

IRA Annual Convention - Reading in Many Languages

IRA Literacy and Social Responsibility SIG (IRA L-SR SIG)

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Round Table Presentation

Writing Children's Books: A Transformative Act for Second Language Learners

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What is the project? First grade ELL students were writing narrative and expository text about their lives and what they know how to do. From the first lesson, they learned that it will be transferred to a final product.

Who are the students? In total, 34 students participated. In the English class, 14 English Language Learners and 3 Native English Speakers – dual language model. I am focusing on the English Language Learners.

Methodology –

- On a weekly basis, I visited a first grade dual language team and modeled thinking strategies, generation of new story ideas, and including details in the drawings.
- After each student finished writing, they would read aloud their stories to their teacher or me, and we would write comments on the page. The comments are a reader response to the text.
- It is not a time to correct conventions but to provide a model of correct conventions via the response.

Rationale – Each participant (teacher and student) has the power and through the interactive dialogue response journaling, no one appears better at writing than the other. Eventually, the students will notice the conventions correctly written, and will appropriate as their own.

How many class meetings with me? 8 first draft-writing sessions and 1 final draft session

What were some discoveries or aha! moments?

- They started to slow down their flow of consciousness when they were writing in February. They wanted the spelling to be correct. We gave them permission to write and then edit.

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- The students in the English classroom took more risks, wrote more freely, and were very creative. They were able to write on a variety of themes.
- The teacher on the Spanish side did not always help me with reader response. She tended to want to have her students write perfectly.

Transferring first drafts to final draft

- When they began to transfer the writing to the Bare Book, the first graders were concerned that they would be copying incorrect conventions. They had so much knowledge about correctness, that this created some disequilibrium.

Student Work

- The English Language Learners writing in English began to write more text. They always added detail in drawings and in text.
- On the Spanish side, it was difficult to discern which work is from the writing lessons because the teacher used the writing notebook for her other writing lessons.

Feelings at the end of the project (see attached sheets)

Teachers make a big difference

The teacher in the English classroom was a former student and understood how I operated – more constructivist. We worked as a team. Together we modeled metacognition by expressing our reactions, questions, and responses to the whole group.

The teacher on the Spanish side left the room often. She did not resonate well with the interactive journal approach, and her students did not increase their writing. Stories were very similar from week to week.

Student Voice

Both groups created their publishing house. The English side's publishing house is called Fans of Spongebob Publishing House.

The Spanish side named their "casa editorial" *Casa Editorial de las rosas*.

Author's Tea to follow – Date to be determined

My Biggest finding – students who were able to articulate their feelings orally in first language were able to visualize a future rich in print. This holds true for both languages. My aha! Moment

Conclusion – Students need to write in first language, too. Writing is a great way to see what students are applying in language.

Comments from First Grade Writers Who Are English Language Learners during the English Block of Dual Language.

Question – *How do you feel now that the book is done?*

“I am glad that I finished because I love books.” – Josue

“I feel like an author and artist.” – Vanessa

“I feel glad because the books are beautiful.” – Ashley

“I feel good because I love writing in my Bare Book.” – Jeovan

“I feel glad because they have a lot of colors.” – Alondra

“I like my stories because it has a lot of writing.” – Jesus

“I am glad they're done because they have a lot of detail.” – Giovanna

“I am glad because they're done and I can learn more.” – Emma (Native English Speaker).

Comments from the First Graders who are in the Spanish block of Dual Language.

One student is a Spanish Language Learner.

Question asked in Spanish – *How do you feel now that the book is done?*

“Feliz – porque no tenia dibujos malos.” (I am happy because it did not have any bad drawings.) – Bella

“Orgullosa – Voy a ser escritora cuando soy grande.” (Proud – I am going to be a writer when I am older) – Belen

“Feliz – Hicimos dibujos. Nosotros vamos a ser bien buenos haciendo libros.” (We drew. We will do well making books.) Yoana

“Orgullosa – Vamos a hacer las dos cosas – artista y escritora y vamos a tener una fiesta.” (Proud – We are going to do both jobs – artist and writer, plus, we are going to have a party.) – Melanie

“Orgullosa porque andaba hecho “(Proud because they are done). – Saul

Except for Bella (Spanish Language Learner) and Yoana (shy), the three strong Spanish speakers continued sharing future aspiration and current applications for writing:

“We are going to be people who write stories.”

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"We are writers because we finished a whole book."

"We wrote a book. It is the first time we finished a book."

"We used many pages."

"We are going to make more books and sell them in the bookstore. I wrote well."

"When people like reading a book and there is hardly any left, we can ask for copies to be made."

"I feel great because we finished."

"When we grow up, we can share with everyone and everyone will want to read it. We have read books from Africa and China and now from Omaha."

"We can sell the books and work in places where they sell books."

"We can create books to use in the schools."

