	4	5	4	3	5	5	4	6	3.71
	Essay 3	4	4	3	3	4	5	3	2	4	2	3	4	5	5	3.64
	Essay 4	6	5	5	5	5	3	3	6	5	4	6	5	6	5	4.93
	Average	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	4	3	5	4	4	4	3.10
	Initial Change	3	1	2	4	3	-1	1	3	1	-1	-1	3	2	5	1.79
	Overall Change	6	5	4	5	5	0	0	4	2	0	0	3	4	4	3.00

Table 4.5b – Individual participant scores for all essays

		In	Th	BP	Co	Tr	Or	Fl	OT	Ev	CT	Di	Gr	SV	MLA	Voice
Dorothy	Essay 1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	1	1	2	3	4	0	1.14
	Essay 2	3	3	4	2	2	3	4	3	5	3	3	4	4	6	3.50
	Essay 3	3	4	4	3	4	6	4	4	5	4	3	3	4	6	4.07
	Essay 4	5	5	5	4	5	6	5	5	6	4	4	6	6	5	5.07
	Average	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	2.11
	Initial Change	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	1	4	2	1	1	0	6	2.36
	Overall Change	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	3	5	3	2	3	2	5	3.93
Dustin	Essay 1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	1	1.64
	Essay 2	2	3	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	3	2	1	3	1.79
	Essay 3	3	2	3	4	5	3	3	3	3	2	3	4	4	5	3.36
	Essay 4	5	5	4	4	6	4	5	5	3	6	5	5	6	5	4.86
	Average	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	2.26
	Initial Change	1	2	0	0	1	-1	-1	1	-1	-1	1	0	-2	2	0.14
	Overall Change	4	4	2	3	5	2	3	4	1	4	3	3	3	4	3.21
Judy	Essay 1	0	1	1	0	0	2	4	5	1	3	4	2	2	0	1.79
	Essay 2	4	3	4	2	5	4	2	3	4	3	3	1	2	5	3.21
	Essay 3	5	4	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	6	4.64
	Essay 4	3	0	4	4	4	3	2	3	5	4	4	3	3	5	3.36
	Average	3	3	3	2	3	4	4	4	3	3	4	2	3	4	3.21
	Initial Change	4	2	3	2	5	2	-2	-2	3	0	-1	-1	0	5	1.43
	Overall Change	3	-1	3	4	4	1	-2	-2	4	1	0	1	1	5	1.57

Table 4.5c – Individual participant scores for all essays

		In	Th	BP	Co	Tr	Or	Fl	OT	Ev	CT	Di	Gr	SV	MLA	Voice
Linda	Essay 1	2	1	2	2	3	3	4	5	3	4	4	5	5	2	3.21
	Essay 2	2	1	2	2	5	2	3	2	2	2	3	4	4	6	2.86
	Essay 3	4	4	3	3	4	5	3	2	4	2	3	4	5	5	3.64
	Essay 4	4	5	5	5	6	5	5	6	5	5	6	5	6	5	5.21
	Average	3	2	2	2	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	5	4	3.24
	Initial Change	0	0	0	0	2	-1	-1	-3	-1	-2	-1	-1	-1	4	-0.36
	Overall Change	2	4	3	3	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	0	1	3	2.00
Robert	Essay 1	3	2	3	1	1	3	2	2	3	4	5	5	3	1	2.71
	Essay 2	6	5	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	5	6	6	5.71
	Essay 3	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	6	3	5	4	5.43
	Essay 4	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	5	5	5.71
	Average	5	4	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	4.62
	Initial Change	3	3	3	4	5	3	4	4	3	2	0	0	3	5	3.00
	Overall Change	3	4	2	5	5	3	4	4	2	2	1	1	2	4	3.00
Susan	Essay 1	2	1	3	2	1	3	3	4	4	3	4	3	5	3	2.93
	Essay 2	3	2	3	4	3	3	2	3	3	1	3	2	4	6	3.00
	Essay 3	5	4	5	5	5	6	5	5	5	4	5	4	4	5	4.79
	Essay 4	5	6	3	6	5	4	4	4	5	4	6	6	3	5	4.71
	Average	4	2	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	5	3.57
	Initial Change	1	1	0	2	2	0	-1	-1	-1	-2	-1	-1	-1	3	0.07
	Overall Change	3	5	0	4	4	1	1	0	1	1	2	3	-2	2	1.79

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study examined the impact that the Embedded Voice Technique (EVT) had on the writer's voice for nine English 3-Honors students at Riverside High School. The need for instruction on writer's voice has been a concern of the teacher-researcher for years as students have historically entered the class with a limited understanding of how to write academically, particularly in regards to their writer's voice. This apparent limitation in voice often appears when students exhibit low confidence in their writing ability. Research has indicated that voice is of particular importance, in both the academic and business worlds. In fact, most occupations require some degree of writing, and when writing sounds sterile and anonymous or incorrect, communication falters (A Nation at Risk, 1983; Anderson, 2001; College Board, 2004; Enos, 1985; Pollington, Wilcox, & Morrison., 2001).

Throughout this study, the teacher-researcher sought to address the problem of practice by using EVT to help participants bolster their writer's voice. Using a variety of data collection instruments (pre and post-treatment Likert surveys, pre and post-treatment questionnaires, pre and post-treatment interviews, a teacher-researcher created rubric, participant artifacts consisting of four essays, post-instruction practice assignments, and participant journals), the teacher-researcher attempted to determine the cause of the observed problem of practice and develop a method to assist students in remedying it.

Data were collected over the course of the eight-week period for analysis. After methodically examining the data, three themes emerged: 1) the enhancement of writer's voice, 2) the increase of confidence and efficacy, and 3) the benefits of group work with essay instruction. What follows is a discussion of the implications of the study, a detailed action plan for improving the study, and recommendations for future research.

Research Question

What impact will the Embedded Voice Technique have on the improvement of one's writer's voice in a 10th and 11th grade English 3-Honors class at Riverside High School?

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of the Embedded Voice Technique on one's writer's voice in a 10th and 11th grade English 3-Honors class at Riverside High School.

Overview of the Study

This study followed nine participants with a range of writing abilities as they were instructed to write using the Embedded Voice Technique (EVT) over an eight-week treatment period. This study was designed based on historical trends that the teacher-researcher has observed of the past 12 years as an English teacher. Historically, students struggle to write essays at an appropriate level. In many cases, they claim to have lost all confidence in their writing ability. Participants indicated that they have noticed no changes in their writing ability in years and explained that they have received very little additional instruction since elementary or middle school. These issues, whether real or

perceived, have negatively affected the quality of student writing and the students'
writer's voices.

The nine participants for the study were randomly chosen from the teacher-researcher's English 3-Honors class. The sample consisted of three males (one Hispanic and two White) and six females (two African Americans, two Hispanics, and two Whites). While these demographics do not match the typical honors class at Riverside High School, they were indicative of the class from which participants were chosen.

The treatment began with a diagnostic essay, completion of the pre-treatment survey and questionnaire, and pre-treatment participant interviews. After initial data collection, five weeks of instruction ensued using the EVT model. This model, created by the teacher-researcher, posits that all components of writing work together to enhance writer's voice; therefore, by enhancing these individually, writer's voice can be enhanced overall.

EVT consisted of direct instruction coupled with practice that focused on specific components of essay writing. After the instructional portion of the treatment, participants wrote three subsequent essays to measure changes to their writing and to their writer's voice. Data were collected at various phases throughout the study and rigorously analyzed to determine what effect EVT would have on participant writing.

Summary of the Study

The first theme that emerged is that writer's voice can be enhanced with proper instruction and time. Typically, the time spent instructing writing is inadequate to enhance student ability (Cremin & Baker, 2014; Gardner, 2017). In many cases, the limited nature of instruction is based on insufficient strategies available to teachers

regarding teaching writing, particularly in regards to writer's voice, which many believe students either do or do not have (Abbas, 2016; Thompson, 2011).

The findings of this study indicate the need for writing instruction and corroborate the findings in the literature review. Participants indicated that prior to the treatment, they felt that they were not proficient writers and often saw themselves as only able to perform aspects of writing that are easily quantifiable, such as basic body paragraph construction and writing conventions that have been the focus of their writing instruction (Freedman & DiPardo, 2017; Greene, 2016; Payne, 1965; Sanders-Rio, 2010). Participants also indicated that they were unable to achieve acceptable voice in their writing because they were not taught how to write adequately. If, as participants indicated, previous instruction was insufficient, it may have been a result of limited instruction for teachers during their pre-service classes (Alexander et al., 1994; Badger & White, 2000; Cremin & Baker, 2014; Douillard, 2006; Thompson, 2011).

However, the findings of the study indicate that students can be instructed in a manner that increases their overall writer's voice using the Embedded Voice Technique (EVT). As components were isolated and participants were taught how to augment their previous knowledge, their writer's voices increased steadily. Initial gains were meager, but gains over the course of the study were exponential as the average writer's voice score for participant on the final essay was three times higher than the average on the diagnostic essay.

The second theme to emerge from the study is that of increased confidence and efficacy. The participants explained that their confidence in their ability to write had

diminished over time. Most indicated that this decrease was a result of unmemorable instruction from previous teachers.

After the study, participants reported an increase in their confidence following the EVT treatment. This suggests that as the participants were offered ways to better their writing using teacher-modeling and intentional, guided practice, they felt a sense of confidence in their ability and a sense of pride in what they had created. Many participants spoke of their newfound pride in their work during interviews as Schoeffel et al. (2011) suggests. Their perceived satisfaction enhanced their confidence towards their upcoming essays as well, and although they were nervous about writing, they felt confident in their abilities. This increase in confidence suggested a shift towards increased efficacy as they continued to improve and hone their abilities over time.

The final theme to emerge is that there are benefits of group work with essay instruction. Although writing is essentially an independent activity, participants found themselves more comfortable not only writing, but revising and critiquing their work and receiving criticism from others as the study progressed. This comfort, be it with writing or with peer editing and criticism, was correlated with increased confidence and higher levels of writing ability, both of which led to overall increases in writer's voice. Even though it is unclear as to how participants' comfort with their peers is related to their confidence (i.e. which one enhances the other), there is an obvious connection between the two that benefited them in this study.

Implications of the Findings of the Study

Several implications can be drawn from the findings of this study. First and foremost is that writer's voice can be taught, but to do so, the way that writing is

instructed and assessed must change. All teachers will agree that while writing instruction is a difficult, time-consuming endeavor, regardless of how it is done, and writing assessment is even more so (Fischer, Meyers, & Dobelbower, 2017). However, it is through assessment that great strides can also be made in writing instruction (Glasswell & Parr, 2009). Assessment has become an idea that is somehow synonymous with finality; the assessment is the end of instruction.

However, the teacher-researcher suggests that this should not be the case based on the findings of this study. Assessments can and should be instructional tools (Veal, 2013). Throughout the study, the teacher-researcher used assessments for individualized instruction by offering comments that were specific and tailored to the needs of the participant. Students were then allowed to make corrections and resubmit their essays if they wished. Doing so allowed participants to examine the suggestions, ask questions to clarify suggestions, or realize that what they were trying to say did not come through in their writing. As students considered the suggestions, the assessment became a learning tool and served as a guide for future assignments.

While summative assessments are needed for educational purposes, primarily for grades, such practices do not often manifest in the world outside of schools. In most cases, there is always the potential to learn from mistakes and correct errors when they occur. The same should be true for writing assessment. Though it takes additional time, teachers should use writing assessments to provide feedback and examples for students to follow that are derived from the student's work. For example, rather than simply marking a phrase with squiggly lines or questions marks, teachers should explain why it is

awkward and offer a solution for how to prevent this from reoccurring in the future, especially for emerging writers who do not yet have the knowledge to fix it themselves.

Another pivotal implication of this study is the need for teachers to use specific examples for instruction. In many cases, examples created by the teacher-researcher served as a way to have participants think about how to better construct writing. In other cases, student writing, both from participants and from the teacher-researcher's previous students, was used to demonstrate both exemplary and erroneous writing as a tool to show participants what does and does not work.

Regardless, the samples were meaningfully chosen with purpose. Researchers suggest that by doing this, teachers allow students to learn to write through the work of others, using their writings as mentor pieces. However, the teacher-researcher posits that mentor pieces do not only have to be exemplary; in fact, students often learn more by seeing what is not correct than by seeing what is because they find themselves in the errors they see and therefore know what to look for and how to remedy such errors (Elbow, 1997; Gentry, 2010; Pollington, Wilcox, & Morrison., 2010; Pytash & Morgan, 2013; Straub & Alias, 2013).

For this reason, teachers must establish a collection of sample texts that show a variety of levels and that have a variety of aspects that are both exemplary and faulty. It has become cliché to tell others to learn from their mistakes; but, if students can learn from the mistakes of others, many mistakes may be prevented in the first place.

Action Plan

At the onset of this study, the teacher-researcher began examining how EVT could enhance participant writing, particularly in regards to writer's voice. Given the

positive findings from data analysis, the teacher-researcher has generated the following courses of action:

1. Writing instruction should be progressive and should begin early.

2. Journaling must be guided.

3. Practice should be as interactive as possible.

4. The findings of the study should be distributed to interested parties.

Course of action one: Writing instruction should be progressive and should begin early. Research indicates that the ability to write well is necessary for a vast number of occupations (Fischer, Meyers, & Dobelbower, 2017; College Board, 2004). With this in mind, it is imperative that writing instruction be conducted throughout the educational careers of students (CCSS, 2019; SCCCRS, 2019; The Committee of Ten, 1894). However, standards in which multiple modes of discourse are slated to be taught yearly do not take into account the time required for true growth in writing (CCSS, 2019; SCCCRS, 2019).

For this reason, the teacher-researcher contends that progressive writing instruction, particularly in high school, would benefit students and greatly enhance their writing ability. The teacher-researcher defines progressive writing instruction as instruction that begins with narrative writing, transitions to expository writing, and culminates in argumentative writing. This would isolate the three primary modes of discourse found within both CCSS and SCCCRS to specific years over the course of students' high school education rather than attempting to force all three into each year while trying to address roughly 50 additional standards.

Several researchers have identified narrative writing as "gateway writing" that paves the way for more extensive writing methods in the future (Elbow, 1997; Lannin, 2014; Pytash & Morgan, 2013). As such, narrative would be a logical first step for ninth grade students as they enter high school. Here, students could learn the intricacies of basic writing, such as how to begin and end their compositions, how to create strong transitions between paragraphs, and how to enhance tone through diction, using material that is familiar to them (Pytash & Morgan, 2013).

Similarly, teachers could teach writing using that with which they are familiar as well, especially given the paucity of writing strategies to which teachers are often exposed (Abbas, 2016; Gardner, 2017; Thompson, 2011). This would allow teachers who may experience low writing efficacy to enter into writing instruction through a more familiar and comfortable medium while establishing a level of competency for students prior to them advancing into the demands of more tedious writing structures (Cremin & Baker, 2014).

From narrative, writing instruction would then focus on expository in the tenth grade. Students will have been successful at narrative writing prior to learning the more advanced methods for expository. This is a logical step from students telling a story that is well known to them to explaining something about which they have acquired knowledge. Foundational skills learned in the narrative format are transferable to expository writing; therefore, teachers could focus on more intricate aspects of writing, such as developing strong thesis statements, embedding quotes into body paragraphs, and choosing the appropriate tone for their audience. Additionally, the South Carolina Education Department recently adapted English EOC exams to include TDAs that are, in

essence, small expository essays. These are taken during the student's sophomore year, so students will need this ability. If, as the teacher-researcher posits, this method of instruction will enhance student writing, this would be the ideal time to do so with expository writing.

The next progression would occur in the eleventh grade as students learn to write argumentative essays. In the teacher-researcher's experience, this is the year that students are first subjected to rhetorical analysis. As such, learning to analyze rhetoric would pair nicely with argumentative writing as this requires students to write using rhetorical strategies (Enos, 1985; Leake, 2016).

Such a pairing would enhance both the writing and analytical ability of students as they could see how to implement such strategies and how the given strategies influence the audience. At this point, teachers could focus on helping students enhance their syntactical structures, build stronger arguments by synthesizing information, and deliver concluding statements that make an impression on the audience. As with expository writing, state law mandates that all third-year students take the ACT or the SAT, both with writing that is either argumentative or rhetorical analysis, respectively. By focusing on this type of writing as a supplement to what is already established, scores for these may increase for the overall school population based on the findings of this study.

Course of action two: Journaling must be guided. Although journaling was used in this study, journals yielded limited data regarding the participants' insights and feelings. Several researchers have touted the benefits of having students journal as a tool for reflection and as a means to simply write (Elbow, 1997; Lannin, 2014; Zori, 2016).

However, what was realized after the study had concluded and data had been collected is that participants needed strong guidance in order to provide useful information.

At the end of each week, participants were given the same journal prompt: Explain your thoughts on this week's instruction. What was beneficial? What would you change? The teacher-researcher expected to have profound insight into the participants' minds about each phase of the treatment. He failed to remember that all of this, the instruction, the practice, and the journaling, was new to the participants. He mistakenly assumed that participants would expound on their thoughts and feelings about the treatment. Rather than insightful knowledge about the participants and their perceived changes, he received listed answers that were, in most cases, a sentence like "I thought it was good" and in other cases, they were one word, such as "nothing." The journaling aspect had become a task to complete rather than astute observations of one's self.

In the future, the teacher-researcher will remedy this by asking questions that focus on specific aspects of the instruction. Although he wishes to allow flexibility in terms of response length and depth, he will also institute minimums for responses in an attempt to gather more fruitful information from participants. Additionally, he will model responses and have participants share theirs in the hopes that examples will ease any discomfort that participants may be experiencing.

Course of action three: Practice should be as interactive as possible. The activity that participants most enjoyed was the transition activity that enabled them to move around and work as a part of something bigger. Conversations with participants indicated that some took this practice more seriously because they were out of their comfort zone, yet all said it was an entertaining and beneficial activity. They found it

mentally stimulating to have to blend their ideas with those of their peers while maintaining the premise of the story.

Although it may prove unfeasible, the teacher-researcher will attempt to create similar activities for other areas of instruction. The difficulty will come from the nature of the other components. Transitions occur throughout a piece of writing, whereas introductions, thesis statements, and conclusions do not. Body paragraphs rely on introductions and thesis statements, and for this reason, cannot stand alone. The only foreseeable platform to use to incorporate the activity into instruction would be to have participants write an essay, but this seems far more difficult than writing a story as is done in the current transition activity.

Course of action four: The findings of the study should be distributed to interested parties. The final course of action to be taken is that of sharing the findings of the study. Initially, findings will be shared within the teacher-researcher's department. Recently, the department head has asked that teachers share strategies that are beneficial for their students during department meetings, thereby providing an outlet for the distribution of the findings.

Additionally, this study will be repeated during the upcoming school year, and the teacher-researcher may look to publish findings in a professional journal if the findings in the upcoming study mirror the findings from this one. Due to the scant information available concerning writer's voice in essay writing, such a publication would enhance the field and may lead to other studies that validate the findings.

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Suggestions for Future Research

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Research Suggestion One: Progressive Writing Instruction

Using the data found during this study, the teacher-researcher hopes to pilot a research study into progressive writing instruction by working with other teachers within his department to develop the aforementioned action plan as a longitudinal study. Each phase would be implemented with the same group of students as opposed to implementing all three modes of discourse within the same class.

By doing so, the growth over the course of the students' high school careers would offer realistic insight as to the degree to which change occurred. Using this model, it is possible that substantial growth in student writing ability would be seen within three years.

Research Suggestion Two: Enhancing Organization

One area that data from this study suggested improving is that of organization. Therefore, additional research is needed to determine how this can be accomplished in the most efficient manner possible. The teacher-researcher plans to look into various ways to model organization for students. They must be shown that there are several ways to organize their writing, such as chronological or thematic, depending on the nature of the assignment or the type of writing desired.

Within the study, Chris suffered from such a misunderstanding on the final assessment. He intended to use more sources than were required as he depicted the theme of American Literature because "[he] wanted to push [himself] and see what he could do." However, he attempted to do so one piece at a time when using thematic similarities would have been much more beneficial for him. To prevent such mishaps in the future, the teacher-researcher intends to study a variety of methods to enhance organization in writing.

Research Suggestion Three: The Benefits of Group Work during Writing

Instruction

      This study revealed that a strong correlation existed between working with peer groups and increasing writing ability. While there are multifarious examples of research that support group work, none were found that link group work with writing instruction. Typically, writing is seen as a solitary endeavor. Yet, data from this study suggests that there is potentially a link between peer groups and writing instruction that needs to be researched further.

Conclusion

      Writing is a time consuming, arduous task; but teaching writing is exponentially more difficult. Many things must culminate for writing instruction to be beneficial. The teacher and student must be willing to live and breathe writing; such instruction does not end at 3:30 but continues for weeks at a time. It takes dedication to the students. It takes dedication by the students. It takes dedication to perform critical introspection into the self. Simply put, teaching writing is one of the hardest and most rewarding things that a teacher can do. The hours spent planning, teaching, and grading may often seem wasted; but, when students rally and put into practice that which we so painstakingly created, none of that time matters.

      Teaching writing, though tedious, is imperative for teachers. Students must learn to write or they are destined to struggle. Not only must they learn to write, they must learn to do so in a manner that lets the self be seen through words on a page. Although this is difficult to do, it is not impossible.

As this study reveals, writing instruction can be conducted in a manner that develops writer's voice. Such instruction must, however, be seen as an investment. As the data suggests, the highest rewards come with time; they cannot be hurried. Yet, just as an investment must be allowed to mature, so must writer's voice, for it is only through such an investment that change can be made.

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APPENDIX A

THE ESSAY RUBRIC

1. Introduction
    - 1 – The intro begins weakly.
        - Starts with a question
        - Dives directly into the prompt
        - Contains quotes/explanation of the text
        - Confusing
        - Too short (fewer than 5 sentences) or too long (more than 12 sentences)
    - 3 – The intro is average.
        - Begins with an attempt at a hook.
        - Has a shift towards the thesis, though it may not be well-organized
        - Mentions the author, background, text, etc. as needed.
        - Of adequate length. (5 – 8 sentences)
    - 5 – The intro is Exceptional.
        - Has an interesting start
        - Smoothly moves from general to specific with adequate knowledge
        - Has appropriate detail without extraneous information
        - Everything is interconnected within the paragraph
        - Length fits the writing; nothing seems forced or left out (8 – 12 sentences)

2. Thesis
    - 1 – Has an attempted thesis.
        - Incorrectly formatted; lists out what will be talked about (a, b, and c)
        - Is poorly constructed; written with simplistic language and style choices.
        - There is a thesis, but not in the introduction
    - 3 – Has a thesis
        - Structure is appropriate, but may be missing part of the format (IIA)
        - Has simplistic language OR style, but overall, level is appropriate
        - May be a 2 sentence thesis or the next to the last sentence.
    - 5 – Thesis is Exceptional
        - Follows the format appropriately
        - Uses higher level syntax and diction

3. Body Paragraphs
    - 1 – Highly underdeveloped paragraphs
        - Only has 1 paragraph and needs several
        - Paragraphs begin with a quote

- Evidence is not used or is not explained
- Quotes are inadequately used
- May be too short or too long
- Three or more paragraphs have multiple ideas within them

3 – Adequately developed paragraphs
- Paragraph has a logic to its construction, though there may be lapses in internal structure
- Evidence is incorporated and relatively effective; is not thoroughly explained
- Quotes may be too long or too short
- Ends with a transition to the next paragraph (should not do this)
- May have two ideas in one – two paragraphs
- Length is adequate

5 – Exceptional development throughout paragraphs
- Paragraphs have a smooth, logical internal flow
- Quotes are of appropriate length and integrated into the paragraph properly
- Explanation of quotes is sufficient
- Only one idea found within paragraph; well-developed analysis/synthesis of the material
- Paragraph is of appropriate length for the material

4. Conclusion
  1 – Weak conclusion
  - Paragraph is a direct restatement of the inverted introduction
  - Ends with a question
  - Introduces new information
  - Introduces new topic
  - Is confusing

  3 – Adequate conclusion
  - Thesis is restated
  - Expands the information appropriately and adequately
  - May summarize the introduction or body paragraphs too directly

  5 – Exceptional conclusion
  - Thesis is REWORDED appropriately to maintain the concept
  - Major points are reviewed
  - Ends with a "mic drop" that states the author's position in a direct manner.

5. Transitions
  1 – Poor transitions
  - No transition
  - Uses clichéd transition words

  3 – Adequate transitions
  - Transitions use words directly from the previous paragraph/last sentence to transition

5 – Exceptional transitions
- Transitions have an idea or concept from the paragraph/last sentence that relates directly back to the thesis.

6. Organization
   1 – Little to no organization
- Two or fewer paragraphs
- Convoluted topics throughout essay
- No logical progression (chronological, topical, etc.)

   3 – Adequate organization
- Uses minimum number of paragraphs to effectively cover topic
- May have multiple ideas within one or more paragraphs
- Progression is logical, but not optimal

   5 – Exceptional organization
- Number of paragraphs exceeds expected minimum
- Paragraphs are logically developed with only one idea in each (may have multiple quotes)
- Progression of ideas is optimized for the thesis

7. Flow
   1 – Little to no flow
- There is no flow/cohesiveness within paragraphs
- Sentences are choppy and have no rhythm or are too monotonous
- Paragraphs stop and start abruptly

   3 – Adequate flow
- Internal paragraph flow is achieved with minimal problem areas
- Sentences have a sort of rhythm to them; may be monotonous at times, but overall well crafted
- Relatively fluid in nature

   5 – Exceptional flow
- Internal paragraph cohesion is virtually perfect
- Intentional variation of sentences to add rhythm is evident
- Writing is fluid and relaxed; no areas "forced" to fit

8. On topic
   1 – Off topic
- There is no connection to the prompt
- There is no connection to the thesis
- The writing is a summary

   3 – Relatively on topic
- Writing connects to the prompt
- May have occasional lapses in connection

   5 – On topic
- Directly connects to the thesis and the prompt
- No or minimal lapses in connection

9. Evidence
- 1 – Poorly used/chosen evidence
  - Evidence does not relate to the thesis/prompt
  - Evidence is present, but typically too long for what is needed
  - Evidence has no lead in or explanation after
  - Quotes are hanging
  - No blended quotes; all are direct and obtrusive
- 3 – Adequately used/chosen evidence
  - Evidence presented relates to the overall concepts presented
  - Majority of evidence is in the form of direct quotes; little to no higher level usage/blended quotes
  - Most have some sort of lead in and explanation after
- 5 – Exceptionally used/chosen evidence
  - Evidence enhances the thesis and relates directly to the prompt
  - Quotes are artistically and masterfully incorporated into the writing; most are blended where applicable
  - Seamless lead in with exceptional explanation

10. Critical thinking
- 1 – Little observable critical thinking
  - No original thought provided
  - Most "thinking" is a regurgitation of source or class discussion
  - Overwhelmingly summarized information
  - Explanations are bland and offer no insight into the thesis
  - Thinking is logically flawed
- 3 – Adequate observable critical thinking
  - Original thoughts provided and supported
  - May have limited and few areas of summary
  - Explanations are clearly related to and support the thesis
  - Thinking is supported logically
  - Thinking is logically correct
- 5 – Exceptional observable critical thinking
  - Original thoughts offer new insight into the thesis
  - No summary
  - Thoughts and insights are well defined and supported
  - Logically correct and insightful
  - Thinking is beyond simple repetition of the ideas of others

11. Diction
- 1 – Poor diction
  - Word choices severely hinder the ability to comprehend the meaning of the writing
  - Word choice reflects conversational/colloquial diction OR is overly pedantic

- Word choice is far below grade level OR is too "high" level so that it does not make sense
- Overuses same word throughout paragraphs/essay

3 – Adequate Diction
- Word choice is grade level or slightly higher
- Diction choices make logical sense
- Occasional observance of intentionality with word choice
- May use same word occasionally in consecutive sentences

5 – Exceptional Diction
- Word choices enhance the understanding of the writing
- Intentionality with choices is evident
- Higher level words used where appropriate
- Illustrates intellect without being pedantic
- Does not use same word within the same paragraph

12. Grammar

1 – Poor Grammar
- Five or more 1st/2nd person pronouns used
- Subject/verb agreement often lacking
- Shifts tenses frequently
- Excessive 3rd person pronouns used
- 3rd person pronouns are vague/ambiguous
- More than 3 contractions used

3 – Adequate grammar
- Two to four 1st/2nd person pronouns used
- Subject/verb agreement is overall correct
- Few, if any, shifts in tenses
- 3rd person pronouns used appropriately with no more than 3-5 used between proper nouns where applicable
- 3rd person pronouns are clearly designated with minimal ambiguity
- 3 or fewer contractions used

5 – Exceptional grammar
- One or fewer 1st/2nd person pronouns used
- Subject/verb agreement is correct throughout the essay
- No shifts in tenses
- 3rd person pronouns used appropriately with no more than 3 between proper nouns where applicable
- 3rd person pronouns are clearly designated without ambiguity

13. Sentence Structure and variety

1 – Poor sentence structure and variety
- More than 4 missing or misused punctuation marks
- Contains multiple fragments or run on sentences
- Sentence variety is repetitive and choppy

3 – Adequate sentence structure and variety
- 1 – 4 missing/misused punctuation marks
- No more than two fragments or run on sentences
- Variety is appropriate and does not seem overly monotonous

5 – Exceptional sentence structure and variety
- No missing or misused punctuation
- No fragments or run on sentences
- Variety exhibits intentionality in design and shows purposefully designed and planned structures

14. MLA

One point will be deducted for each missing aspect of MLA formatting:
- Header
- Heading
- Title
- Font size/type
- Double spacing
- Incorrect margins

15. Voice is calculated as the average of all preceding components multiplied by 2 to determine numerical value.

$$V = avg. (1\text{-}14) * 2$$

All components are then added together to determine the raw score. This total is subtracted from 100. The difference is divided by 1.5. This product is then subtracted from 100 to generate the grade.

$$Grade = (Raw\ Score - 100) / \text{-}1.5 + 100$$

Example:

Introduction	2	Critical Thinking	1
Thesis	3	Diction	3
Body Paragraphs	2	Grammar	2
Conclusion	1	Sentence structurer/variety	1
Transitions	2	MLA conventions	3
Organization	1	Voice Calculation	3.57
Flow	1	Raw Score (sum)	28.57
On topic	2	Grade	52.38
Evidence	1		

TEACHER-RESEARCHER LIKERT SCALE SURVEY

1. Please enter your full name for credit.

2. Where do you rank yourself on your ability to write introduction paragraphs?

    1   2   3   4   5

3. Where do you rank yourself on your ability to write a strong thesis statement?

    1   2   3   4   5

4. Where do you rank yourself on your ability to write body paragraphs?

    1   2   3   4   5

5. Where do you rank yourself on your ability to incorporate meaningful text into

    body paragraphs?

    1   2   3   4   5

6. Where do you rank yourself on your ability to analyze and explain meaningful

    text in body paragraphs?

    1   2   3   4   5

7. Where do you rank yourself on your ability to write good, strong transitions?

    1   2   3   4   5

8. Where do you rank yourself on your ability to write conclusion paragraphs?

    1   2   3   4   5

9. What is your understanding of voice in essay writing?

    1   2   3   4   5

10. What is your understanding of using strong diction in essay writing?

       1   2   3   4   5

11. How comfortable are you with using multiple types of punctuation?

       1   2   3   4   5

12. How comfortable are you regarding your ability to vary your sentences in terms

   of structure and length?

       1   2   3   4   5

13. How well do you understand how tone can be used in essay writing?

       1   2   3   4   5

14. What is your ability to select an appropriate tone for your intended audience?

       1   2   3   4   5

15. What is your desire to enhance your writing ability?

       1   2   3   4   5

16. How willing are you to put forth the effort to enhance your writing?

       1   2   3   4   5

APPENDIX C

DALY-MILLER WRITING APPREHENSION TEST (WAT)

1. I avoid writing. (-)

   1   2   3   4   5

2. I have no fear of my writing being evaluated. (+)

   1   2   3   4   5

3. I look forward to writing down my ideas(+)

   1   2   3   4   5

4. I am afraid of writing essays when I now they will be evaluated. (-)

   1   2   3   4   5

5. Taking a composition course is a very frightening experience. (-)

   1   2   3   4   5

6. Handing in a composition makes me feel good. (+)

   1   2   3   4   5

7. My mind seems to go blank when I start to work on my composition. (-)

   1   2   3   4   5

8. Expressing ideas through writing seems to be a waste of time. (-)

   1   2   3   4   5

9. I would enjoy submitting my writing to magazines for evaluation and publication. (+)

   1   2   3   4   5

10. I like to write down my ideas. (+)

       1   2   3   4   5

11. I feel confident in my ability to express my ideas clearly in writing. (+)

       1   2   3   4   5

12. I like to have my friends read what I have written. (+)

       1   2   3   4   5

13. I'm nervous about writing. (-)

       1   2   3   4   5

14. People seem to enjoy what I write. (+)

       1   2   3   4   5

15. I enjoy writing. (+)

       1   2   3   4   5

16. I never seem to be able to write down my ideas clearly. (-)

       1   2   3   4   5

17. Writing is a lot of fun. (+)

       1   2   3   4   5

18. I expect to do poorly in composition classes even before I enter them. (-)

       1   2   3   4   5

19. I like seeing my thoughts on paper. (+)

       1   2   3   4   5

20. Discussing my writing with others is enjoyable. (+)

       1   2   3   4   5

21. I have a terrible time organizing my ideas in a composition course. (-)

     1   2   3   4   5

22. When I hand in a composition, I know I'm going to do poorly. (-)

     1   2   3   4   5

23. It's easy for me to write good compositions. (+)

     1   2   3   4   5

24. I don't think I write as well as most other people. (-)

     1   2   3   4   5

25. I don't like my compositions to be evaluated. (-)

     1   2   3   4   5

26. I am not good at writing. (-)

     1   2   3   4   5

APPENDIX D

PRE-TREATMENT RESEARCHER QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Please enter your name so I can give you credit for taking this.

2. What are your thoughts about writing in general? This is ANY type of writing: stories, poems, etc.

3. What are your thoughts regarding ESSAY writing?

4. Where do you rank yourself as a writer? Why?

5. Do you consider yourself to be a good essay writer? Why or why not?

6. What constitutes good essay writing?

7. Are you comfortable incorporating what you believe makes for good essay writing in your own writing?

8. Who do you know that is a good essay writer? Why?

9. What do you consider your strengths as an essay writer?

10. What do you consider your weaknesses as an essay writer?

11. What is the hardest part about writing an essay for you?

12. What is the easiest part about writing an essay for you?

13. When you think about your essay writing skills, do you feel that your writing needs work? If so, what would you most like to fix?

14. Some people are "scared" of writing, particularly essays. Are you? Why or why not?

15. What do you do to make your writing sound intelligent?

16. What makes a strong introduction paragraph?

17. What makes a strong thesis statement?

18. What makes body paragraphs strong?

19. How can you make a strong transition between paragraphs?

20. What makes a strong conclusion?

21. Which is more important to good writing, good grammar, spelling, and mechanics, or

strong voice? Explain the best you can.

POST-TREATMENT RESEARCHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Please enter your name so I can give you credit for taking this.

1. How have your thoughts regarding ESSAY writing changed since we began instruction?

2. As of now, where do you rank yourself as an essay writer? Why?

3. How has your comfort level with essay writing changed since we began instruction?

4. Have any of your skills improved? If so, which ones have and how do you know?

5. Do you think that your ability has declined? If so, where and how?

6. When you think about your essay writing skills, where do you feel that your writing needs additional work? Why?

7. Has your fear of essay writing changed? Please explain.

8. Do you believe that your writing sounds more "intelligent" now than it did before? Why?

9. Which is more important to good writing, good grammar, spelling, and mechanics, or strong voice? Explain the best you can.

10. What are your thoughts about the instructional method we used? Are the notes useful? Was the practice helpful? Please explain your response.

APPENDIX F

PRE-TREATMENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about your writing history.

   a) When did you learn to write?

   b) What is the most vivid writing instruction you can remember?

   c) How often was your writing enhanced/improved by teachers throughout your

      education?

   d) Is writing natural for you? Explain. If no, has it ever been?

2. How do you feel about essay writing? Are you confident in your ability?

3. Do you believe that you need to improve your essay writing ability? (Explain.)

4. If you could improve one thing in your essay writing ability, what would it be? Why?

5. Have you ever worked specifically to become a stronger writer?

   a) What did you do?

   b) How much effort did you put into it?

   c) Did anyone help you? If so, who and how?

APPENDIX G

POST-TREATMENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are your thoughts on the way we worked on writing?

    a. Do you believe it was beneficial for you?

2. Is there any one area that you think has improved greatly? What area was it, and why do you feel that way?

3. What aspects of essay writing do you feel like you need more practice with?

4. Have you become more confident in your abilities? Where? Have you lost confidence in anything? If so, where?

5. Do you believe that you have enhanced your writer's voice? Explain.

6. Where do you believe there could be improvements made to the instruction?

APPENDIX H

"A BROOK IN THE CITY" BY ROBERT FROST

The farmhouse lingers, though averse to square

With the new city street it has to wear

A number in. But what about the brook

That held the house as in an elbow-crook?

I ask as one who knew the brook, its strength

And impulse, having dipped a finger length

And made it leap my knuckle, having tossed

A flower to try its currents where they crossed.

The meadow grass could be cemented down

From growing under pavements of a town;

The apple trees be sent to hearth-stone flame.

Is water wood to serve a brook the same?

How else dispose of an immortal force

No longer needed? Staunch it at its source

With cinder loads dumped down? The brook was thrown

Deep in a sewer dungeon under stone

In fetid darkness still to live and run --

And all for nothing it had ever done

Except forget to go in fear perhaps.

No one would know except for ancient maps

That such a brook ran water. But I wonder

If from its being kept forever under,

The thoughts may not have risen that so keep

This new-built city from both work and sleep.

APPENDIX I

"CHICAGO" BY CARL SANDBURG

Hog Butcher for the World,

Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,

Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler;

Stormy, husky, brawling,

City of the Big Shoulders:

They tell me you are wicked and I believe them, for I

have seen your painted women under the gas lamps luring the farm boys.

And they tell me you are crooked and I answer: Yes, it

is true I have seen the gunman kill and go free to kill again.

And they tell me you are brutal and my reply is: On the

faces of women and children I have seen the marks of wanton hunger.

And having answered so I turn once more to those who

sneer at this my city, and I give them back the sneer

and say to them:

Come and show me another city with lifted head singing

so proud to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning.

Flinging magnetic curses amid the toil of piling job on

job, here is a tall bold slugger set vivid against the

little soft cities;

Fierce as a dog with tongue lapping for action, cunning

as a savage pitted against the wilderness,

Bareheaded,

Shoveling,

Wrecking,

Planning,

Building, breaking, rebuilding,

Under the smoke, dust all over his mouth, laughing with white teeth,

Under the terrible burden of destiny laughing as a young man laughs,

Laughing even as an ignorant fighter laughs who has never lost a battle,

Bragging and laughing that under his wrist is the pulse,

and under his ribs the heart of the people,

Laughing!

Laughing the stormy, husky, brawling laughter of

Youth, half-naked, sweating, proud to be Hog

Butcher, Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat, Player with

Railroads and Freight Handler to the Nation.

"THE GREAT CITY" BY WALT WHITMAN

The place where a great city stands is not the place of stretch'd wharves, docks, manufactures, deposits of produce merely,

Nor the place of ceaseless salutes of new-comers or the anchor-lifters of the departing,

Nor the place of the tallest and costliest buildings or shops selling goods from the rest of the earth,

Nor the place of the best libraries and schools, nor the place where money is plentiest,

Nor the place of the most numerous population.

Where the city stands with the brawniest breed of orators and bards,

Where the city stands that is belov'd by these, and loves them in return and understands them,

Where no monuments exist to heroes but in the common words and deeds,

Where thrift is in its place, and prudence is in its place,

Where the men and women think lightly of the laws,

Where the slave ceases, and the master of slaves ceases,

Where the populace rise at once against the never-ending audacity of elected persons,

Where fierce men and women pour forth as the sea to the whistle of death pours its sweeping and unript waves,

Where outside authority enters always after the precedence of inside authority,

Where the citizen is always the head and ideal, and President, Mayor, Governor and what not, are agents for pay,

Where children are taught to be laws to themselves, and to depend on themselves,

Where equanimity is illustrated in affairs,

Where speculations on the soul are encouraged,

Where women walk in public processions in the streets the same as the men,

Where they enter the public assembly and take places the same as the men;

Where the city of the faithfulest friends stands,

Where the city of the cleanliness of the sexes stands,

Where the city of the healthiest fathers stands,

Where the city of the best-bodied mothers stands,

There the great city stands.

APPENDIX K

"WHAT DOES AMERICAN DEMOCRACY MEANS TO ME?"
BY MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE

Democracy is for me, and for 12 million black Americans, a goal towards which our nation is marching. It is a dream and an ideal in whose ultimate realization we have a deep and abiding faith. For me, it is based on Christianity, in which we confidently entrust our destiny as a people. Under God's guidance in this great democracy, we are rising out of the darkness of slavery into the light of freedom. Here my race has been afforded [the] opportunity to advance from a people 80 percent illiterate to a people 80 percent literate; from abject poverty to the ownership and operation of a million farms and 750,000 homes; from total disfranchisement to participation in government; from the status of chattels to recognized contributors to the American culture.

As we have been extended a measure of democracy, we have brought to the nation rich gifts. We have helped to build America with our labor, strengthened it with our faith and enriched it with our song. We have given you Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Booker T. Washington, Marian Anderson and George Washington Carver. But even these are only the first fruits of a rich harvest, which will be reaped when new and wider fields are opened to us.

The democratic doors of equal opportunity have not been opened wide to Negroes. In the Deep South, Negro youth is offered only one-fifteenth of the educational

opportunity of the average American child. The great masses of Negro workers are depressed and unprotected in the lowest levels of agriculture and domestic service, while the black workers in industry are barred from certain unions and generally assigned to the more laborious and poorly paid work. Their housing and living conditions are sordid and unhealthy. They live too often in terror of the lynch mob; are deprived too often of the Constitutional right of suffrage; and are humiliated too often by the denial of civil liberties. We do not believe that justice and common decency will allow these conditions to continue.

Our faith envisions a fundamental change as mutual respect and understanding between our races come in the path of spiritual awakening. Certainly there have been times when we may have delayed this mutual understanding by being slow to assume a fuller share of our national responsibility because of the denial of full equality. And yet, we have always been loyal when the ideals of American democracy have been attacked. We have given our blood in its defense-from Crispus Attucks on Boston Commons to the battlefields of France. We have fought for the democratic principles of equality under the law, equality of opportunity, equality at the ballot box, for the guarantees of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. We have fought to preserve one nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Yes, we have fought for America with all her imperfections, not so much for what she is, but for what we know she can be.

Perhaps the greatest battle is before us, the fight for a new America: fearless, free, united, morally re-armed, in which 12 million Negroes, shoulder to shoulder with their

fellow Americans, will strive that this nation under God will have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, for the people and by the people shall not perish from the earth. This dream, this idea, this aspiration, this is what American democracy means to me.

ESSAY WRITING: BACKGROUND AND OUTLINING

General Information: Essays and Outlining

Types of Essays

- Narrative – You can, and should, use personal pronouns. This is the ONLY one that you should do this with. This is the type of writing you are used to.

- Argumentative – Your job here is to present an argument with supporting facts from multiple sources to prove your thesis' validity. You must argue against the counterclaim of your opposition. This is similar to what lawyers do.

- Persuasive – Your job is to persuade others to agree with you. It is one-sided and biased. This does not typically require as much irrefutable evidence as argumentative, and you do not HAVE to argue against the counter claim. (I would, but it isn't required.)

- Expository – In these essays, you are explaining something to someone. You are simply telling them the "what" of a situation. There is no argument, no sides, and no opinion. News *should* do this.

- Compare and contrast – These are usually the most difficult essays to write correctly. You present the similarities AND differences between two opposing things. Like expository, it is unbiased and purely fact based.

- Test taking – These are read as rough drafts, so they are not supposed to be perfect. They will always be shorter, less developed due to time constraints, but they should typically follow closely to the argumentative essays.

Your essay must be:

- Convincing and logical.
- Organized
    - Strongest to weakest points.
    - Oldest to newest.
    - Beginning to end.
- Planned out
    - This is usually established by pre-writing

Outlining: How to make it work for you
- 2 reasons to outline:

o Organize your writing
　　　　o Take notes from a book

Outlining – Levels (tiers)
- Level 1 – main idea of paragraph
- Level 2 – important ideas/what you are looking for specifically (quotes/evidence)
- Level 3 – personal thoughts
- These are in order of the text.

Example using food

I) Fruits
  a) Grows on trees
    1) Apples
    2) Oranges
    3) Bananas
  b) Grows on vines
    1) Grapes
    2) Cantaloupes
    3) Watermelon

II) Vegetables
  a) Roots
    1) Potatoes
    2) Carrots
  b) Flowering
    1) Broccoli
    2) Cauliflower
  c) Leafy
    1) Lettuce
    2) Cabbage
    3) Collards

How do you start an outline?
- Tier 1: Main Idea
  - Main idea of a paragraph is usually the first sentence.
- Tier2: Secondary Ideas
  - Things that you think are important
  - Definitions, dates, quotes, etc.
- Tier 3: Your thoughts
  - Put your ideas or specific things you were looking for here.
  - Symbols, rhetoric, etc.

Outlining Practice 1
1. Develop a theme for "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost.
2. Be sure to pay attention to not only WHAT he says, but WHY he says it. Also, be sure to watch for symbols and archetypes
3. Develop an outline for an essay around the following prompt:
　　　　How does Frost develop his theme in the poem "The Road not Taken"?

Outlining Practice 2
1. Develop a theme for "Chicago" by Carl Sandburg.
2. Be sure to pay attention to not only WHAT he says, but HOW he says it. You must watch his tone to understand the poem. (Hint: Diction creates tone. Use this.)
3. Develop an outline for an essay around the following prompt:

How does Sandburg use literary devices throughout the poem "Chicago" to achieve his theme?

Outlining Practice 3
1. Examine the essays written by you and your partner for "A Brook in the City."
2. Develop ONE theme from your two essays.
3. Develop an outline in which you identify four areas from the poem that would support your theme.

ESSAY WRITING: INTRODUCTIONS AND THESIS STATEMENTS

Purpose:
- To introduce your subject, create interest, and state your thesis
- This is where you:
  - Mention the text
  - Tell about the author
  - Put your paper in order to give it cohesion

Without an intro:
- You have no direction to go in.
- You have no point to argue.
  - Nothing is stated, so what is the point of writing?
- The reader is confused.
  - You do NOT want your reader confused.
  - This is VERY bad.
- It's like getting in the car to go to Los Angeles with no map or GPS.
  - How do you get there? Sure, you go west, but then what?

General information about Introductions:
- The following CAN be found in your introductions:
  - You can begin with relevant background information.
  - You can SUMMARIZE the text(s) you are going to discuss.
- Your introduction should be a MINIMUM of 5 sentences, but it will typically be longer.
  - Typically, it is no more than one paragraph.
  - The order in which you list things in your introduction is the order that you MUST present them in when you write your paper, so try not to specify an order in your introduction.

Now, let's look at a couple of introductions that I created to determine if they are good or not. Be sure to explain why you make your decision.

<u>Example 1</u>

   In this essay I will tell you about Patrick Henry and Thomas Paine and how they used rhetoric in their writing to persuade the audience to go to war against brittan. Rhetoric is persuading people through your word choice. Patrick used rhetoric to make people feel some type of way. Thomas used rhetoric. To make people feel like he did. Patrick and thomas used rhetoric to make people feel some type of way. I think you will see that the rhetoric they used is <u>pathos</u>. Here is how I know.

<u>Example 2</u>

   Mankind has always longed for freedom. Sometimes, it was freedom from nature; others, it was freedom from tyranny. For Americans, our yearning began with opposition to British rule and the tyranny that accompanied it, and in 1775, our desire turned to action as skirmishes erupted throughout the colonies. One of the patriots crucial to the opposition was Patrick Henry, an orator and lawyer from Virginia, who inspired the Virginia legislation to fight when all rational thought suggested waiting. His words stirred up such emotion within those in attendance that action was the only option, and the war soon began.

   Henry, however, was not the only one to influence the masses with his voice. Thomas Paine became an inspiration to the troops as they lost hope and morale. With his motivational, encouraging words, the troops that had recently suffered loss rallied, storming the British forces as they invaded New York. These two men had something in common: each used rhetoric, specifically <u>pathos</u>, to achieve their purpose.

Starting your introduction

- To start you introduction, you need to know your thesis.
  - What will you be talking about in your essay?
- Once you have it, you have to figure out why it is important for us to know.
  - This should be some sort of universal truth about life.
  - How does your idea apply to everyone?
- Think about:
  - The historical context.
  - How long the issue has persisted.
  - This is the first sentence of your introduction.

Example: Developing your first sentence

- Think about "The Road Not Taken."
- We'll use the theme that "the decisions we make shape our future."
- Our Thesis will be something like this:

> *By using symbolic imagery, Frost explains that the decisions we make,*
> *even the small ones, have a profound impact on our future.*

- How can we make this universal?

How it all fits together:

Thesis: By using symbolic imagery, Frost explains that the decisions we make, even the small ones, have a profound impact on our future.

First Sentence: Every day, people make hundreds of choices that seem insignificant at the time.

The second sentence

- Now, you have to figure out how to move from the universal concept to the specific thesis.
- This is where you will probably mention the author and the text.
- You may mention the time period if you need to, but that is up to you.

How it all fits together:

First Sentence: Every day, people make hundreds of choices that seem insignificant at the time.

Second Sentence: This concept is the backbone of Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken."

Thesis: By using symbolic imagery, Frost explains that the decisions we make, even the small ones, have a profound impact on our future.

3rd and 4th sentences

- Now you have to begin to get specific.
- You have your universal truth, you have tied it to the poem, what else do you need to know?
- How can you move from the idea in your second sentence to the thesis?

How they fit

First Sentence: Every day, people make hundreds of choices that seem insignificant at the time.

The Sentences:
2. Each of these choices dictates what happens throughout the day and throughout our lives. (I decided to shift my 2nd sentence to the 3rd sentence because it sounded better.)
3. This concept is the backbone of Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken."
4. Frost, a late romantic poet, uses the analogy of walking in the woods to show the importance of our choices.

Thesis: By using this analogy and its innate symbolic imagery, Frost explains that the decisions we make, even the small ones, have a profound impact on our future.

The finished introduction

Every day, people make hundreds of choices that seem insignificant at the time. Each of these choices dictates what happens throughout the day and throughout our lives. This concept is the backbone of Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken." Frost, a late romantic poet, uses the analogy of walking in the woods to show the importance of our choices. By using this analogy and its innate symbolic imagery, Frost explains that the decisions we make, even the small ones, have a profound impact on our future.

When it's done:
- Your intro will be "funnel shaped"
- You have a broad opening statement(top of the funnel)
- It tapers down.
- It meets at a specific point (Thesis)

Essay template:

Introduction
- First, figure out what the overall idea of your paper is. (Theme/thesis)
  - Begin with a vague, universally true statement about your topic/idea. (1-2 sentences)
- Begin to work your ideas down to your SPECIFIC topic.
  - Briefly explain what needs to be explained to help your reader understand your topic. (2-3 sentences MAX)
- Give the importance of your topic/idea. (1-2 sentences)
- Get specific about your topic/idea. (1-2 sentences)
- Write your thesis statement.

Thesis Statements
- A thesis statement is a judgment or opinion stated as a FACT.
- Thesis – Main idea/central point of your essay
  - Typically is last sentence of your introductory paragraph.

Effective Thesis Statements
- An <u>EFFECTIVE</u> thesis statement has three characteristics:
  - Clearly expresses your essay's main idea
  - Communicates your essay's purpose
  - Is clearly worded

Bad thesis statement: Why is this bad?

> *I think that community college might make sense for some people, but it might not for others.*

Good thesis statement: Why is this good?

> *For many people, a community college makes more sense than a four-year university.*

The IIA Format

After conducting in-depth analyses on AP essays, it became evident that a good, high-scoring thesis on AP essays has the following 3 parts:

- Introductory clause at the beginning.
- Independent Clause
- Appositive within the independent clause

Introductory Clause

- These "introduce" the sentence that you are writing.
    - A clause (phrase) at the beginning of a sentence that "introduces" the subject.
    - It is always set off by a comma at the end.
    - It almost always begins with a preposition.
- These cannot stand alone, and often have other names such as dependent clauses, prepositional phrases, etc.
- Examples:
    - In the poem Chicago, …
    - By closely examining Hawthorne's use of light and dark, …

Independent Clause

- This is the fancy way of saying a sentence.
- These can stand alone and need no other parts to make sense.
- Examples:
    - Sandburg clearly develops his theme through his use of literary devices.
    - It is clear to see that those who stand in the light are truly innocent.

Appositive (courtesy of http://www.chompchomp.com/terms/appositive.htm)

- An appositive is a noun or noun phrase that renames another noun right beside it.
- The appositive can be a short or long combination of words.
- The important point to remember is that appositives are <u>nonessential</u> and will *always* be separated from the rest of the sentence with commas or hyphens.
    - Use commas if the appositive IS NOT a full sentence.
    - Use hyphens if the appositive IS a full sentence.

- Examples:
  - Sandburg clearly develops his theme *– industrialization will destroy mankind –* through his use of literary devices.
  - It is clear to see that those who stand in the light, *such as Hester*, are truly innocent.

Practice 1
- Now, it's time to see if you can apply what you have learned.
- With a partner, use the poem "Mag" to create an introduction for the following prompt:
- Prompt:

  Based on the poem, determine how the speaker feels about Mag.

Let's look it over.
- Turn to the group behind/in front of you.
- Share your introduction with the other group.
- Decide what is good and what needs to be corrected.
- Answer the following questions for each introduction. If you answer "No," you must offer suggestions to correct the problem.
  1. Does the paragraph begin with a universal statement?
  2. Is there context between the first sentence and the thesis? (i.e., Does is logically funnel down to the thesis?)
  3. How many sentences are there?
  4. Is the thesis in the correct format? (Introductory clause, Independent clause WITH an appositive?
  5. Does the thesis make sense?

Practice 2
- Create an introduction for the following:
- Prompt:

  What is the theme of "The Great City" by Walt Whitman?
- Possible Theme (use this unless you have one of your own):

  People are the ones who control the government, not leaders nor money.

Let's look it over.
- Turn to the group behind/in front of you.
- Share your introduction with the other group.
- Decide what is good and what needs to be corrected.
- Answer the following questions for each introduction. If you answer "No," you must offer suggestions to correct the problem.

1. Does the paragraph begin with a universal statement?
2. Is there context between the first sentence and the thesis? (i.e., Does is logically funnel down to the thesis?)
3. How many sentences are there?
4. Is the thesis in the correct format? (Introductory clause, Independent clause WITH an appositive?
5. Does the thesis make sense?

Practice 3
- Create an Introduction for the following prompt:
- What is the theme of "A Brook in the City"?
- Theme possibility:
  > No matter what we do, Nature and man will always be in opposition.

Let's look it over.
- Turn to the group behind/in front of you.
- Share your introduction with the other group.
- Decide what is good and what needs to be corrected.
- Answer the following questions for each introduction. If you answer "No," you must offer suggestions to correct the problem.
  1. Does the paragraph begin with a universal statement?
  2. Is there context between the first sentence and the thesis? (i.e., Does is logically funnel down to the thesis?)
  3. How many sentences are there?
  4. Is the thesis in the correct format? (Introductory clause, Independent clause WITH an appositive?
  5. Does the thesis make sense?

APPENDIX N

ESSAY WRITING: BODY PARAGRAPHS, CITATIONS, AND TRANSITIONS

Rules for Body Paragraphs

Body Paragraphs should:
- ALWAYS BE INDENTED!
- Have a clear focus for each body paragraph that relates back to the thesis
- Include evidence for your reasoning in each body paragraph
- Have clear transitions from one body paragraph to the next
- Be organized from:
  - Most important point to least important point.
  - From oldest event to newest event.

Body Paragraphs
- The purpose of body paragraphs is to explain your thesis.
  - Why do you believe what you believe?
  - This is where you have to explain yourself.
- You must use TEXTUAL evidence to do this appropriately.
  - EVERYTHING in your body paragraphs is designed to support your thesis.
  - All of your evidence must be related back to the thesis, otherwise it is a WASTE OF SPACE!
- There should be NO QUESTION as to why you are correct in your ideas by the end of the paragraphs.
  - If you can read it and ask "why?" or "how?" when you finish, you have NOT done your job correctly.
  - You as the writer MUST make sure that you have fully discussed the topic at hand. DO NOT ASSUME IT IS CLEAR!
  - This is why you need information from sources.
- Quotes from others prove that your ideas are correct or they show how you came to think the way you do.
  - But, quotes MUST BE EXPLAINED, even if it seems obvious.
  - This is how you tie your paragraphs back to your thesis.

EXTREMELY BASIC Body Paragraph paradigm
- Body paragraph 1 – the STRONGEST example/argument you have.
  - Transition Sentence
  - Quote
  - Explain your choice
  - How is it related to your thesis?
- Body paragraph 2 – the NEXT STRONGEST example/argument you have.
  - Transition Sentence
  - Quote
  - Explain your choice
  - How is it related to your thesis?
- Body paragraph 3 – the NEXT STRONGEST example/argument you have.
  - Transition Sentence
  - Quote
  - Explain your choice
  - How is it related to your thesis?
- Etc.

Paragraph formula
- Each body paragraph has the same BASIC structure:
  - A tie to the previous thought/paragraph (transition)
  - Your point/argument/example
  - Quote that supports your idea
  - Explain your quote of choice.
    - How it relates to your topic/theme? (Connection to your thesis)
- This is the MINIMUM number of sentences you should have. However, you will typically have substantially more (8-10 recommended).
- This builds a strong, cohesive argument.
  - The more evidence/support you have, the better your essay will be.

Quotes
- These are NOT the same as dialogue!
  - Do not simply look for quotation marks for your quotes.
- You must select quotes that will SUPPORT YOUR IDEAS.
  - These must be put in quotation marks.
  - These must have the author and page in parentheses (Fowler 22)
- You must also clearly explain how the quotes support your thinking/thesis.
  - Don't assume that it is obvious.
  - What does it mean?

- o How does it support your thesis?
  - ▪ This will be at LEAST 2 sentences.
  - ▪ This MUST be the bulk of your paragraph.

How to shorten quotes
- Although you will write the quote out, it doesn't always have to be a full sentence.
  - o Ellipse (The three dots)
    - ▪ Use ellipses (…) as needed.
    - ▪ This shows that you have REMOVED something from the quote.
  - o Ellipse Example
    "Knowledge is constructed from experience…and should be situated in a realistic setting" (Mergel, 1998).
  - o Brackets (square looking parentheses)
    - ▪ If you add words for clarification, bracket them [the words].
  - o Bracket Example
    This sparked change, and in the 1970's, "the dominant theory of writing instruction began [to shift] away from a focus on the written product and form toward an emphasis on the writing process and all its complexity" (as cited by McCarthey, 1990, p. 1).

Including evidence with quotes/citations
- There are basically 2 ways to cite information:
  - o Direct quotes
    - ▪ Examples of these can also be seen in the first paragraph above.
  - o Embedded quotes
    - ▪ Look at the second paragraph for an example of this.
- Direct quote example:
  - o In "The Tide Rises, The Tide Falls," the imminence of death is illustrated in line two. "The twilight darkens, the curlew calls…" (2) Here Longfellow is stating that the sun is beginning to go down, thus representing the end of both day and life.
- Intermediate direct quote example:
  - o In line two, Longfellow states that, "The twilight darkens, the curlew calls…" This is done in reference to the approach of death and the nearing to the end of life.
- Advanced embedded example:
  - o Using the analogy of twilight (the precursor to night), Longfellow depicts death not as a fast process, but as a "Darkness [that slowly] settles on" us all as we sleep safely inside our "roofs and walls" (Line 6).

- Both have their place in an essay, so there should be a blend.
  - IF you are going to overuse one, overuse the embedded.

Transitions
- Transitions are one of the most important aspects of an essay.
- They can make a bad idea great, or they can ruin a great idea.
- Successful transitions:
  - Use words/phrases from the last line of the previous paragraph in the first line of the new paragraph.
  - Combine thoughts from the previous paragraph with the current paragraph.
- This will be in the first sentence of the new paragraph.
- Trite transitions ("First, Second, Next, Finally" etc). are NOT acceptable transitions.

Transition Example
  - In Patrick Henry's "Speech to the Virginia Convention," he uses a variety of persuasive techniques. Henry's most effective persuasive technique is the use of pathos.
  - Pathos is the most effective type of persuasion Henry uses because…
- Transition Example 2
  - Dogs are wonderful animals. They are full of love for their owners and typically want nothing more than to make their owners happy.
  - Cats, however, are less concerned for their owners happiness than they are their own.

Practice 1
- Write a body paragraph using the 2nd stanza of "Because I could not stop for Death."
- Thesis:
  As Dickenson explains, Death is constantly moving, neither fast nor slow, as it creeps up on us.
- Take a look at what you have.
- In your group, each of you will read one of the body paragraphs aloud.
- Those of you not reading need to listen carefully.
- Answer and explain the following about your peers' paragraph:
  1. Does the paragraph flow?
  2. Are the quotes well chosen?
  3. Are the quotes too short/long?
  4. Are the quotes embedded?
  5. Is the quote fully explained?

6. Is there a clear connection to the thesis?
7. Is it confusing?
- Do this for EACH of body paragraph.
- Write down all comments and offer corrections for any "no" answers.

Practice 2
- Examine the 1ˢᵗ and 3ʳᵈ stanzas of "The Road Not Taken". Write a body paragraph that illustrates how Frost uses these stanzas to symbolize the end of one stage of life and the beginning of the next.
- Thesis: Throughout the poem "A Road Not Taken," Frost uses a variety of literary devices to build his theme – once made, decisions cannot be undone.
- Take a look at what you have.
- In your group, each of you will read one of the body paragraphs aloud.
- Those of you not reading need to listen carefully.
- Answer and explain the following about your peers' paragraph:
  1. Does the paragraph flow?
  2. Are the quotes well chosen?
  3. Are the quotes too short/long?
  4. Are the quotes embedded?
  5. Is the quote fully explained?
  6. Is there a clear connection to the thesis?
  7. Is it confusing?
- Do this for EACH of body paragraph.
- Write down all comments and offer corrections for any "no" answers.

Practice 3 (To be completed after the transition activity.)
- Using the "city" poems, write three body paragraphs that tie them together based on the author's ideas about progress.
- Poems: "The Great City"
  - ○ "A Brook in the City"
  - ○ "Chicago"
- Thesis: Although the majority of people in America saw industrialization as a progressive need, many, including Whitman, Frost, and Sandburg, saw industrial progress for what it was: the end of life as they knew it.
- Take a look at what you have.
- In your group, each of you will read one of the body paragraphs aloud.
- Those of you not reading need to listen carefully.
- Answer and explain the following about your peers' paragraph:
  1. Does the paragraph flow?
  2. Are the quotes well chosen?

3. Are the quotes too short/long?
4. Are the quotes embedded?
5. Is the quote fully explained?
6. Is there a clear connection to the thesis?
7. Is it confusing?

- Do this for EACH of body paragraph.
- Write down all comments and offer corrections for any "no" answers.

Essay Recommendations

- You must incorporate transitions (in the manner we discussed).
  - "First, Second," etc. are NOT acceptable transitions.
- Do not use PAST tense when you are discussing literature.
- Make sure you bring your quotes back to the essay thesis in your explanation.
  - WHY DOES IT PROVE THE ESSAY'S THESIS?
- Do not start sentences with –ing words until you are more adept at writing; they often lead to fragments.

Essay Template:

Body Paragraphs

- Each body paragraph has the same <u>BASIC</u> structure:
  - A tie to the previous thought/paragraph
  - Your point/argument/example
  - Quote that supports your idea
  - Explanation of your quote of choice
  - How it relates to your topic/theme
  - This is the MINIMUM number of sentences you should have. In many cases, you will have substantially more.
- Sample layout for essay:
  - Body paragraph 1 – the STRONGEST example/argument you have.
  - Body paragraph 2 – the NEXT STRONGEST example/argument you have.
  - Body paragraph 3 – the NEXT STRONGEST example/argument you have.
  - Etc.

APPENDIX O

THE TRANSITION ACTIVITY

Directions
1. Take out 2 sheets of paper.
2. I will give you a prompt to write on.
3. When I say stop, you will complete your sentence and stop.
4. I will then play music and ask you to stand up and walk around the room.
5. When the music stops, you will sit at the closest desk.
6. You can only sit at a desk once.
7. You will write your name in the margin on the paper.
8. Then, you will receive another prompt.
9. Your job is to read the preceding writing, then transition from that idea to the new prompt on the board.

Are there any questions?

Prompt 1
- Once upon a time…
- Create an imaginary place.
- Only describe this place; do not add any characters.
- You will have 5 minutes to write.

Stop. Walk around the circle until the music stops.

Prompt 2
- Read about your peer's imaginary place.
- Now use a transition sentence in the next paragraph to create two characters who live in this imaginary place.
- ONLY discuss the characters
- Be careful not to include any conflicts.
- You will have 6 minutes to write.

Stop. Walk around the circle until the music stops.

Prompt 3
- Read your peer's story.
- Create a new paragraph, using a transition, and discuss a CONFLICT the characters face.
- Do not resolve the conflict, just create it.
- You will have 7 minutes to write.

Stop. Walk around the circle until the music stops.

Prompt 4
- Read your peer's story.
- Create a final paragraph, using a transition, and resolve the conflict(s).
- You will have 8 minutes to write.
-

Stop. Return to your original desk.

It's time to read your masterpiece.
- As you read, look at the transitions.
- Write your responses to the questions below on notebook paper. Make your each of your responses 50 words, minimum.
1. How are the ideas blended together?
2. Does the story make sense, or is it just sort of forced?
3. Which transition is the best? Why?
4. Which is the worst? Why?
5. From what you can see, what makes a good transition?

We will read SOME of these aloud shortly.

ESSAY WRITING: CONCLUSIONS

How have you been taught to write conclusions?

Is this familiar?
- Start with "In conclusion…" (I just threw up in my mouth. ☹)
- Restate your thesis.
- Restate the introduction.
- End with a question.

I'm sorry to tell you this, but NEVER DO THIS AGAIN!

There is no "Magic Formula," but this should help some.
- Never introduce a new topic or idea in the conclusion, and NEVER end with a question!
- Use an introductory clause, but NOT "In conclusion…"
- Start by restating your <u>IDEA</u> or <u>RE-WORDING</u> your thesis.
- Review major points or sum up each argument in no more than one sentence each. You may even be able to put them together in 1-2 sentences.
- Conclusions should be no more than 3-5 sentences on average.
   - They can be longer, but NOT shorter.

Here is why this format is bad. Look at how similar these two paragraphs are.
- In this essay I will tell you about Patrick Henry and Thomas Paine and how they used rhetoric in their writing to persuade the audience to go to war against brittan.
- Rhetoric is persuading people through your word choice.
- Patrick used rhetoric to make people feel some type of way.
- Thomas used rhetoric.

- To make people feel like he did.
- Patrick and thomas used rhetoric to make people feel some type of way.
- I think you will see that the rhetoric they used is _____.
- Here is how I know.
- In conclusion, I have showed you that Patrick Henry and Thomas Paine used rhetoric.

- They used rhetoric to persuade the audience to go to war against Britain.
- Rhetoric is persuading people to feel like you do.

- Patrick and Thomas used rhetoric to do this.

- As you can see, I have told you why.

Conclusion Example 1

- In conclusion, I have showed you that Patrick Henry and Thomas Paine used rhetoric. They used rhetoric to persuade the audience to go to war against Britain. Rhetoric is persuading people to feel like you do. Patrick and Thomas used rhetoric to do this.

Conclusion example 2

- Clearly, pathos is the most effectively used rhetorical device in both "The Speech to the Virginia Convention" and "The Crisis, No. 1." While each writer uses his own style, they both achieve the same result: inspire those around them to act and not back down. And while logos and ethos are used, pathos is the best for motivating the masses to follow and oppose the tyranny they faced. Today, a similar war is ongoing, and each side is using these same appeals to sway our vote and gain our support. It is our duty to discover the facts rather than listen to the rhetoric so that when we face the opposition and are pressed to decide, our decision is ours alone, and our voice can help to influence others.

Conclusions should attempt to:

- End with a generalization as to why your idea is important.
- Leave the reader thinking about the topic.
- The last sentence should have an impact.
  - Make it the equivalent of a mic drop as you walk off the stage.
- After you write your conclusion ask:
  - Does it have a GOOD introductory clause?
  - How does it use the original thesis?
  - Is the thesis REWORDED?
  - Are the major points of the essay summarized?
  - What is the mic-drop at the end?

Essay Template:

Conclusion
- Sum it all up here.

- Link it back to your introduction/main idea.
- Leave it with something to think about, but NOT a question.

Conclusion Practice 1 and 2
- Choose 2 of your introductions that you wrote earlier. Write one on the front of a piece of paper and the other on the back.
- Then, write a conclusion for each introduction.
- If you do not have 2 introductions, write 2, then write the conclusions for them.

Conclusion Practice 3
- Using your new "Brook" essays, write a new conclusion for the revisions you have made. You should have a finished "essay" that is in a much better format when you're done.

ESSAY WRITING: REVISION, PROOFREADING, AND MISCELLANEOUS
INFORMATION

Revision/Proofreading
- Revision is making your writing sound better.
    - Better sentences (syntax)
    - Improved word choice (diction)
    - Rearrange for better structure and flow (voice)
    - Fix order/organization if needed.
- Proofreading is fixing errors.
    - Grammar
    - Punctuation
    - Mechanics
    - Spelling

What to look for in your essay:
- Grammar
    - Are commas correct?
    - Are there fragments?
- Pronouns
    - Are there any personal pronouns?
    - Are there any vague pronouns?
- Quotes/Citations
    - Are there good, well-chosen quotes?
    - What type of quotes were used?
    - Are they cited correctly?
- Information:
    - Is the information clear?
    - Is the quote explained fully?
    - Are there questions about their analysis? Write at least one down on their sheet.
- Revision
    - Where can you use higher diction?
    - Can you remove the "to be" verbs and make stronger sentences?

- Can you remove *is, was, etc.*?

Words to NEVER use because they are WEAK! (Pick stronger words instead.)
- Good
- Bad
- More
- Little
- Things
- Stuff
- People
- A lot (of)
- Really
- Very
- So
- Just
- Like
- You
- Me
- I
- Might, maybe, could be, appears to be, I think that

Rules to sound "educated"
- Don't overuse "IS"
- Don't overuse "ONE"
- Try not to write the author's name in consecutive sentences. Have at least 3 between them.
- Try not to use the same word more than twice per paragraph, and NEVER in the same sentence.

Revision Practice
- Re-read the essay and circle all of the preceding issues that you see.

MLA Format for Essay
- Header
    - Last name and page number at top right
- Heading – front page ONLY, left side
    - Your name
    - Teacher's name
    - Class/section (block)
    - Date
- Centered title, and it MUST BE GOOD, NOT LAME!
- Double space
- 1 inch margins
- 12 font of Times New Roman
- In text citations (Equiano 84)

Proofing/Finishing: Ask yourself the following questions
- Does it "look" like an essay? Are there multiple paragraphs?
- Is there an intro? Does is sound "good"?
- Do paragraphs have transitions, quotes, explanations?

- Does the essay go in the same order as the intro? Does is make sense in the order it's in?
- Does it read like a dry encyclopedia entry or too much like a story?
- Are interesting, high level words used? Is it "interesting" for an essay?
- Is it about ONE idea?
- Is it a summary?
- Does the essay FULLY explain the ideas it needs to discuss?
- Are GOOD quotes used?
- Are they accurately explained?
- Are there missing words, punctuation, etc?
- Are there run-on sentences and fragments?
- Is the rhythm of the sentences simple, easy and repetitive, or is there contrast?

Things to avoid.
- First name usage
  - If you don't personally know the person your are discussing (author, poet, character, etc.), DO NOT call them by first name!
  - Use the last name only.
- First and second person pronoun usage
  - I, me, my
  - You, your, you're
- Vague pronoun references that create ambiguity (confusion)
  - To whom am I referring?
    Equiano saw a man on the deck of the ship. He went over and beat him when he would eat his dinner. It made him sick and he wanted to kill himself.
- Contractions
  - NEVER use contractions in formal writing. You MUST write out the words.
- Tense shifts
  - You must maintain the same tense throughout your essay. You can't say: Equiano wrote his narrative. In it he says that slaves were treated badly. He said on page 84…
- No explanation of quote or tie to thesis
  - When you put a quote, you must explain how it is connected. You can't just say it is an example. Why is it an example? What is the purpose of it being here?
- Make sure that your quotes:
  - Are connected to you thoughts

- Say what you want them to say
- Say what you THINK they say
- A quote may be a sentence, 2 sentences, a paragraph, a portion of a sentence, etc.
- Beginning paragraphs with quotes
  - Do not do this. There is no transition from the preceding paragraph if you do.

SAMPLE ESSAYS FOR REVISION/PROOFREADING CRITIQUE

Student 1, Student 2

English III, Semester I, Block II

Mr. Fowler

October 12, 2018

Chicago Essay

The gunman, so "cruel" and "vile", wears an ironclad burden; a graphene guise drawing contempt and unmerited cruelty. With each shot, the gunman cripples its state, boring holes that allow "them" to see the pale blue face of deprivation, the face of judgement, the face of optimistic lies. This concept serves as a foundation for Chicago; a poem by 20th century poet, Carl Sandburg that grasps transgressions fueled by the Great Depression from a different perspective, casting away shadows of "brutality" in exchange for the, "faces of women and children [baring]... the marks of wanton hunger." Through usage of an array of diction, symbols, and an established tone, Sandburg forges the theme, "the flaws that drive misfortune are often the very flaws that give a city's people their pride", acknowledging his city's wicked nature, but never once denouncing it.

Sandburg, having answered "their" claims with resonation, forges the aforementioned theme by using an array of diction; a fluid contortion of word choice that aids in the conveyance of intertwined disgust and pride. The speaker, seemingly consumed by

pessimism, indicates disgust by initiating the poem with reference to Chicago's preconceived notions, referring to how it is prominently known as the, "Hog Butcher for the world, Tool Maker [In reference to unethical labor], Stacker of Wheat [In reference to those bereaved in the process], Player With Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler [In reference to the economy fueled by the 90% and curated by the 10%.]" The speaker also agrees, or resonates with "their" perception of Chicago in his first two responses to what "[they] tell [him]", fully satiated by "their" designation of "[the city][as] wicked" and, "crooked, "for [he] has seen its painted women under the gas lamps luring the farm boys" and the, "gunman kill and go free to kill again." This serves to convey the speaker's disgust by divulging how he, in despite of his aptness to doing so, did not vouch for Chicago, rather he allowed the city, "his" city, to be tarnished, combatting the series of defamatory statements with passive phrases. I.e the speaker elaborates on Chicago's "wicked" designation as opposed to forming a rebuttal. With a force almost antithetical in nature, Sandburg proclaims his pride for the city of Chicago, "[giving] them back the sneer."

Following suit with a sudden shift in tone, Sandburg indicates pride by requesting that, "[they] show him another city with lifted head singing so proud to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning" and altering his prior inflection with a new sense of joy amidst the qualities that previously repulsed him, regarding how each citizen " [laughs] with white teeth, under the terrible burden of destiny laughing as a young man laughs…. [laughing] the stormy, husky, brawling laughter of Youth, half-naked, sweating, proud to be Hog Butcher, Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat, Player with Railroads and Freight Handler to the Nation" as opposed to dawning on the city's adverse characteristics.

Coherently, the speaker allows pride to swell in his reference to "[laughter]", an indicator of exuberance, and "bragging", a signifier of contention, in his second mention of the city's characteristics. It is with divine thought that the speaker pairs diction with symbols in a sturdy meld, allowing for the forged theme,"the flaws that drive misfortune are often the very flaws that give a city's people pride" to surface in its perfect, crystalline structure.

   Through the accumulation of a variety of symbols, Sandburg further augments the weight of "Chicago"'s theme, and paints a [far] more vivid image of a 1930's Chicago. To set the scene of the poem, the narrator describes Chicago as "Hog Butcher for the World,...City of the Big Shoulders", which is what the world perceives Chicago as. He then takes the reader directly into the darkest parts of the city, and has no difficulty admitting to the [vicious] claims of Chicago's brutality. The narrator has "...seen your painted women under the gas lamps luring the farm boys", which reveals how the people of the city are "painted" and "wicked", hiding their true selves. His point is further developed by describing this particular scene with "gas lamps", showing that the shady business is being executed under the shelter of night; a place where you're unable to be seen. He then states that he has "...seen the gunman kill and go free to kill again." This serves to make it known that even the authority is wicked enough to turn a blind eye to the violence as long as they get a cut of the spoils. Afterwards, the narrator agrees once again that the city is brutal and unforgiving, for he has seen "On the faces of women and children…the marks of wanton hunger." Somehow, though, the narrator eventually has a realization and makes a retort that shows a possibly altered perspective on his part.

After submitting to all of the terrible things said about Chicago, the narrator asks those that "...sneer at this my city…" to find him a better city; a "...city with lifted head singing so proud to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning" in an attempt to prove that regardless of how good or bad Chicago is, there's no better option. As his rant continues, the Narrator seamlessly transitions back to Chicago, and begins to commend the citizens for their hard work. He describes them as "bareheaded, shoveling, wrecking, planning, building, breaking, rebuilding." Those words represent the endless cycle of industry, but they also represent unyielding determination. A man is seen with "...dust all over his mouth, laughing with white teeth…", "...bragging and laughing that under his wrist is the pulse, and under his ribs is the heart of the people…" Regardless of their struggles, the people of Chicago refuse to succumb to the cold grip of fate. Through all of the shadow, He saw a light. The narrator finally gained pride for his city, seeing that deep down is a burning passion that belongs to everyone. A will to survive and a will to thrive is what he saw in those people. This gradual change in the narrator's opinion is further built upon through the continuous changes in tone throughout the poem.

Sandburg sets a multitude of tones throughout "Chicago" to convey the gradual growth of the narrator's opinion that began as bitter and almost discomforting, but eventually blossomed into strong pride in his city. The first two stanzas are when the narrator's animosity for Chicago is [the] strongest. He begins by listing off what Chicago is most known for, but doesn't ever try to defend the city's honor. He immediately goes into the multifarious unsettling niches that the citizens fall into, and how those that sneer at the city say "...you are crooked and [he answers]: Yes, it is true…" yet again refusing to defend Chicago. Swiftly though, his tone begins to develop into something more

prideful. He mockingly asks "...those who sneer at this my city…" to name a better city and begins to describe what this theoretical "perfect" city would be like. His tone becomes far more prideful as this description becomes a description of Chicago and its people. He describes the people as "savage"and "youthful.", and he forges the description of a man who's "...laughing with white teeth, under the terrible burden of destiny laughing as a young man laughs…" acknowledging the determination of Chicago's people. He almost seems to speed up his diction alongside his growing passion. With each stanza, the reader and narrator both begin to see Chicago in a new light. One that paints a picture of pride and determination.

  This picture, made complete by defining strokes of a new perspective, emphasizes the gunman's angst, balancing his "cruel" and "vile" nature with undertones of the burden that he wears; the ironclad guise drawing contempt that he, seeking to bore holes revealing the pale blue face of deprivation, manifests as shared pain. Through the clever execution of an array of diction, symbols, and an established tone, Sandburg forges the theme, "the flaws that drive misfortune are often the very flaws that give a city's people pride". The speaker, though initially repulsed by his city, begins to see a new light in Chicago; a hearty contention in its pulse that allows a broiling stream of conquered adversity to flow through the veins of the people. A contention serving to shine through the, "terrible burden of destiny", "the toil of piling job on job", the boisterous smoke and dust.

Student 1 and Student 2
Mr.Fowler
English III
5 October 2018

The Road Not Taken Essay

In life, one will always have to make a choice, regardless of the severity or difficulty. "The Road Not Taken", by Robert Frost is a great example of this. The person in his poem is a explorer in an Autumn wood and has to choose what path to take. Frost shows us this through Literary devices throughout the poem.

In the first stanza Frost talks about the "yellow wood" showing that it is fall. When he talks about yellow he is showing the end of fall and winter is coming. Knowing that it is fall and the leaves are all kinds of color, orange shows change and an adventure. Winter is so close and the end and death is near. The woods and wilderness is an escape for the person that could possibly save him/her from death.

In the third stanza Frost brings up the morning showing a rebirth of the person. The fall leaves have all fallen and spring has come bringing life. Before the person left they made a mark in their head to walk the other path on another day. Knowing the choices that's been made they wondered on whether to ever come back.

Even though Frost uses Archetypes, a type of symbolism, tone is another useful tool that he uses. In the beginning he has a curious, or worried tone. " And sorry I could not travel both. And be one traveler, long I stood," said Frost in stanza one. Robert Frost displays he is both curious about the path and worried he will not be able to explore both.

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Frost may have been worried in the first half of the poem, but towards the end he calms himself and seems more accomplished. "Oh, I marked the first for another day!... I took the one less traveled by and that has made all the difference" in this Frost is saying it will be okay and that he can go the other way another time. While on the other hand he is feeling more accomplished because of his choice and how he chose to take the path that others did not.

Briefly, Frost's use of tone and archetypes creates the severity of the decision the character has to make. As said said in paragraphs 4 and 5, Frost's use of tone shows how stressed his character is until finally deciding and being relieved. The Road Not Taken also has a large use of archetypes as seen in paragraphs 2 and 3.

Student 1 (George Bush)

Mr. Fowler
English 3H
20-Nov-18

Bush's Comforting Words:

The reason why Bush was concerned about the people was

not only because the terrorist attacks. Bush was concerned about the

aftermath of it. After a tragic event people have a tendency to panic and worry, some

people even have a terrible desire to commit suicide from distress due to lost family. We

always need comfort or something to help us through pain. Bush was their comfort for

this tragic event. This was a very random attack and Bush was relatively new President in

office. He gave this speech to make the American people not worry about another attack

by using comforting words, expressing condolences and telling the people what he's

doing during a crisis.

Although George was fairly new in office, he did good job of doing his duty as

President of the United States. Bush got on national TV and greeted the people and

continued to deliver his message. He started off with the greeting to show that he here to

comfort the people while going through the crisis. He doesnt let the event get to his head

and condemn him "But they have failed. Our country is strong." This quote shows that

Bush thinks that the terrorist failed at making america fall and is a strong solid nation.

Bush's speech was a very important message to the people through this time

because he didn't want anyone to feel alone or in harm's way. "I implemented our

government's emergency response plans. Our military is powerful, and it's prepared."

Bush wanted to people to feel safe in their own country so he addresses that the

Government and Army are ready in-case of another attack. This was a very efficient way

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to keep the people from panicking or hurting themself doing so. "The search is underway for those who were behind these evil acts. I have directed the full resources of our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and to bring them to justice." Bush made the people know that the Terrorist that committed this crime will be punished severely.

Right After Bush Tells the people what he is doing to help and giving his condolences the people, he starts to thank outside countries for their cooperation in helping the cause. "And on behalf of the American people, I thank the many world leaders who have called to offer their condolences and assistance. America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world, and we stand together to win the war against terrorism." The reason Bush is thanking them is because he needs all the outside help he can get to aid the country. This made the people feel thankful that other countries are helping them against terrorism.

  Throughout Bush's speech he used numerous ways to comfort his audience. He gave this speech to make the American people not worry about another attack by using comforting words, expressing condolences and telling the people what he's doing during a crisis. He knew that people around the country were caught off guard by the attack. After the fact he wanted to let them know that they are making their move ensure the citizens are safe.

Student 1

Mr. Fowler

English 3

8 February, 2018

Chicago Analysis

Carl Sandburg's poem "Chicago" is a very confusing poem. However, when you

actually begin to understand the poem, the theme is conveyed well and the poem as a

whole may no longer be confusing. The theme of this poem is "Even though you or

someone else thinks that a certain place is better than another, all places have the same

problems." Sandburg uses diction, symbols, and tone in order to convey this theme to the

reader.

The tone of Sandburg's poem changes in a few different places. In the beginning of the

poem, lines 1 through 11 the tone of the poem is negative toward Chicago. This can be

seen in line 3, when Sandburg wrote "... Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight

Handler;" this can be interpreted as him saying that Chicago takes risks, with the nation's

money. Taking risks with money can lead to debt, which can lead to negative effects with

it, like the event that was happening when this poem was written: the Great Depression.

If the city is taking risks with the people's money during this time, that would possibly

lead to many problems, therefore that line is talking about Chicago in a negative way.

However, the tone changes at around lines 12 through 16, when Sandburg wrote " And

having answered so I turn once more to those who sneer at this city, and I give them back

the sneer and say to them: Come and show me another city with lifted head singing so

proud to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning." This shows that the narrator (most

likely sandburg himself) has admiration for the city of Chicago, and is telling someone

else to find him a city like it, where even though there is rampant crime and many of the

weak and helpless are starving, the citizens still have pride in the place that they live.

   Even though Sandburg switches to the tone of the poem being positive about Chicago,

where he goes on to mock the other cities, he then switches right back to negative in line

20, and from then on he continues to be negative about the city of Chicago. An example

of this negativity would be in lines 22 through 26 Sandburg writes "Bareheaded,

Shoveling, Wrecking, Planning,   Building, breaking, rebuilding…" this is talking about

Chicago. When he wrote bareheaded, it can be interpreted as being unprotected or

exposed. Being a city and being exposed do not go well together, since if the city is

exposed, the people inside of the city are exposed as well. Exposed, as I am using it, does

not necessarily mean naked, but rather all of the secrets within the city are exposed, and

thus the people's lives and secrets are exposed. When Sandburg wrote the part in line 26

about building, breaking, and rebuilding he had set up a cycle. If the cycle keeps going,

the city would never stop building, breaking, and rebuilding itself. This means that the

city would never be complete, since it would always be breaking down what it had built

up. This can be the hopes of the people, the buildings, and the families or something of

that nature. The never-ending cycle of building breaking and rebuilding would halt the

process of progress, which will have a negative effect on the economy as a whole.

   Tone isn't the only way Sandburg decided to show the theme of the poem. Along with

the tone shifts, he also used symbols to convey the theme to the reader. In line 2, for

example, Sandburg wrote "Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat". This could be referring to

people, as wheat. Another word for wheat is grain, and grain could be used to describe

people. This is because the grim reaper, which is a common symbol for death, carries a scythe. A scythe is a common tool used by farmers to harvest wheat, when it's time. The symbol of the scythe, when in reference to the grim reaper, is used to symbolize the reaping of the "wheat" or the people when it is their time to die. Going back to the Chicago, the use of wheat, in this line, would be to say that the city of Chicago is stacking people. Not literal stacking, but more and more people enter the city, basically "stacking" into apartment buildings and houses. This symbol relates back to the theme because the people on the outside of the city may think that people have space and this line is basically telling the reader that there isn't much space at all.

  Another symbol would be on line 31, Sandburg wrote "... and under his ribs the heart of the people". The ribs can be a symbol of a cage. If you read it this way, Sandburg says that chicago has the heart of the people in a cage. This can mean many things, but the main idea is that the heart of the people, and therefore the people, is trapped there. The people that are criticizing chicago don't realize that they are trapped too. When they move to the city, unless they actually know what they are doing, they will be trapped there, either with a job or with money problems or something of that nature. They could have family there that wants them to stay, or they could just have something there that they don't want to leave behind.

  Even though Chicago has many symbols, the true way that Sandburg shows us the theme of the poem is with diction. He uses certain words instead of others to show that Chicago goes deeper than the outsiders think, and that it has the same issues as most other big cities.