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MALP® In The Classroom With A Focus On New Activities For Learning To Improve Linguistic Complexity In Writing For English Learners Seventh-Grade Students

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MALP® in The Classroom with a Focus on New Activities for Learning to Improve Linguistic Complexity in Writing for English Learners Seventh-Grade Students

by

Jehan Hanna Rehayem

A Capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English as a Second Language.

Hamline University
Saint Paul, Minnesota

May 2017

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To my seventh graders, who benefited greatly because of their engagement and love of learning.
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My parents, Monagah and Rohy Hanna, have been the best role models one could ask for. I am grateful to them for teaching me the importance of education, family values, faith, and prepared me to serve humanity.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Over the past ten years, I have taught English learners (ELs) in three states from a variety of countries. My teaching career started in Orange, New Jersey as a bilingual elementary school teacher. My students were all from Haiti. I was hired mainly because of my expertise in French as it was the only language my students were familiar with at the time. Two years later, I accepted an English Learners teaching position with Chicago Public Schools in Chicago, Illinois. My students were mostly Arabic speaking. Again, I was hired mainly because of my expertise in Arabic. Two years later, I moved to the Twin Cities and continued teaching diverse populations. These experiences made it very clear to me how important being familiar with my students’ languages was to my teaching. Hence started the seeds for this research.

During my second-year teaching at Columbia Academy in Columbia Heights, Minnesota, sometime in the middle of the school year, a thirteen-year-old student from Iraq, joined my English Language Development (ELD). Yousif sat nervously in my class. He had not attended any school prior to coming to my room! Yousif was illiterate in Arabic and English. His family had to flee his home country of Iraq due to war. Since I was born in the Middle East, I was familiar with Yousif’s language and culture. Yousif was a very curious young man and always came to my room with questions about many subjects. He lived with his mom and brothers. His father was deceased. His brother owned a barbershop and I sensed that his family started pressuring him to perhaps get a job at the barber shop to help support the family. Yousif’s inability to read and write was beginning to affect his dream of going to college. He felt that he was not smart enough for high school, and was considering dropping out.
Unfortunately, the situation of students like Yousif was becoming more familiar to me and fellow teachers of secondary students. Because of the increasing number of refugee and immigrant students in our schools today, the Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm® (MALP®) emerged as a promising approach. MALP® was built on disciplinary understanding of balanced pedagogical practices for EL’s instructiongrouping strategies such as collaborative learning; supports for tasks and content using scaffolding and other sheltered methods such as Language Experience Approach; theme-based curriculum design with real-world relevance, and culturally responsive methods and content that drew on students’ funds of knowledge (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010b). MALP® is significant in that it expands on generally effective practices to create a customized approach to instruction based on an honest facing of the particular needs of the instructional situation, which the developers say consists of three essential steps: (1) accept the conditions the students need in order to learn, including a strong relationship with teachers; (2) design lessons that combine processes from more familiar learning paradigms (emphasizing collaborative learning and scaffolding and a combination of oral and written learning modes) with new and not yet familiar paradigms used in the United States, and (3) focus on activities that use familiar language and content while developing the cognitive skills or academic worldview (DeCapua et al., 2009, p. 39). These three considerations find the pedagogical space in the fusion of horizons between oral and academic literate ways of knowing, as well as formal vs. informal ways of thinking. From that primary position, DeCapua and Marshall call for lessons designed with the modes of oral learning in mind, to bridge to an American academic paradigm.

DeCapua and Marshall (2010b) have identified three main factors that I found to be common with Arab, Hmong, Russian, Vietnamese, Portuguese, and Liberian students I have
worked with over the past few years (notwithstanding the fact that these are different countries in different regions of the world). These are: (1) collectivism versus individualism; (2) pragmatic ways of thinking versus abstract academic ways, and (3) oral communication versus literacy.

What followed was a synthesis of the MALP® developers’ discussion surrounding the three characteristic factors of older oral learners (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010b). Our ELs learn best when learning settings include strong interconnectedness between people—teachers and students—and when they can work together and share responsibility for learning. This preference contrasts strongly with educational approaches based on core American cultural mythologies that encourage independence and individual accountability. Our students who are from oral cultures benefit from significant integration of oral and literate modes of instruction, where oral discussion within a familiar context permeates topical introductions, work patterns, and assessment, in sequence with reading and writing. Further, students of oral backgrounds seek and benefit from redundancy and memorable aggregates of information rather than a thinly scattered presentation of content and skills, such as is typical in our system of education based on my experience. Favoring a pragmatic approach to learning, they seek opportunities to practice rather than analytical tasks that ask them to isolate critical features and perform little academic "tricks" like true/false, multiple choice, and so on.

Based on the points made above, students who are more comfortable learning orally, are also more comfortable working in groups, helping each other, and learning in real world context from which the new vocabulary expresses meaning. These students have preference for situational thinking based on experience rather than abstract or formal reasoning. The MALP® developers recognize the importance of memory supports which are favored by orally toned learners, specifically recommending the use of redundancy. The MALP® presupposes oral
learners’ preference for experiential, pragmatic knowledge, and thus bases instruction on concrete, real-life activities designed to help students bridge from known concepts to abstract academic thinking. The point from the developers of the MALP® regarding academic tricks such as true-false and multiple choice recalls the artificiality of propositional reasoning and abstract definitions which learners find challenging or a waste of time (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010b). As discussed above, the oral/informal approach embraces reality in a holistic manner connected to and informed by experience, while the literate/formal approach to knowledge is expressed typically in abstractions and conceptual categorizations.

While I agree with the developers of the MALP® that orally-conditioned learners benefit from significant integration of oral modes in instruction, I would as an educator place more emphasis on the need for very explicit instruction in the ways of literacy, beginning with the most basic sound-symbol correspondence lessons, and progressing through the development initial literacy skills with deliberateness and at a pace that does not exceed their learning needs. MALP® suggests that teachers should start with oral modes and then move to literate modes. A typical scenario has the teacher reading a book while students listen, followed by oral discussion of the story. The goal of MALP® is to start with oral modes and move to literacy-based activities. Certainly, students often gravitate toward the talking part of the lesson, since this is the part where they can often perform better. What I want to add to a discussion of the MALP®, then, is what I consider the imperative of focusing lessons on students reading and writing at their developmental level—letters, words, sentences, paragraphs, stories, whatever is appropriate—and using oral activities as a support to this rather than themselves being the focus.

While not representing a definitive solution to the challenges faced by oral learners in U.S. high schools, the MALP® has gone a considerable distance in creating non-imperialistic
conditions of possibility for a living encounter of the oral mindset and the different intellectual landscape of academic literacy. The MALP® is a worthwhile starting point for teachers and schools looking to customize instruction to create a better learning opportunity for our students.

While MALP® was designed for SLIFE students adapting to Western education, I believe that the MALP® is a culturally responsive teaching model that can be applied to all students. It helped me plan lessons relevant to my students’ lives, actively engage them in learning while building language and content knowledge. I will elaborate more in Chapter Four: Results. My 7th grade class was not moving up the EL proficiency level in writing as indicated here: Participant #1 scored 3.5 in ACCESS Writing in 2015 but went down to 3.3 in 2016. Participant #2 scored 3.4 in 2015 but went down to 2.9 in 2016. Participant #3 scored 3.1 in 2015 but went down to 3.0 in 2016. Participant #4 scored 3.9 in 2015 but went down to 3.8 in 2016. Participant #5 scored 2.5 in 2015 but went down to 2.4 in 2016. Participants #6-9 were tested in 2016 only. I discovered the MALP® and I trained myself to incorporate its principles and implement it using project-based learning. I will discuss the project-based learning I used in this study later when I discuss Chapter Four: Results. My students really had a good time and they understood the lessons better and we saw real progress. In classes where I collaborated with mainstream teachers, my students took longer than the mainstream students to catch on, but they tried and succeeded over time in writing.

This is a study about the use of the MALP® instructional model in the classroom. The purpose of the study is to find out how 7th Grade ELs can function more effectively in both their preferred, culturally-based learning systems (collectivism, pragmatic thinking, and oral communication) and in Western-style formal education settings. Three of my students were born
in the U.S. to immigrant parents. One student is a refugee and five students are immigrants from a variety of countries. Four of the students had interrupted schooling for up to a year for reasons including waiting to be allowed in the U.S. and violence in their countries of origin which prevented them from attending school. All nine students were able to read and write in their L1 when they started the EL services. In order to help educators understand how to integrate key elements of formal education while balancing and acknowledging the needs, preferences, and priorities of language learners, I will research a practical set of guidelines to follow in designing and delivering instruction to language learners in the writing domain, namely linguistic complexity. In this study, my goal is to evaluate the effectiveness of the MALP® in raising writing scores.

This chapter introduces the issues involved in this study; it also provides an overview of the terms used throughout the paper. In addition, this chapter explicates the reasons for exploring the MALP®, the needs of language learners, culturally responsive teaching, western style formal education, best practices in teaching writing to English learners, and some strategies for explicit linguistic complexity instruction with emphasis on academic writing.

This study was expected to be beneficial to the field as it examined the distinctions between culturally-based and school-based learning systems and some potential ramifications of these differences.

My primary research question is: Can the MALP® help raise the English Language Proficiency of our EL students in writing by focusing on new activities for learning to improve linguistic complexity? The answer to this question will likely benefit all teachers, as well as students, as it will be an additional resource for teaching academic writing to EL students. This
area of study is important to me personally because, based on the writing scores of my students, it appears that they were at a plateau or fossilization stage. My students have been receiving EL services for one to seven years. Some of my students tended to use incorrect language as a natural process of language acquisition at work. They needed to actively work on correcting their errors. In conversation with my colleagues, I have found this to be true of many EL students who have been receiving services for several years. The MALP® Instructional Model is expected to offer new culturally responsive teaching (CRT) strategies, which are worth investigating. The way CRT addressed my students' needs in writing was done by incorporating relating aspects of students' daily lives into all our lessons which was a result of talking to students and learning about their individual needs. For example: when students were learning how to write about a sequence of events, I encouraged them to write about their daily routine at home and in school, starting from the time they get up in the morning. When we learned about enumerating, we used a list of food ingredients that they would use in a familiar dish. Yet another example of incorporating CRT to help students improve writing was describing a favorite topic. The students started by telling a partner about a game, sport, or other topic that they know well. They had to decide on words they need to define to their partner then they had to elaborate and explain it further. They used a tool called a word web to gather important words that go with the topic (usually this is a graphic tool where the main word is placed in the center, then other related words are placed around it). Through this writing activity we learned about different sports students played in their respective countries, one student described how she enjoyed sewing when she lived in Liberia, and the Vietnamese students wrote about the clothes they wear and their cultural significance. Culturally Responsive Teaching is a pedagogy that recognizes the
importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

**Culturally Based and School Based Learning Systems**

As I have worked with 7th Grade English learners in classrooms over the last ten years, I have noticed that they struggle with academic writing, especially when writing about things with which they have no cultural familiarity or vocabulary to which they can relate. Students are therefore unable to activate their background knowledge to make predictions and inferences and write about the content.

To communicate effectively in writing, students need to formulate an idea, think of the appropriate way to say it, start to write using correct spelling, and then create another sentence to continue to communicate the idea (Marshall, H.W. 1998). If we add the student’s worry that he/she is making huge, embarrassing errors or that their ideas are not good enough in the first place, then we begin to understand the complexity involved in writing in a second language. In fact, the way the teacher communicates, or the way the students put their ideas on paper, is largely influenced by one’s culture. In some of my classes, my Hmong students were very confused when I told them to revise their writing because this was a "first draft." In their experience, they had always written an item once and submitted it as "the final version" and then the teacher would correct it. This is mainly due to their culture. The idea that my student had to write it over again didn't make sense to him/her. I have learned that my students from other cultures may have developed a storytelling style that involves laying out a lot of background information and detail, taking quite a while to get to the point of the story. In most western writing, we expect a topic sentence or a lead paragraph that will tell us what the point is,
everything following leads to a direct conclusion. Many of my students had great difficulty connecting their ideas this way.

Some Hmong students born in this country or too young to remember the catastrophic incidents of their parents’ exiles and resettlements, find themselves today in a strange world of cultural change. They want to help their own people, and at the same time, they want to become conventional Americans. Based on my experience with my students, their confusion and uncertainty stem from a variety of sources; they feel labeled by mainstream community and schools, and they feel culturally remote from both their home culture and the mainstream culture. In school, they cannot talk about their cultural traditions to Americans who would not understand them. At home, they cannot talk about school activities, because their parents do not understand them.

In 1999, Brenda Finn conducted a study on cultural context and cognitive style in Hmong secondary school students. Barely a quarter century in this country, the Hmong were among the newest Americans. Since 1975, when United States' troops pulled out of Laos, more than 170,000 Hmong refugees and their children have adopted this as their new land, settling primarily in cities in the states of California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Products of an agricultural economy and a clan-centered, historically preliterate, homogeneous, insulated culture, they arrived in American airports badly equipped to deal with a capitalistic, technological, industrial, heterogeneous, media-saturated culture. Overnight, their world had changed. They had to meld two contrasting worlds if they were to become part of their adopted country. As the children of refugees, Hmong teenagers have had the intensified challenge of responding to cultural change as they were learning how to be part of American youth subculture
and school communities. Because of their cultural heritage, Hmong students may have learned to perceive and approach tasks differently than their non-Hmong classmates, using cognitive processes supported in their families but not reinforced in American schools. In families, they have learned primarily through observation and demonstration, cooperative problem-solving strategies, deductive reasoning, and reliance on contextual cues for meaning. Their approach to learning has been characterized by extrinsic motivation, sensitivity to others, and social responsiveness. In the daily transition from home to school, they confronted the standards and expectations sanctioned in most secondary schools: that students learned primarily through lecture and print materials, individual problem-solving strategies, inductive reasoning, and reliance on analysis and logic; and that students will be intrinsically motivated and desire personal recognition. The confrontation between different modes of learning and cultural values sanctioned by the Hmong and American worlds posed challenges for Hmong secondary school students and for educators who assist them in learning. This study identified cultural values and practices, examined cognitive approaches to learning, and described instructional practices judged to be effective by educators and students in promoting learning in Hmong secondary school students. It suggested practical improvements which schools may pursue as socializing institutions, in working with Hmong students reconciling culturally influenced modes of learning with well established American educational practices (Finn, B., 1999). Even though a lot of research covered the Hmong population, resulting in a large number of papers covering this particular group, my personal experience proved the same analysis is applicable with my students from other cultures as well.

With that said, the task for improving ELs’ writing skills is a big one, but the payoff for instructional dedication can be great. Students need to use meta-cognition to process language
and work with it in a more meaningful way (Shutter, R., 1985). In 2005 Israel, E. referred to four approaches that incorporate metacognition in literacy instruction and are designed to facilitate social exchanges of shared knowledge. These four, often overlapping, approaches are direct explanation, scaffolded instruction, cognitive coaching, and cooperative learning. Winograd and Hare (1988) summarized how direct explanation has been approached across several instructional studies designed to help students develop better skills in literacy. The teacher is to directly explain what the strategy is, why the strategy should be learned, and how to use the strategy. Improved use of paraphrasing and summarizing by students is key. Scaffolded instruction is a way of sharing and developing student’s metacognitive knowledge. The interactive dialogue between educators and students offer a natural context for exploring beliefs about learning. These opportunities give students a chance to share rationales for why they made certain judgments and choices in the classroom. Scaffolded instruction enhances the social relationships among teachers and students and provides additional motivation for learning (Winograd & Smith, 1987). Cognitive coaching includes mutual dialogue, direct explanation, modeling, and encouragement. An important component of the dialogues was teachers’ understanding of students’ complaints and misconceptions. Reciprocity allowed students to share their thoughts and feelings about the thinking processes they were learning instead of focusing only on the content. Cognitive teaching combines assessments of learning with sensitive instruction; it integrates cognitive explanations and motivational encouragement. Procedural facilitation described by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1985) as a means of enhancing composition processes helped students make more thoughtful decisions while writing. Students can be encouraged to choose appropriate words and topics, to reorganize the order of sentences, and to revise ideas to achieve text coherence. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1985) concluded that
procedural facilitation is particularly helpful when task demands exceed the current level of student’s ability. In cooperative learning, students “usually work together to complete tasks, whereas students in other settings work at their seats or receive instruction in large groups in which most interaction occurred between teacher and student” (Webb, 1982, p. 421).

For our immigrant students who are still learning English, writing can be a very challenging task. Academic writing may contain not only linguistically complex language and unknown vocabulary, but also culturally unfamiliar elements to which our learners are unable to relate to. Thus, writing competency can be a difficult skill to develop.

Role of the Researcher

I worked with nine 7th Graders at a public middle school in a Midwestern state. This study sought to find out what impact the MALP® had in helping EL students move up the EL proficiency ladder in writing. My goal was for them to move up one level in the writing score on the ACCESS. ACCESS stands for Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Learners. W-APT stands for the WIDA (World Class Instructional Design and Assessment)-ACCESS Placement Test. It is an English language proficiency (ELP) " screener" test given to incoming students who may be designated as English learners. It assists educators with programmatic placement decisions such as identification and placement of ELs. The W-APT is one component of WIDA's comprehensive assessment system. This test was approved by my professor of research methodology at Hamline and was also approved by my school district. I used the W-APT in Writing as a pretreatment, which I gave my students around mid-October. Following that, I taught writing using the MALP® model. At the end of December, I administered the same test again to monitor progress. I continued my instruction and
administered the posttest around the beginning of February. The same writing test was administered all three times for data collection. I used the WIDA Performance Definitions-Speaking and Writing Grades K-12 rubric (See Appendix A). This was my first year teaching at this school. I did my study with the EL students who came to my room for instruction daily. In this study, my goal was to evaluate the effectiveness of the MALP® in raising writing scores. The following chart describes in detail my nine students. Participants one, three, and four were born in the U.S. but they were considered EL students because those students first learned a language other than English as declared by a parent or guardian (on the Home Language Questionnaire). They came from a home where the language usually spoken is other than English, or they themselves usually speak a language other than English. In addition, those students were given an assessment measuring their English language proficiency and based on developmentally appropriate measures, which may have included observations, teacher judgment, or parent recommendations, were deemed to lack the necessary English skills to participate fully in academic classes taught in English. Participants two, five, six, seven, eight, and nine were born in non-English speaking countries. Participants one and four have been receiving EL services for seven years and yet they have not exited the EL program mainly because they need to make progress in the writing domain. Participant two has been receiving EL services for four years and needs to raise his writing score. Table 1: Students’ Educational Backgrounds shows the language proficiency in writing for each of my participants under Mid-October Pretreatment. The goal of this study was to raise the ELP of students from two to three, three to four, four to five, and five to six in writing in linguistic complexity on the WIDA Performance Definitions- Speaking and Writing Grades K-12 rubric.
Looking at Table 1, it appears that four students began receiving EL services several years after arrival in the United States. Students 1 and 4 were born in the U.S. but did not start EL services until 2nd grade. Student 2 may have been three years old upon arrival to the U.S. He started EL services in 3rd grade. Student 3 who was born in the US, had the longest gap before he began receiving EL services, possibly because of the fact that he was born here and it was assumed that English was his first language until it became obvious that that was not the case. He did not start EL services until he was in 6th grade. I had two students (Participants #5, #8 and #9) who verbally told me that their formal education was interrupted for more than a year before coming here and had to have some home schooling by relatives. There are no official records of that and they do not officially meet the SLIFE criteria for Minnesota for the following reasons: 1) They did not have at least two years less schooling than the English learner’s peers. 2) They did not
function at least two years below expected grade level in reading and mathematics. 3) They are literate in their L1.

Background of the Researcher

I have been in the U.S. most of my life. Growing up, I attended a private French school in Cairo, Egypt where the standards of education were quite high. Although I grew up with three languages at that school (French, Arabic, and English), learning to write essays in my primary language (L1) -Arabic- was not explicitly taught in my school. Thus, I struggled with academic writing in English when I came to New York City as a high school student. This area of research is important to me, because based on the writing scores of my students, I saw that they too were struggling or had reached a plateau.

Having been an EL student myself who struggled with writing, this study is personal to me. Several researchers have noted that there is a connection to be explored between culturally responsive teaching and academic writing (Marshall, H.W. & DeCapua, A., 2013). Culturally relevant or responsive teaching is a pedagogy grounded in teachers’ displaying cultural competence: their skill at teaching in a cross-cultural or multicultural setting. Teachers enable each student to relate course content to his or her cultural context. I believe that it is the job of the teachers to develop and structure the instruction in a way that can assist English learners to develop English literacy. Gay, G. (2010) suggested the following for culturally responsive teaching: Getting students personally involved in their own learning, using varied formats, multiple perspectives, and novelty in teaching, responding to multiple learning styles, modeling in teaching and learning, learning by doing, incorporating different kinds of skill development (i.e. intellectual, social, emotional, moral) in teaching and learning experiences, transferring
knowledge from one form or context to another; combining knowledge, concepts, and theory with practice. Gay, G. (2010) suggested having students reflect critically on their knowledge, beliefs, thoughts, and actions; and building capacity, confidence, and efficacy in students as agents of pedagogical, intellectual, moral, and social justice changes related to cultural diversity. I believe that my responsibility as a teacher lies in creating the sets, props, and the rough draft of the scripts for the learning encounters that take place in my classroom as we create stories. But how these unfold is beyond my control because my students construct the characters. Together, we create teaching and learning dynamics that work best for our class and what we are trying to accomplish in the classroom.

Guiding Question

My primary research question is: *Can the MALP® help raise the English Language Proficiency of our EL students in writing by focusing on new activities for learning to improve linguistic complexity?*

Summary

In this study, I focused on the MALP®, because I wanted to find out how my refugee and immigrant English learners (7th Graders) function in both their preferred, culturally-based learning systems (Hispanic, Hmong, Arab, Russian, Vietnamese, Portuguese, and Liberian) and in the Western-style formal education settings. In order to help educators understand how to integrate key elements of formal education while balancing and acknowledging the needs, preferences, and priorities of language learners, I attempted to create a practical set of guidelines to follow in designing and delivering instruction to our language learners in the writing domain. This study is likely to be valuable as it examined the distinctions between culturally-based and school-based learning systems and potential ramifications of these differences.
Chapter Overviews

In Chapter One, I introduced my study by establishing the purpose, significance and need for the study. The context of the study was briefly introduced as was the role, assumptions, and biases of the researcher. The background of the researcher was provided. In Chapter Two, I provide a review of the literature relevant to MALP®, language learners, culturally responsive teaching, Western-style formal education, best practices in teaching writing to EL students, and some strategies for explicit linguistic complexity instruction with emphasis on academic writing. Chapter Three includes a description of the research design and methodology that guides this study. Chapter Four presents the results of this study. In Chapter Five, I reflect on the data collected. I also discuss the limitations of the study, implications for further research and recommendations for further research of the use of the MALP® as an instructional model in the classroom.

This topic is important to me personally because of my religious beliefs which are best expressed in this quote by Baha’u’llah - prophet founder of the Baha’i Faith: “Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom.”

The above quote is at the heart of why I became a teacher. In the mid-19th century, Baha’u’llah addressed humanity saying: “Ye are all fruits of one tree, the leaves of one branch, the flowers of one garden.” And now I am on a quest to examine issues relating to race, culture, ethnicity, and education. My students are expected to acquire knowledge, examine their own and other people’s thoughts about the knowledge acquired, clarify feelings and beliefs about the issues and topics being studied, consider ways to convert their knowledge, feelings, and opinions into transformative actions, and review and analyze their learning processes to discern broader
insights, messages, and implications for improvement embedded in them. I believe that diversity should be accepted and celebrated as a natural feature of humanity and as a consistent criterion for selecting a wide variety of learning opportunities and experiences for my culturally diverse students.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to help educators integrate the curriculum with culturally-based elements from the cultural backgrounds of the students, thus acknowledging the needs and preferences of ELs, I looked at a practical set of guidelines to be followed to facilitate this process, especially as it pertained to the writing domain. This study focused on the MALP® in the classroom, mainly on new activities for learning to improve linguistic complexity usage in writing for ELs seventh-grade students. I examined several different cultures, some of which were represented by some of my students (Hispanic, Hmong, Arab, Russian, and Liberian).

My primary research question is: Can the MALP® help raise the English Language Proficiency of our EL students in writing by focusing on new activities for learning to improve linguistic complexity?

I would like to introduce two of the experts of the MALP® as I was greatly inspired by their research: Helaine W. Marshall Ed.D and Andrea DeCapua, Ed.D. Helaine W. Marshall Ed.D is the Director of Language Education Programs and Professor of Education, Long Island University-Hudson. Dr. Marshall has developed programs for secondary and adult students with limited or interrupted formal education. She is the co-author of Making the Transition: Culturally Responsive Teaching for Struggling Language Learners and Breaking New Ground: Teaching Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education.

Andrea DeCapua, Ed.D., is a researcher, educator, and educational consultant. Her interests include second language acquisition, culture, and second language learners and the classroom.
Dr. DeCapua is a frequent presenter and trainer at conferences, national organizations, and school districts around the country. She is the author/co-author of several books on struggling language learners and the MALP®: *Making the Transition to Classroom Success: Culturally Relevant Teaching for Struggling Language Learners*, *Breaking New Ground: Teaching Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education, Meeting the Needs of Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education*.

Since the school district I teach in has Hmong students as the largest minority, I would like to refer to some research about the Hmong culture and elements of storytelling in their culture. In 1990, Trueba, T. Jacobs, L.; & Kirton, E. addressed how the Hmong faced their problems with little public complaint, showing their character and endurance through their folk heroes. History and storytelling come together in the daily life of the Hmong, to a greater degree as they uprooted themselves and moved to another place. The storytelling, music and historical accounts celebrating the virtues and heroic deeds of the Hmong forefathers, the love of family and loyalty to one’s own kin, have for centuries helped the Hmong maintain a strong collective identity formed by loyal and strong people. Storytelling continues to be the cement that articulates a deep religious belief system with the motivation to face the destitution of daily life.

In 2011, Marshall H.W. & DeCapua A. published “*Breaking New Ground: Teaching Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Schooling in Secondary Schools*” building on the introduction to the topic concerning Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE). I will explain SLIFE in greater detail and give references later as three of my students have had interrupted formal education, making the SLIFE based instructional model in this study applicable to their needs. I would like to refer to the book “*Breaking New Ground: Teaching*


Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Schooling in Secondary Schools” as part of the research that referred to MALP®. It introduced readers to and engaged them in the implementation of the MALP® instructional model. The book presented a belief that teaching SLIFE should in no way be remedial. The book provided a presentation of MALP® from theory to practice and guided readers to reflect on each element of the model, learn why and how it is essential and effective, and determine how teachers can use it in their own teaching of SLIFE. My study is meant for all teachers and EL students with an emphasis on use in the classroom. It will inform the reader whether the MALP® can help our EL students in writing with a focus on new activities for learning to improve linguistic complexity.

Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm (MALP) ®

In 1998, Marshall H. W. began working with Hmong students in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Drawing on research on oral cultures like the Hmong from Laos, as well as classroom observations and discussions with community liaisons, Drs. Marshall and Andrea DeCapua developed MALP®. Noting that traditional EL pedagogy, developed for L1 literate and educated English learners, was unsuitable and ineffectual for students like the Hmong, Dr. Marshall analyzed their learning paradigm and contrasted it with the paradigm underlying mainstream U.S. classroom instruction. Combining selected elements of each resulted in a Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm, hence the acronym MALP® for the

Marshall, H. W. (1998) has found that some of the Hmong students have difficulties adjusting to the American educational system as compared with other language minority groups. Even though this research was done at a time when Hmong families were newcomer refugees and some had limited formal education, I found that the premises of the conclusions still apply to some extent to some of the students I encountered in my school district such as my Hmong
student (Participant #3 in my study), who was born in this country but did not start receiving EL services until 6th grade. I have found that underlying this difficulty Marshall refers to, is a fundamental conflict between learning in traditional Hmong cultural settings and learning in American classroom settings. Despite this conflict, many Hmong students have successfully negotiated our school systems. Most of them did this, however, by compensation strategies, such as memorizing, repeating, spending extended periods of time attempting to master large amounts of material, and receiving extensive help from friends and siblings, rather than by mastering the requirements of successful learning in a formal educational setting. Shutter (1985) refers to this phenomenon as residual orality. Marshall, H. W. (1998) demonstrates that success in educational system constitutes a change in basic assumptions for the Hmong learner, a shift from the Hmong learner’s paradigm to the formal educational learning paradigm. The position taken is that active participation in formal education is itself an important part of the acculturation process, requiring the building of a cluster of formal schemata having to do with learning in a specific setting. Marshall, H. W. (1998) first examines the conditions, processes, and activities characteristic of each setting and then outlines how teachers can use their knowledge of these two conflicting paradigms to design a MALP® that can help learners succeed academically. Classroom applications are included to demonstrate how MALP® can be effective with Hmong learners (See Figure 1: Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm and Figure 2: MALP® Teacher Planning Checklist) on pages 27 and 28. Bassey, (1999) refers to pragmatic versus academic tasks by explaining that our ELs generally learn by doing, following a role model, operating within a context, and getting feedback from the results themselves or from people. The key activity is practice, preceded by observation and followed by monitoring. Oral traditions remain important in transferring knowledge and skills from adults to students. Pragmatic activities happen within
context and have some real-world application that is immediately apparent. For example, I taught my students a lesson on sequence of events. We made soup. We started by peeling vegetables, slicing them, and adding water. My students learned to use signal words and phrases to connect their ideas, show logical relationship between ideas, and I guided them in using academic words in speaking and then in writing. My students had a meal that satisfied them and they learned an academic lesson. Teachers can refer to detailed lists of academic tasks associated with each of Bloom’s levels of cognitive engagement (Krathwohl, 2002; Marzano & Kendall, 2008), however, the goal of the teacher should be to build new schemata for the unfamiliar ways of thinking they are teaching. The following academic tasks (based on Bloom’s Taxonomy) and their possible implications will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

This study concentrates only on the box in the lower left of Figure 1: Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm on page 27, focus on new Activities using familiar language and content), and on boxes C1 and C2 of Figure 2: MALP® Teacher Planning Checklist on page 28.
Figure 1: Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm

Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm

Accept Conditions
- Struggling ELs
  - Immediate relevance
  - interconnectedness
- U.S. Schools
  - future relevance
  - independence

Combine Processes
- shared responsibility
- oral transmission
+ individual accountability
  - written word

Focus on New Activities using familiar language and content
- pragmatic tasks
- school tasks
When I applied MALP® in the classroom, I followed the checklist in Figure 2 sequentially, taking the model as a cohesive whole. However, for this study I am focusing on Part C primarily because I learned that there is not enough research focusing on new activities for learning. I believe this instructional model can be expanded in its applications to all language learners unaccustomed to and/or uncomfortable with the expectations of Western-style formal education settings. The unifying concept that holds true for all such learners, regardless of their individual linguistic and cultural backgrounds, is cultural dissonance. Cultural dissonance is the term commonly used to describe a sense of discomfort, discord or disharmony arising from cultural differences or inconsistencies which are unexpected or unexplained and therefore difficult for individuals to negotiate (Delpit, 2006). Delpit, L (2006) talks about how each of us
belongs to many communities. Joseph Suina, a Pueblo Indian scholar (Delpit, 2006), has proposed a schematic representation of at least three levels of community membership. He sets up three concentric circles. The inner circle is labeled “home/local community” (Delpit, 2006), the middle circle is “national community”, and the outer circle represents the “global community” (Delpit, 2006). In today’s world, it is important that we learn to become active citizens in all three communities, and one requisite skill for doing that is an ability to acquire more linguistic codes. We have a choice to try to destroy language diversity in the classroom, or we can encourage in our teachers and students a “mental set for diversity” (Delpit, 2006). Those who have learned additional codes because their local language differs significantly from the language of the national culture can be in a better place to gain and have access to the global culture than mainstream Americans who only know one way to talk. Rather than think of our diverse students as problems, we can view our students instead as resources who can help all of us, and perhaps better learn how to become citizens of the global community.

Marshall (1998) believes that the MALP® has taken its place among the highly-regarded applications of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) (Marshall, 1998). Culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy that is grounded in teachers’ displaying cultural competence which includes skills at teaching in a multicultural setting and enables students to relate course content to their cultural context (Marshall, 1998). By applying CRT to language learners, Drs. De Capua and Dr. Marshall have created a bridge that connects all students whose language and/or culture do not match that of the mainstream students (Marshall, 1998).

English learners are a diverse group entering our schools with a wide range of backgrounds and needs. Many readily develop the necessary language skills and content
knowledge, and progress satisfactorily. But others struggle and school presents major challenges. MALP®, as a culturally responsive approach, can build bridges to formal education for these learners.

De Capua states: “There is not just a single way to understand the world around us, only one reality.” Educators and their students may each see the world in very different ways, based on their significantly different prior learning experiences (2016). This is especially true for some, though not all, ELs who for whatever reason have not fully participated in formal education and have developed ways of thinking and understanding that are anchored in real-world experiences. We, as educators, in contrast, anchor our ways of thinking and understanding the world in formal education. To best address the needs of these students, we must become aware of cultural factors underlying these two different perspectives. Once we develop such an understanding, we can design and implement instruction that builds bridges to learning in our classrooms.

I attended a MinneSLIFE conference at Hamline University in April 2016 and through the sessions I learned that practical implementation of the MALP® in the classroom is an area that needs more research. MinneSLIFE is a group of educators, researchers and other concerned individuals focused on Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE), a sub-population of English Language Learners. The challenges faced by SLIFE can be substantial as they fight to acquire both the content and language of US Schools. Last year, I taught an 8th grade refugee student from Iraq who has not had any formal education in the last ten years and this is how my interest in the MALP® started. Students with limited interrupted formal education (SLIFE) make up an important subset of English learners. The Minnesota Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success (LEAPS) Act defines SLIFE as an English
learner with interrupted formal education who: 1) Comes from a home where the language usually spoken is other than English, or who usually speaks a language other than English. 2) Enters school in the United States after grade six. 3) Has at least two years less schooling than the English learner’s peers. 4) Functions at least two years below expected grade level in reading and mathematics. 5) May be preliterate in the English learner’s native language. Please see Figure 3: Struggling ELLs compared to other ELs.

Figure 3: Struggling ELLs compared to other ELs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Struggling ELLs</th>
<th>Other ELs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No / interrupted / limited formal education</td>
<td>Appropriate grade-level education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No / low literacy</td>
<td>Age-appropriate literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing grade-level content knowledge</td>
<td>Grade-level content knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete identity as learner</td>
<td>Identity as learner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DeCapua, (2016) compares struggling English Language Learners (ELL) who are SLIFE and other ELs. In 2009, DeCapua, A., Smathers, W. & Tang, L.F. explained all the terminology related to SLIFE, understanding SLIFE, intake and identification, the MALP® model, reading resources, ELL resources, programs, and courses. This article also explained what MALP® is.
This was a valuable resource as it showed how SLIFE came into our school systems with a different learning paradigm from the one presumed by our North American education system. Under the MALP®, I had to accept my students’ conditions for learning. My students are not SLIFE according to the state of Minnesota as they do not fulfill all the criteria required to be identified as SLIFE. I think using MALP® could help my students even though they are not SLIFE because they needed a culturally responsive teaching model. I decided to study MALP® in the classroom to find out whether it can raise the scores of my students in writing in linguistic complexity or not. Per DeCapua, A. & Marshall, H.W, (2011), I followed the following instructional strategies: I had to start by adapting my instruction to my students’ need for immediate relevance and interconnectedness. I had to establish and maintain on-going two-way communication with my students. My instruction had to promote connections among them. With my literacy assessments and interventions, I had to accept immediate relevance, I had to focus on incorporating familiar material into my lessons, making associations between their past experiences and their current life situations and the new materials I was teaching. Relevance in the MALP® meant making connections between the pragmatic worldview of my students and the academic world of our education; I had to focus on the here and now, not the future. To include immediate relevance, I began each unit of instruction with ways in which the material could be incorporated into the lives of my students. To create an interconnected classroom community, I had to infuse instruction with interpersonal elements. Research has shown that the most effective teachers are those who take responsibility for both the affective and academic domains in the classroom—that is, teachers who are well organized, well able to present the requisite material to their students, and who have a strong relationship with their students (Cazden, 2001; Clarke, 2007; DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1995).
Conversational interaction was key and I had to ensure that students remained on task when engaged in cooperative learning. I also had to be aware if my students’ attention was distracted by material that was too difficult and was not adequately scaffolded. DeCapua, A. & Marshall, H.W. (2011) elaborated on focusing on pragmatic activities by explaining that our students understand new information within the context of what they already know, which is why it is difficult for all students to understand abstract academic concepts and apply them to new tasks (Willingham, 2009). Students are less likely to recall information that does not fit their schemata (Kee & Davies, 1990). My students came from different learning paradigms with different schemata making academic ways of thinking particularly difficult. This was established as I observed how my students organize current knowledge and provide a framework for future understanding. It was also evident in social schemas, stereotypes, social roles, and worldviews. It was important to help them construct a series of schemata, based on the interactions they experience, to help them understand the world. Skills like comparison/contrast, analysis, synthesis, and similar academic ways of thinking are integral to Western-style formal education. During this study, I concluded that a key to improving my students’ ability to understand the abstract thinking underlying academic activities and in particular the skills mentioned above, was for my students to do activities repeatedly with different information and within different contexts. In Chapter Four, I will discuss the activities I used to teach academic ways of thinking using familiar language and content.

In 2010, Dr. Martha Bigelow conducted a study that shows the need for English Language Development teachers to continue training in literacy methods throughout their teaching career to address the needs of our adolescent refugee students. The way this relates to my research question is that it demonstrates that such training results in measurable progress and
growth in literacy skills for students. For my study, I am looking for measurable increase in writing scores in linguistic complexity by using the MALP® instructional model. If it does in fact show growth, schools should train teachers to use it as part of literacy methods. This growth is a result of reading/literacy instructional methods as presented within a guided reading framework. It is also reflected in an increase in receptive vocabulary, expressive vocabulary, and overall reading ability, including discrete linguistic behaviors and overall reading levels of adolescent refugee students. It is useful as it also shows how classroom instruction should be based on running records, guided writing centers, and listening centers. This resource is valuable as it also considers the importance of social influences and social interactions on literacy learning.

In 1999, Carter, R.B. conducted a study about the educational needs and barriers for refugee students in the United States. This study is relevant because Participant #9 in my study is a refugee. It addressed acculturation, human rights, refugees, and segmented assimilation. Segmented assimilation is a sociological model of the experience of immigrants who adopt aspects of their new culture (Carter, 1999). It proposes that social and economic barriers can be so severe that they cause downward mobility among certain immigrant groups and create oppositional forms of culture. The way this research relates to my topic/study question is that it looks at what refugee students need to succeed in U.S. schools. This is a valuable resource because it values the training of teachers and teachers’ aides to understand the issues faced by refugee children in their classrooms. The wellbeing of our refugee children affects the stability of society as a whole. This resource looks at how helping refugee children to succeed needs to be a priority for educators, administrators, and policymakers.
In 2005, Fry, R. addressed the higher dropout rate of foreign-born teens. According to the research done, the two key factors are the age at which the teen migrated and the country that initially educated him/her. The way this relates to my research is some of my refugee students may fall in the category of dropout students based on whether they finish high school or not. This is a valuable resource as it looks at reasons for dropout among the foreign born not because of their exposure to American ways but because of problems in education they have experienced before coming to the U.S. It appears that youths that migrate early in childhood to the U.S. are more likely to be enrolled in high school than their later arriving peers. Consequently, it seems that early childhood arrivals who received all their schooling in the U.S. and had the longest exposure to U.S. schools and society are the most likely to stay in school.

In 2012, Windle, J. & Miller, J. conducted a research in an Australia school and looked at popular literacy strategies used by teachers working with low literacy refugee-background students. The data of the research shows the popularity of discussion over scaffolding through written resources to the popularity of teacher-focused activities. The research suggests that providing teachers with additional time, resources and strategies should be directed at building student autonomy (Bruner & Watson, 1983; Piaget, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978), particularly through greater opportunities for practice. Other work has shown that expert teachers of refugee learners prioritize opportunities for repetition and recycling of learned material (Burgoyne & Hull, 2007). This is a valuable resource as it suggests the need for professional development, which will highlight student production and practice of language structures and pedagogy where teachers provide more scaffolding involving written practice. This study is relevant as it addresses strategies used by teachers of refugee students to teach writing. I find some of these strategies in harmony with MALP® especially as it relates to scaffolding the written word through oral
interaction and how repetition and recycling of learned material make the new language and content more accessible.

In 1991, Congress passed the National Literacy Act that defined literacy as an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society to achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential. Using this definition of literacy, the U.S. Department of Education published the results of its National Adult Literacy Survey in 1993. This survey remains the most comprehensive, statistically reliable source on literacy in the United States. Rather than classifying individuals as either "literate" or "illiterate," this survey created three literacy scales: prose literacy, document literacy, and quantitative literacy. These scales profile the types of materials and demands individuals encounter in their daily lives; for example, interpreting instructions from a warranty, reading maps, balancing a checkbook, or figuring out a tip. By measuring literacy proficiency for each literacy scale, five levels of literacy were defined with Level 1 reflecting the lowest skills and Level 5 reflecting the highest skills. When comparing the above to WIDA’s levels of reading and writing (also five levels) we find that WIDA standards and goals concentrate more on college and career readiness. These WIDA levels focus on oral language development, literacy across all content areas, with attention to genre, text type, language forms and conventions, and the use of instructional supports.

Some of our EL students tend to have low-literacy, missing grade-level content knowledge, and even incomplete identities as learners. They have many obstacles. Cole (2005) draws our attention to culturally-rooted differences and prior learning experiences that have led to the development of different cognitive pathways, than those essential to success in formal education. If we measure our learners through the lens of formal education, then yes, they are
lacking. But what if we recognize that their reality is distinct, that their ways of thinking and perspectives on learning, derived from their prior culturally-based experiences, are simply different rather than inadequate?

**Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) ©**

An essential portion of this alternative conversation about ELs is the incorporation of culturally-responsive teaching into our classrooms (Gay, 2010). CRT requires a deep exploration of culture going far beyond the “heroes, holidays, and food” approach (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2016; Ngo, 2010). A deep understanding of culture allows us to draw on and honor the prior experiences and current knowledge of ELs, which are experiences and knowledge that may not be (and in most cases are not) school-based ways of thinking and school knowledge. At the same time, we must facilitate the development of their identities as learners that align with our formal educational paradigm.

Some of our EL students have unique learning needs. Research suggests there are three critical underlying cultural differences that need to be understood:

1-**The roles of literacy and orality:** For some ELs, their preferred mode for accessing and transmitting information may very well be through oral means rather than through written means (Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2013). Even when they have basic literacy skills, many learners are still more comfortable exchanging information and knowledge orally. In our educational system, strong literacy skills are fundamental. Academic success hinges on participatory reading and writing skills, a form of literacy demanding much more than decoding skills (Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2013).
2- The dimensions of collectivism and individualism: Most struggling ELs come from collectivistic cultures that highly prize interdependence and the interconnectivity of the group. People regard themselves as an inseparable part of a web of relationships, the maintenance of which is central to behaviors and actions. U.S. mainstream culture, in contrast, is a highly individualistic culture that values independence, and the pursuit of individual wants and preferences (Hofstede, 2000; Triandis, 1995). Our educational system reflects and fosters these values by lauding independent work and requiring individual assessment.

3- Essential features of informal ways of learning and formal education: Informal learning and formal education promote the development of different types of cognitive pathways, given divergent sociocultural processes for learning and teaching, and the types of activities for supporting the development of knowledge and skills (Gavin, Beebe, and Zhao, 2011). Some ELs, whose dominant learning has been through informal ways, have experienced learning within their web of relationships and as part of the sociocultural practices of their communities and families (Rogoff, 2014). Learning is rooted in the here and now, with tasks that are concrete, pragmatic, and immediately relevant. Learning to cook, farm, peddle, or any of the myriad sociocultural practices of daily life do not require literacy, prescribed curricula, or tasks removed from every day experience.

For this study, I will focus on Number Three above. I will be researching strategies for helping ELs succeed in schools. I see a gap in defining the practical methods of application of the MALP® model to make the transition to classroom success, which demands that our students are able to access and transmit information via the written word rather than orally. Our students need to engage in expected classroom behaviors and academic discourse while becoming active
particpants in a learning process based on literacy and decontextualized tasks for building and demonstrating content knowledge.

Teachers may choose to teach ELs in the ways with which those students are most comfortable, namely focusing on the concrete and familiar, and incorporating conventional basic literacy development. This instructional model has not been very successful as our students do not seem to have appropriate academic second language instruction in content areas and have seldom developed school-based ways of thinking and modes of discourse (Sheng, Sheng, & Anderson, 2011; Suárez-Orozco et. al., 2013).

Another instructional model that does not seem to work is when teachers think that the current pedagogical practices are sufficient and that it is the responsibility of ELs to catch up and keep up. This will work for some students, particularly if they have a great deal of support, personal motivation, and aptitude, but it does not work for the majority. This is evident in high disengagement and dropout rates in this population (Sheng, Sheng, & Anderson, 2011; Suárez-Orozco et. al., 2013).

Neither approach summarized above truly addresses the needs of the majority of ELs. The current study will focus on how to build a bridge between the learning paradigm of ELs and that of our educational system specifically in the area of academic writing. Culturally sensitive teaching will be at the heart of it.

Distinctions Between Culturally-Based and School-Based Learning Systems

To understand the MALP®, we must think of learning as consisting of three separate but related components: conditions, processes, and activities (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011; Marshall,
Each component consists of two elements, for a total of six elements. For this study, I will briefly introduce the first two components of MALP®: Conditions for Learning, and Process for Learning. I will however do a close reading of the literature review about the third component: “Activities for Learning” in my capstone. I will summarize and synthesize the literature relevant to this third component after a brief discussion of the first two.

1) Conditions for learning

These are important for ELs and must be present before effective learning can take place. Some ELs come from backgrounds with informal ways of learning. Since most of their learning has taken place outside of formal classrooms, their prior learning experiences have been closely tied to the real world, to the pragmatic, and to concrete tasks with actual results. Some ELs also come from collectivist subcultures and are accustomed to working together with others (Robinson, 2011).

In implementing MALP®, we need to ask ourselves: Does my pedagogy consistently incorporate material of immediate relevance along with subject matter knowledge? Is my classroom a warm, encouraging, and challenging environment that fosters a sense of interconnectedness, that is, being part of a classroom and school web of learning relationships? These are questions that must be affirmatively answered under the MALP® instructional model (Paris, 2012).

Yet, the two elements of “immediate relevance” which is defined as having a bearing on or connection with the matter at hand, and “interconnectedness” which in turn is defined as part of the terminology of a worldview which sees a oneness in all things, are not commonly evident in most formal classrooms beyond the very early years of schooling (Paris, 2012). Formal
education is not situated in daily life and practices, but is apart from these, and the development and/or maintenance of webs of relationships -if they exist- are not seen as central but as auxiliary, and are usually found outside the curriculum as in sports teams or clubs. Learning in formal education is future-based and predicated on the notion of discrete subject areas and content knowledge (Robinson, 2011). It is learning removed from the real world, where schooling takes place before “life,” where students are expected to be independent learners. Thus, we must consciously ensure that immediate relevance and interconnectedness are evident in our classrooms.

2) Processes for Learning:

Processes are how people prefer to access and transmit information. Some ELs prefer oral transmission, whereas formal education is grounded in literacy (Weimar, 2013). Some ELs are accustomed to shared responsibility while formal education demands individual accountability, particularly on assessments. The preference for oral transmission makes the centrality of literacy in our classrooms difficult for some ELs. Their familiarity with sharing responsibility, i.e. working together with others to accomplish tasks, makes the emphasis on individual accountability seem peculiar. Furthermore, in our educational system, even when group learning is encouraged, individual accountability remains the norm (Weimar, 2013). To transition learners to literacy and individual accountability which are essential processes of formal education, we need to link them with oral transmission and shared responsibility, the two processes preferred by some English learners.

In combining the oral with the written, we avoid thinking in terms of listening, speaking, reading and writing as four discrete skill sets. Instead, we see speaking and listening as integral supports for literacy, and we use strategies and techniques developed specifically for literacy
development (Weimar, 2013). In combining shared responsibility with individual accountability, we provide opportunities for learners to work together, which also include sections or pieces requiring learners to work individually. Key to this is ensuring that the individual accountability piece does not only take place during assessments, but also while learners are sharing responsibility in a learning task.

3) Activities for Learning:

Activities for learning are the tasks that learners perform to build and demonstrate mastery. These tasks differ greatly between informal ways of learning and formal education. Weaving a piece of cloth or selling items in the market require pragmatic, concrete tasks that produce immediate tangible results. In formal education, tasks are decontextualized, and are found primarily in school rather than outside of the school setting, such as asking to define a word. To transition ELs to thinking in school ways and being able to engage in decontextualized tasks, we provide opportunities for them to become familiar first with school ways of thinking and practice school tasks before new language and content are introduced. By starting with familiar language and content, ELs can focus on the task itself, without the additional difficulties posed by new language and content. Once they are familiar with school-based ways of thinking and the new task, then we introduce new language and content.

Douglas, C. M. (2015) addressed the application of Culturally Responsive Education (CRE) in the creation of lesson plans for Vietnamese students in New York City. A group of teachers from the New York City Public School System spent six weeks in Vietnam studying the language and culture to develop lesson plans that would address the needs of Vietnamese students in their classrooms. This study demonstrated the importance of teachers
connecting with their students through the incorporation of sociocultural elements that translated to a culturally responsive curriculum, not just for Vietnamese students but for all students. Sociocultural elements are customs, lifestyles and values that characterize a society. Some examples are religion, attitudes, economic status, class, language, politics, and law.

This article was very relevant to my topic as it showed how educators must utilize methods of culturally responsive education to make learning an accessible and significant experience that advances the opportunities of their students in a global society. I agree with how this article described culturally responsive teaching as having characteristics that acknowledge cultural heritage which in turn impact student dispositions and attitudes about their education; culturally responsive teaching is purposeful in connecting student experiences to school through varied strategies. Like the MALP® instructional model, cultural diffusion must be intricately interwoven into the lesson plans incorporating useful material from culture of origin (C1) and present culture (C2). Through this educational cultural diffusion, students are given the opportunity to relate what is being taught in the curriculum to their lived experiences. Education becomes tangible almost automatically instead of waiting for the individual to assimilate (which has a negative connotation). Cultural diffusion in education essentially compels the educator to assess what items and elements are useful in a student’s education. Cultural diffusion is critical to CRE, which requires that teachers teach all students through differentiation. Differentiated instruction is a learner-centered teaching approach using individual learning styles, abilities, motivation and readiness levels (Bush, 2006). Differentiation signifies that the teacher knows the learner to the extent that all qualities of the student are scrutinized and noted. The curriculum is not diminished; it is relevant and challenging through tailoring it to the demographics of the
classroom. According to Ladson-Billings (1995), CRE addresses the discontinuity that often exists between home and school environments.

Another aspect of my topic Douglas, C. M. (2015) addressed, is how an ethnic group’s cultural traditions, socio-linguistic patterns and social structure are vital to the construction of educational systems. For example, as a teacher, I need to know: (a) which ethnic groups give priority to communal living and cooperative problem solving and how these preferences affect educational motivation, aspiration, and task performance; (b) how different ethnic groups’ protocols of appropriate ways for children to interact with adults are exhibited in instructional settings; and (c) the implications of gender role socialization in different ethnic groups for implementing equity initiatives in classroom instruction.

Nisbet, D. (2010) addressed how EL teachers must carefully target their instruction for maximum impact and to foster meaningful connections for learners. It offers a practical resource guide for designing and implementing effective vocabulary instruction. It provides an overview of a three-tiered vocabulary framework, followed by specific recommendations for selecting and teaching vocabulary in the classroom.

This article is relevant to my topic as it addresses strategies for explicit vocabulary instruction, which is key to academic writing instruction. I agree with the article that in order to truly know a word, a learner must be able to: (a) define it, (b) decode and spell it, (c) pronounce it, (d) know its multiple meanings (including common and specialized meanings), and (e) be able to ascertain and apply the appropriate meaning in a particular context (Calderon, 2007; Nagy & Scott, 2000). Additional strategies that I used in my classroom were: strategies for providing brief instruction: (a) using an L1 translation, (b) using a known synonym, (c) showing an object or picture, (d) giving a quick demonstration, (e) drawing a simple picture or diagram, (f)
breaking the word into parts and giving the meaning of the parts and the whole word (the word part strategy), (g) giving several example sentences with the word in context to show the meaning, (h) commenting on the underlying meaning of the word and other referents, (i) direct teaching of cognates.

Another aspect of my topic Nisbet, D. (2010) addressed as it relates to writing was “Idea Completions”. I had my students complete sentence stems, which required them to draw on their knowledge of the word’s meaning to explain a situation. To illustrate, for the word “virtuoso”, students might be asked to complete the sentence, “The audience asked the virtuoso to play another piece of music because...”

Nisbet, D. (2010) suggested that the meaning of Tier 1 words can often be conveyed using visuals, realia, gestures, or demonstration. I can also provide or allow students to obtain a native language translation. A key consideration here is that the meaning of Tier 1 words should be conveyed quickly and clearly so that connections between students’ native language and second language knowledge is fostered. Tier 2 words are high-frequency words in the speech of mature, proficient users of English. This category includes academic vocabulary and other words, which appear across a variety of domains (e.g., analyze, redundant, significant). Tier 3 words are low-frequency words, often associated with specific disciplines. My study had students with a variety of levels, using different levels of Tier words.

Lee, S. H. (2003, December) investigated vocabulary use in the writing of 65 secondary schools multi-grade and multi-L1 intermediate EL learners of a Greater-Vancouver public secondary school. The research shows how writing in context, with attention to vocabulary use, is a tool for general second language improvement (Muncie, 2002). Research has shown that lack of vocabulary contributes to writing difficulty for foreign language learners (Santos, 1988;
Astika, 1993) and that vocabulary is one of the most important features that determine writing quality (Raimes, 1985; Yzawa & Cumming, 1989; Leki & Carson, 1994; Walters & Wolf, 1996).

I agree with Lee, S. H. (2003, December) that the learners’ vocabulary size has serious implications for every day oral and written communication and academic success. This study had a restricted set of target vocabulary, and it attempted to answer some rudimentary questions in a person’s second language (L2) recognition and productive vocabulary research. These questions pertained to learners’ and native speakers’ vocabulary knowledge appropriate to a particular context, as well as the difference between learners’ recognition and productive vocabulary in writing on a particular topic, and the immediate and long-term effects of explicit instruction on the learners’ vocabulary use in writing.

Lee, S. H. (2003, December) is relevant to my topic as it addressed best practices in teaching writing to EL students. This study has confirmed that word comprehension does not automatically predict productive use of the word, and that learners needed to expand their controlled active vocabulary as well as use newly learned words.

Explicit vocabulary instruction helps to convert newly learned vocabulary into productive vocabulary in an immediate writing task and helps retention, but it is subject to loss and more practice in the production of newly learned vocabulary is required. EL learners need to be shown how to use already recognized vocabulary as well as new vocabulary in a production task, and how lexical variation and variation of lexical frequency affect the quality of their writing. In the early stages of writing instruction, writing tasks can be approached from a vocabulary focus to help learners get accustomed to thinking of vocabulary as part of the writing process.

Roehrig, G. H., Dubosarsky, M., Mason, A., Carlson, S., & Murphy, B. (2011, March 25) is a study that was guided by an interest in developing a culture of inquiry-based and science
instruction in American Indian classrooms. The results of the study indicated that sustained, culturally-based science professional development can positively change the quality of science teaching and that teachers engaged the students in culturally-relevant and investigative science and mathematics activities. Over two years the teachers were observed to "look more, listen more and notice more." Looking more over the course of two years, they have seen a shift in teachers' attitudes toward the teaching of science. The professional development provided opportunities for teachers to look for science in their communities and classrooms. The teachers realized that they can 'do science' with the students in their classroom as well as on a nature walk, around the water table and in every corner of their classroom. As teachers began to look for easy opportunities to infuse science into their classrooms, their attitudes changed from negative to positive. Over the course of a second year of professional development, teachers also developed more positive attitudes toward being able to infuse culture into their science instruction and no longer saw a disconnect between "the University people's science" and "the reservation's science" (p.569). This is relevant to my topic as it provides examples of new activities for learning which make language and content more accessible in ways similar to the goals and strategies of the MALP® model. I see it being used in a variety of subjects and settings, especially as our classrooms become more diverse. Embracing and learning from the different cultures of our students has become a necessity. The same study also addressed my topic of preferred, culturally based learning systems of American Indian students where teachers started to listen more closely to their students' interests and ideas and use students' curiosity to drive instruction rather than the schedule. I agree with how the teachers built on students' enthusiasm and enjoyment of nature. Increased listening to and respect for student ideas was clearly reflected in statistically significant increases in scores for positive climate and regard for
student perspective. An increase in teachers' ability to listen to students' ideas and knowledge of the subject matter, teaching activities and strategies, in turn led to statistically significant increases in scores for instructional learning formats. Professional development provided the teachers access to a variety of interesting and stimulating materials and teaching strategies, but through increased listening to students, teachers also actively looked for opportunities to actively engage students in the content area. Noticing more during the second year of professional development, they focused in on the details of inquiry-based instruction. Using observations and model lessons, teachers were encouraged to look beyond the surface activity in their classrooms and to notice the details about students' ideas and the role of the teacher as a questioner to help students build and develop their ideas. Teachers improved in the teaching skills needed to engage their students in inquiry and critical thinking activities. The data shows that there is still room for improvement in teachers' instructional support and the third and final year of professional development will focus on providing teachers an opportunity to notice more in-depth their own teaching and questioning strategies through reflection on a video of their own content area instruction. Again, I see a focus on new activities for learning here, using tasks requiring academic ways of thinking, and making these tasks accessible with familiar language and content.

Professional development providers need to model teaching strategies that connect content and process and to help teachers understand the role of student interest in this endeavor. It is important for teachers to understand the family culture that students bring to the classroom and to help students see connections between their culture and content area. Professional development structure needs to be flexible to address the needs of the teachers. Evaluation and research data should not be limited to summative use. Surveys and observations of teachers need
to be reviewed frequently and used as formative data to guide program structure. Meaningful instructional change takes time and single workshops with limited follow-up in classrooms are ineffective in producing instructional change.

Dong, Yu Ren. (2013) highlights how ELs’ prior knowledge can be used to help learn content area vocabulary. According to the author, the concept of prior knowledge for an EL student should include his or her native literacy skills, native cultural knowledge, and previous learning. Information is provided on how teachers can use ELs’ native languages, culturally familiar experiences, and concept mapping to assist in comprehension.

Dong, Yu Ren. (2013, May) addressed my topic of preferred, culturally-based learning systems. This journal suggested using native language, familiar examples, and concept mapping to teach English learners. I agree that ELs struggle with content area vocabulary every day. Unlike most native English speakers who have learned at least 12,000 words by high school (Nagy and Anderson 1984; Nation 2006). Secondary school–age ELs must learn everyday English, school English, and content area vocabulary to pass examinations and graduation requirements.

When teaching ELs, the concept of prior knowledge needs to encompass their native language, previous subject matter learning, native literacy skills, and native cultural knowledge and life experiences. To uncover prior knowledge, teachers can use various ways to teach English learners: 1) Survey students, 2) Ask English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) teachers or bilingual teachers about ELs English proficiency levels and needs, and how to teach challenging reading materials and vocabulary in a comprehensible and meaningful manner, 3) Invite students to talk and write about what they know about the topic before the lesson (e.g.,
“What do you know about…?” “What comes to mind when you think of…?” “How do you translate… in your native language?”

ELs come into class with prior learning, native languages, and cultural and life experiences. Even though their prior knowledge is acquired and expressed in their native language and may be different from what the teacher expects, it is a powerful learning tool. By building upon ELs’ native language and bridging their prior knowledge with new learning tasks, teachers can actively engage students and create a rich learning context, speeding up the learning process and increasing understanding.

The Gap

Although some research has been conducted on the distinction between culturally-based and school-based learning, there is a need for more compelling evidence concerning the differences between the two, based on rigorous research. I aim to find strategies for helping ELs succeed in school. I see a gap in research about successfully making the transition from pure research to classroom success. As we expect our students to access and transmit information via the written word rather than orally, they need to engage in expected classroom behaviors and academic discourse, and become active participants in the learning process. Students need to further their literacy skills and handle decontextualized tasks while building and demonstrating content knowledge. MALP® can help our learners along this path.

Research Questions

This research is expected to be useful to other EL practitioners as it will examine the distinctions between culturally-based and school-based learning systems and potential ramifications of these differences.
My primary research question is: Can MALP® help our English Learners in writing with a focus on new activities for learning to improve linguistic complexity?

To answer this question, I will need to know my students’ writing proficiency prior to MALP®-based instruction as well as after such instruction.

Summary

This chapter presented a literature review on the topics of MALP®, culturally responsive teaching, and distinctions in conditions, processes, and some activities for learning in culturally-based and school-based learning systems. It also described the gap in application and the need of this study to help teachers understand the distinction between these two models of learning. The next chapter presents the methodology and the data collection tools utilized in this study.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study is designed to explore whether the MALP® can help EL students in moving up the EL proficiency ladder in writing. In this study, I wanted to know the distinctions between culturally-based and school-based learning systems and potential ramifications of these differences. I wanted to understand the use of MALP® in the classroom.

My primary research question is: Can the MALP® help raise the English Language Proficiency of our EL students in writing by focusing on new activities for learning to improve linguistic complexity? (See Appendix A: W-APT Grades 6-8 Writing Test) which was the test used to assess my students.

This was a classroom study drawing upon qualitative and quantitative methods. I worked with nine 7th Graders at a public middle school in suburban Minnesota. I used the W-APT Grades 6-8 Writing Test as a pre-assessment, which I gave my students around mid-October. Following that, I taught writing using the MALP® model. At the end of December, I administered an immediate test. I administered the delayed test around beginning of February. The same writing test was administered all three times for data comparison. I used the WIDA writing rubric. I collaborated, as well as had students in my room. I conducted my study with the EL students who came to my room for instruction daily.

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter describes the methodologies used in this study. First, the rationale and description of the research design is presented along with a description of the qualitative and the quantitative methods. Second, the data collection protocols are presented, the procedure, and the subjects.
Number of years in the United States

I would like to briefly introduce my participants, please see Figure 4: *Number of years in the US*. Participants # 1, 3 and 4 (33%) were born in the United States (U.S) to immigrant parents. Participant #1 speaks Spanish at home, Participant #3 speaks Hmong at home, and Participant #4 speaks Russian at home. Those three students have been receiving EL services because they speak another language at home, and they are not proficient in English. Participant #2 came to the U.S. at the age of three. He is from Ghana and speaks Creole English at home. Participants# 5, 8 and 9 (33% of my students) have been in the U.S. for two years and they speak Lebanese Arabic, Vietnamese, and Spanish respectively. Participant # 7 has been in the U.S. for three years and speaks Portuguese at home. Participant #6 has been in the U.S. for one year and speaks Egyptian Arabic at home. Participant #9 is a refugee from Honduras. Participants # 2, 5,
6, 7 and 8 are immigrants. Participants #5, 8 and 9 had interruptions of six months to a year in their schooling.

Mixed-Methods Research

Mixed-Methods Research includes both qualitative and quantitative characteristics. Combining and analyzing such a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative data in the same study can be very helpful in understanding a research problem more completely (Creswell, 2008). In mixed methods research, a researcher collects both numeric information and text to better answer a study’s research question. The term” mixing” implies that the data or the findings are integrated and/or connected at one or several points within the study. The type of data I collected was both qualitative and quantitative through the three assessments I gave my students. I compared and interpreted the results of the tests, which measured the improvement in the quality of linguistic complexity, organization, cohesiveness, and coherent expression of ideas. Using a rubric, this qualitative assessment got translated to a quantitative assessment with numbers to measure such progress. This study adopted the triangulation design because multiple research techniques and multiple sources of data were used to explore the issues from all feasible perspectives. Using the technique of triangulation can aid in credibility, transferability, and dependability in qualitative research (Mackey, A., & Gass, S. M.,

The MALP® model has three parts: A) Accept conditions for learning, B) Combine processes for learning, C) Focus on new activities for learning. Part C has 2 areas of focus:1) I am focusing on tasks requiring academic way of thinking, 2) I am making these tasks accessible with familiar language and content. My research focused on part C. My documentation is in the Chapter Four: Results, and it shows the gain or loss each student made. It includes the students' L1, entry date to the U.S., and beginning of services date. This method was suitable for my study
because student writing is a convenient source of data. My dependent variable was the level of proficiency in writing. My independent variable was focusing on new activities for learning through my instruction.

Data Collection, Materials, And Procedures

Participants and Location/Setting

This study was conducted with nine 7th Graders (five girls and four boys) at a public middle school in suburban Minnesota. The setting of data collection was my classroom. This was my first-year teaching at this school. I intended to find out the following information about the students: their proficiency level, length of time in US/my site, and language/country/ethnic background.

Data Collection Technique 1

I used the W-APT Grades 6-8 Writing Test as a pretreatment, which I gave my students around mid-October. Following that, I taught writing using the MALP® model. At the end of December, I administered an immediate test. I continued my instruction and administered the delayed test around beginning of February. The same writing test was administered all three times for data collection. This type of documentation is not intrusive and gives a large amount of data. I also looked at past WAPT scores for comparison. The writing tests I used had constructed responses which allowed for individuality. I graded it with the WIDA Writing Rubric. My documentation showed the gain or loss each student made. It included the students' L1, entry date to the U.S., and beginning of services date.

Data Collection Technique 2
Another data collection method for this study was extended-literature review, including peer-review journal articles. These articles for the most part had well-defined objectives, including precise definitions of study variables and outcomes as well as appropriate and well-documented study identification and selection strategies. One needs to be aware of potential weaknesses such as biases in selecting which studies to include. (Perry, F.L. Jr., 2005).

**Data Collection Technique 3**

An additional data collection method was text analysis of textbook segments or instructional material based on a well-defined theoretical framework (systemic-functional grammar, relevance theory, genre analysis, case grammar, etc.). One of the strengths of this technique is that it provides thorough analysis of text concentrating on one variable at a time. An example of that is the frequency or different types of subject pronouns (revealing patterns of linguistic features). A potential weakness is that it may be limited to one theoretical framework, neglecting other related or interacting variables (Perry, F.L. Jr., 2005).

**Data Collection Technique 4**

A final data collection method was periodic assessments of my students who are the participants of this study, using curriculum based instructional materials in a well-defined setting, appropriate to the study. A potential strength was the availability of research tools and curricular materials. A potential weakness was logistical constraints (financial, physical, political, social, etc.)

**Ethics**

This study employed the following safeguards to protect informant’s rights: research objectives were shared with my school district and parents. Letters explaining the study were
sent to the director of instructional curriculum for review and approval. Letters explaining the
study were also sent to the parents requesting written permission/informed consent. The human
subjects review, verbatim transcriptions, and the anonymity of my students were promised to the
parents and the school district.

Data Validity and Assumptions

In 2012, Plonsky, L. & Oswald, F. explained meta-analysis as a statistical tool used in
research synthesis to convert the findings of individual studies to comparable values to estimate
an overall observed finding about a given treatment or condition across studies. There are times
when our study questions involve surveying a wide range of existing studies rather than
collecting original data. In a sense, a meta-analysis is a way of synthesizing results across studies
through a statistical procedure. It is an average of averages in which the data points are
individual studies, not individual participants.

To examine my assumptions and biases, I conducted a meta-analysis using a statistical
approach combining the results from multiple studies to provide a better alternative to individual
studies. This analysis enabled me to improve estimates of the size of the effect and/or resolve
uncertainty when different reports disagreed. My meta-analysis was a statistical overview of the
results from one or more systematic review. It produced a weighted average of the included
study results. A weighted average is an average resulting from the multiplication of each
component by a factor reflecting its importance. Results can be potentially generalized to a larger
population.

Conclusion
My primary research question was: *Can MALP® help our ELs in moving up the EL proficiency ladder in linguistic complexity in writing?*

In this study, my goal was to evaluate the effectiveness of the MALP® in raising the writing scores. In this chapter, I described the methods I used. Details were presented on the data collection tools, the procedures, the data analysis, and the ethics involved. Chapter Four presents the results of the tests and summarizes the data.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This is a study about the MALP®. The purpose of the study was to find out how 7th Grade ELs can function more effectively in both their preferred, culturally based learning systems (Hispanic, Hmong, Arab, Russian, Vietnamese, and Liberian) and in Western-style formal education settings. In order to help educators understand how to integrate key elements of formal education while balancing and acknowledging the needs, preferences, and priorities of ELs, I will research a practical set of guidelines to follow in designing and delivering instruction to language learners in the writing domain namely vocabulary usage. In this study, my goal is to evaluate the effectiveness of MALP® in raising writing scores.

My primary research question is: *Can MALP® help our EL students in moving up the EL proficiency ladder in writing?*

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter details the results of the study. First, I documented data analysis in these ways: I described systematically the information collected about my students, the themes or patterns that emerged. Then I explained systematically the results and their interrelationships. I presented results that were consistent with the methods and procedures stated in the methods chapter. I documented connections with the literature review, i.e. agreement, disagreement, and discovery. Finally, I documented how the results responded to my study question and indicated what will be included in the following chapter.
Tests Results

The following sections outline data about the nine students in the study, which have been broken down into number of years in the United States, years in EL services, October pretreatment, December immediate test, student progress gain/loss, January post-test, and final student progress gain/loss.

My school district uses a website called Ellevation, which transformed school districts to better serve English Learners by supporting student data analysis, standards-based instruction, program reporting requirements, collaboration, and staff development. Every student is assigned to an EL teacher in the district and the student has his/her page where they have all the information that teachers can refer to pertaining to the students. Ellevation does not provide number of years of education students received in their native countries. It gives teachers test results in all four-language domains since the student started receiving EL services. Every EL teacher in my school district assigns goals in Ellevation for each student in each language domain (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) for the year.

Figure 5: Years in EL Services
Years in EL Services

Four of my students (44%) have been receiving EL services for one year. Participants #3 and 5 (22% of my students) have been receiving services for two years. Participants #1 and 4 (22% of my students) have been receiving EL services for eight years. Participant #2 has been receiving EL services for eight years. Participant #2 has been receiving EL services for five years (See Figure 5: Years in EL Services).

Figure 6: Mid October Pre-assessment

Mid October Pre-assessment

Before beginning my instruction using the MALP® instructional model, I gave my students the W-APT Grades 6-8 Writing Test. My students’ scores ranged from 2.9 to 5. Participants #6 and #7 had the highest writing scores even though they have been receiving EL services for the shortest amount of time in comparison to the other students in the study. I believe this may be due to strong literacy skills in their L1. Participant #9 joined our class after October
and was included in the graph. Looking at this graph, one would predict that perhaps the students with the higher scores would make the most progress, however after my instruction using the MALP® instructional model I was pleasantly surprised to see the results different from the way I predicted. (See Figure 6: *Mid October Pre-treatment*).

**Figure 7: End of December Immediate Test**

![End of December Immediate Test](image)

My goal was to see if the MALP® instructional model can increase my students’ English Language Proficiency Level in writing in linguistic complexity. I used the WIDA Performance Definitions as my guide in determining the ELP level for my students. My goal was for my students who are at Level 2 (or emerging) to inch up towards Level 3 (or developing). Participant #2 started out at Level 2.9 at the beginning of my study and Participant #9 scored 2.4 in December which was his first test as he arrived late in the school year. Similarly, my goal for my
students at Level 3 was to inch up towards Level 4 (or expanding), my students who were at Level 4 to inch up towards Level 5 or (bridging). Finally, I aimed to take my students who were at Level 5 up to Level 6 (or reaching). I was very encouraged to see that the December test showed that all students made some progress (See Figure 7: End of December Immediate Test). I used Figure 8: WIDA Performance Definitions-Speaking and Writing Grades K-12 as my rubric to grade all the writing done by my students. This study focused only on linguistic complexity in writing.
Figure 8: WIDA Performance Definitions—Speaking and Writing Grades K-12

At each grade, toward the end of a given level of English language proficiency, and with instructional support, English language learners will produce...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse Level</th>
<th>Sentence Level</th>
<th>Word/Phrase Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linguistic Complexity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Language Forms and Conventions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Vocabulary Usage</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5 Bridging</td>
<td>Multiple, complex sentences</td>
<td>Technical and abstract content-area language, including content-specific collocations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organized, cohesive, and coherent expression of ideas</td>
<td>Words and expressions with shades of meaning across content areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4 Expanding</td>
<td>Short, expanded, and some complex sentences</td>
<td>Specific and some technical content-area language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organized expression of ideas with emerging cohesion</td>
<td>Words and expressions with expressive meaning through use of collocations and idioms across content areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3 Developing</td>
<td>Short and some expanded sentences with emerging complexity</td>
<td>Specific content language, including cognates and expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expanded expression of one idea or emerging expression of multiple related ideas</td>
<td>Words or expressions with multiple meanings used across content areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 Emerging</td>
<td>Phrases or short sentences</td>
<td>General content words and expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emerging expression of ideas</td>
<td>Social and instructional words and expressions across content areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 Entering</td>
<td>Words, phrases, or chunks of language</td>
<td>General content-related words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single words used to represent ideas</td>
<td>Everyday social and instructional words and expressions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

...within sociocultural contexts for language use.
After two months of instruction using the MALP® instructional model, all my students showed some increase in their writing score. I modified my instruction by focusing on new activities for learning, focusing on tasks requiring academic ways of thinking, and making these tasks accessible with familiar language and content. I used Figure 8: WIDA Performance Definitions-Speaking and Writing Grades K-12 as my rubric to grade all the writing done by my students. The bar graph above reflects student progress from October to December. Participant #1 went from 3.9 to 4.3 (.4 gain), and Participant #3 went from 3.6 to 4.0 (.4 gain). Based on the WIDA Performance Definitions, these two students went from writing short and some expanded sentences with emerging complexity, to writing short, expanded, and some complex sentences. They were relating ideas specific to content areas and they made progress by expanding related ideas characteristic of content areas. Participant #2 went from 2.9 to 3.3, this student went from
writing phrases or short sentences to writing short and some expanded sentences with emerging complexity. This student started writing an idea with details and made progress in writing related ideas specific to content areas. Participants #’s 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 made some progress within their ELP level. Participant #9 was a new student and took the test for the first time (See Figure 9: Student Progress-Initial Gain/Loss).

**Figure 10: Beginning February Post Test**

![Graph showing beginning February post test results for participants 1 to 9.]

Beginning February Post Test

After months of teaching using the MALP® instructional model, I was very pleased with the results. My performance criteria for my participants focused on linguistic complexity. When evaluating my students writing, I was looking at the voice, mood, logical connectors, parallelism, and organizational types. In this case, it was expository writing. My students showed improvement in the quantity and variety of written text in communication. They showed progress in the amount, structure, and density of written text. They also showed growth in the coherence
and cohesion of ideas. Finally, they showed improvement in the variety of sentence types to form organized text (Figure 10: *Beginning February Post Test*).

Figure 11: *Total Student Progress Gain/Loss*

![Total Student Progress Gain / Loss](image)

**Total Student Progress Gain/Loss**

The results showed that 56%, or 5 of my 9 participants showed gain by moving up the ELP because of my instruction using the MALP® instructional model. My implementation of MALP® specifically in writing included teaching new activities for learning using academic ways of thinking. I actively worked at getting to know my students’ individual needs in a collaborative environment that resulted in transforming our class into a community of writers. The content and language became more familiar to my students through activities for learning to enhance linguistic complexity in writing. The rest of this chapter elaborates on the activities we used in our classroom. Student progress-initial showed that Participants #’s 1, 2, and 3 had
moved up one level. Total student progress showed that Participant #4 moved from Level 4 to Level 5 by using multiple, complex sentences, the writing became more organized, cohesive, and coherent expression of ideas characteristic of content area. Participant #8 moved from Level 3 to Level 4 by using short, expanded, and some complex sentences, his/her writing showed organized expression of ideas with emerging cohesion characteristic of content area. The rest of the participants continued to make progress within their ELP Level (See Figure 11: Total Student Progress Gain/Loss) and (See Table 2: Total Student Progress Gain/Loss) which shows the cumulative progress data collected throughout the study.

Table 2: Total Student Progress Gain/Loss

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>L1</th>
<th>Arrived</th>
<th>Pre-Treatment</th>
<th>Immediate Test</th>
<th>Student Progress Initial</th>
<th>Delayed Test</th>
<th>Total Student Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>8/25/2004</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Creole</td>
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<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>#3</td>
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<td>Hmong</td>
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<td>0.4</td>
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<td>0.4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Arabic-Lebanese</td>
<td>6/10/2015</td>
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<td>4.3</td>
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<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6</td>
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<td>Arabic-Egyptian</td>
<td>6/5/2016</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7</td>
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<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>10/9/2014</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>9/2/2015</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>5/28/2015</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considerations in Implementing MALP® in My Study
Mixed Ability Classes:

In 2009, DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang explained that project-based learning encouraged and supported consistent and real differentiation of learning, and that true cooperative learning should become the norm. To accommodate the needs of all students in my classroom, we chose projects that were relevant and we scaffolded the written word through oral interaction, which fit in with the MALP® model. I found this to be the case in my study, project- based learning is a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging and complex question, problem, or challenge. The challenge in this study was focusing on tasks requiring academic ways of thinking. These tasks became accessible through repeated activities using familiar content, and language. Our project was learning how to write a good essay with an introduction, which includes a topic sentence, a detailed body, and a conclusion. I posted a set of instructions with the sequence of steps my students needed to follow in order to write a good essay. The students were taught how to write a topic sentence, the sentence that states what the paragraph will be about. The topic sentence may answer part of the prompt to show the topic. They were taught that it should get the reader’s attention. I also taught the students non-examples of a topic sentence such as: “Hi, my name is Bob and I am writing about the zoo!” The topic sentence is usually the first sentence in the paragraph. It introduces the main topic of the paragraph. It sometimes lists the main details of the paragraph. Example: The Omaha Zoo is famous for its tigers, bears, and elephants. Main topic: Omaha Zoo, Main ideas: tigers, bears, elephants. I taught my students types of topic sentences: General topic sentence: states the main topic of the paragraph. Example: The Omaha Zoo is a fantastic place to visit in Nebraska. Clueing topic sentence: names the main idea and hints about the main details. Example: The Omaha Zoo is
famous for its large animals. Specific topic sentence: Names the main idea and lists the main details in order. Example: The Omaha zoo is famous for its tigers, bears, and elephants.

Identifying and writing topic sentences using the main idea and details proved to be challenging for some of my students. Following the MALP® model where we focused on academic tasks and making these tasks accessible using familiar language and content, this became a newly acquired skill. We incorporated culturally responsive teaching by activating prior knowledge and my students shared information about their favorite animals from their respective cultures. We scaffolded the written word through oral interactions.

My students worked in groups and pairs to read and edit each other’s writing. They were grouped based on English language proficiency levels. The students with the higher proficiency levels were peer mentors for the students of lower proficiency levels. The partnering of students changed as progress was made, and they also got to choose their partner to work with. They practiced and rehearsed their own knowledge and further refined their academic English as they helped their classmates. During my instruction using MALP®, learning was constantly scaffolded and information was recycled and applied in a variety of ways to maximize opportunities for my students to understand and internalize. The MALP® model was an instructional model that provided a framework for classroom teaching, placing equal weight on language, content, and culture.

I have found that teaching by following the U.S. learning paradigm caused distress for some of my students as they could not catch up due to cultural dissonance. Before incorporating MALP®, and through our oral interactions and our work in class, I learned from my students that they thrive on working together rather than the learning paradigm of mostly independent work assigned in class. After incorporating MALP® I could see that they were more engaged and
enjoyed the learning. The MALP® neither required me to make a complete shift to the learner’s paradigm nor forced the students to make an immediate and complete shift to the U.S. learning.

The new academic tasks I introduced:

I intended to build ways of academic thinking into the writing process, avoiding a focus on pure writing skills, although that, in and of itself, contained academic thinking. I looked at the academic tasks that underlie the writing itself such as using formulas to locate relevant data and following steps in a sequence. I planned to strengthen the writing by first laying the foundation with these tasks. Because these tasks were new, however, I had to introduce and practice them with language and content my students found accessible, gradually moving them forward toward the more challenging writing concepts I had to teach them, and the academic language that accompanied these concepts.

I thought that the writing project would be a great way to introduce and reinforce the concept of steps in writing, and why order is important in writing a better paragraph. I decided to teach sequencing as the primary new academic task to focus on in this lesson. To scaffold this concept, I provided a clear list of the steps involved which especially for my students made getting to the outcome of the assignment easier and more efficient. To help my students visualize a paragraph, I used the steps in (Figure 12: Favorite Country Essay-Outlining Information) and modeled the steps for them.
I demonstrated how a constructive task of a paragraph had to follow a certain order. I showed many examples of other paragraphs also following a specific order. I gave my students the template above as they worked in teams to write the paragraph. Because this sequence of writing steps was new, the emphasis was to become familiar with this sequence, talk about it, write about it, and refer to it when they presented their writing to the class. My next task was to teach my students sentence structure with the goal of making the students become familiar with this new academic language. This was accomplished through a variety of activities including the following sequenced methodology:
Using a template for identifying sentence structure (Simple Sentences):

This study focused on tasks in the classroom using the MALP® model for students to learn academic ways of thinking, in this case learning how to write a simple sentence. As my students learned this task, the language used became more familiar. I taught my students that every complete sentence must have two parts, a subject and a verb phrase. The students were required to do the following:

1) Circle the subject(s)-who or what the sentence is about.

2) Underline the verb phrase(s)- what the subject does, what will happen to the subject.

They worked in teams and asked each other questions such as: Who or what is the sentence about? Any helping or linking verbs? Any action verbs? (See Appendix B: Verb Cheat Sheet) Using the Verb cheat sheet facilitated identifying helping and linking verbs as the students gradually became familiar with the language.

Once they identified the correct subject(s) and verb phrase(s), they wrote the sentence structure following one of the formulas: Subject Verb (SV), Subject Subject Verb (SSV), Subject Verb Verb (SVV), Subject Subject Verb Verb (SSVV) (See Figure 13: Simple Sentences Practice #1).
Figure 13: Simple Sentences Practice #1

**Name** __________________________ **Hour** __________ **Due Date** ________________

**SIMPLE SENTENCES PRACTICE #1**

*Circle the subject(s).*
*Underline the verb phrase(s).*
*Fill in the Sentence Structure Formula in the blank - SV SSV SVV SSVV*

1. **SV** Our winter break is too short.
2. **SV** The break should be 3 months long.
3. **SSV** My grandma and grandma came to get me over break.
4. **SVV** They brought presents and took me ice skating.
5. **SSV** Mom and Dad cooked all the food and decorated the house.
6. **SVV** My brother kept the fire going in the fireplace and shoveled the driveway.
7. **SSV** Margaret and SyV my sisters, just played with their new dolls all week.
8. **SV** I ate so much food.
9. **SV** It was a great break really.
10. **SVV** Now I have to go back to school and can't play all the time anymore.
The boxes on the left in the figure above are:

S= Sentence labeling: the students worked together and checked this box when labeled the right subject and verb.

F= Formula: the students worked together and checked this box when the correct formula was identified.

To teach the new activities using academic language and making it familiar and readily accessible, the following visual was used by all students to identify and create a simple sentence.

It’s like a game of volleyball! The subjects must stay on their side of the net, and the verb phrases must stay on theirs. It does not matter which side of the net they are on as long as they don’t mix (See Figure 14: *Team Subject/Team Verb Phrase*).

**Figure 14: Team Subject/Team Verb Phrase**

The students worked together and asked each other: *Is there a volleyball net in the middle that separates the subject from the verb phrase?*
The last step was to create their own simple sentences and check that the complete sentence made sense when it stood alone. They also had to identify the method or formula used to explain the sentence structure.

In writing and developing linguistic complexity, my students had to work on mastering the above academic tasks essential for their success. The importance of always checking what was written to see if it made sense became a guiding principle in writing a simple sentence.

How did I make the new tasks accessible to my students?

I focused on new activities for learning. I made tasks accessible with familiar language and content by doing the following:

- I provided sentence frames to guide the use of language to describe the steps of writing.

- I provided familiar content for the repeated writing activities.

- Project-based learning: Centered on activities in which my students produced something cooperatively over a set period. My students were asked to produce summaries of simple sentence structures. The time for any given project ranged from one to two lessons to several months, depending on the type of project. Regardless of the duration, project-based learning served to foster a learning community while promoting the acquisition of academic ways of thinking and content knowledge (Lin et al. 1995). Project based learning consisted of learner-centered, active, and participatory activities; it was collaborative, integrated the four-language skill area (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), lent itself to an interdisciplinary approach, incorporated outside knowledge, resulted in a tangible product, and was long-term. In my classroom, project-based learning promoted students supporting or mentoring one another, and I facilitated that. My students talked about their sentences, looked at formulas as a visual and
written and published their essays. We found that task repetition in the diverse contexts that projects provided fostered learning and control of language, retention of content knowledge, and the development and application of academic ways of thinking (DeKeyser, 2007), all of which are factors key in helping all students achieve.

As my students used familiar language and content to develop the use of linguistic complexity using the MALP® model, they worked in pairs to create sentences and give feedback to each other. The purpose was not only to create sentences but also to create a written version of the steps in understanding sentence structure and the reasons for each step. The academic task objective was to provide support by giving reasons (See Figure 15: Simple Sentences):

**Figure 15: Simple Sentences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circle the subject(s)</td>
<td>Who/what the sentence is about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underline the verb phrase(s)</td>
<td>What the subject does, what will happen to the subject, or linking verb (may include helping verbs).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask yourself:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any linking or helping verbs?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any action verbs?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are all the subjects on one side and all the verb phrases on the other? Can you draw a volley ball net between them?</td>
<td>A sentence is a simple sentence when all the subjects are on one side and all the verb phrases are on the other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the sentence structure formula?</td>
<td>Is it SV, SSV, SVV, SSVV?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is your sentence labeling accurate?</td>
<td>Need to identify the subject(s) and verb(s) of the simple sentence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The next step in sentence structure was to teach compound sentences comprising two simple sentences joined together -to make one longer sentence. The following graphic organizer explains the steps and reasons in the process of learning used in my classroom. This graphic organizer and the one for simple sentences were displayed in the classroom for students to refer to during project-based activities (See Figure 16: *Compound Sentences*).

Figure 16: *Compound Sentences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do we have two simple sentences - also known as Independent clauses (I)?</td>
<td>A compound sentence is just two simple sentences joined together to make one longer sentence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which formula are you using: I, c I or I; I ?</td>
<td>To create a compound sentence, we must put a connector piece between the two independent clauses. Option1: comma conjunction (, c) The conjunction must be one of the seven FANBOYS: For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So Option 2: semicolon (;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalize the first word and use end punctuation</td>
<td>Needed for any sentence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following compound sentences worksheet (See Figure 17: *Compound Sentences*) was used to assist my students in identifying this type of sentence structure. Again, they worked on it in pairs. After completing the three steps indicated at the top of the paper, they discussed the results and then checked the boxes to the left. S was checked if the sentence labeling was accurate and F was checked if the formula was accurate.
Identifying sentence structures was followed by creating new sentences. The time spent on creating sentences was time-on-task that engaged the students and solidified the concepts they have been studying. As they talked about their work together and practiced writing, I provided sentence frames to help the students in their writing and key vocabulary was posted on a word wall so that they could easily find the terms they needed. The students used colors, designs, and other personalized additions in their essays along with the content to make the essays their own. When the students finished their writing, I posted them up on the wall so that they could refer to them as needed. When our writing unit ended, I selected one or two writings to leave up representing different cultures. The sequence repeated for the next unit.
Project-based learning and MALP

In project-based learning, I acted as a facilitator and guide rather than as the repository of knowledge. Peer interaction and peer support, with teachers as guides, are central. In this approach, learning means doing something, not just receiving and reproducing information. Based on the MALP®, students must have many opportunities to develop and practice academic ways of thinking in the context of familiar language and content. A significant benefit of project-based learning was my ability to embed academic tasks throughout this study. Project-based learning allowed for the development of higher-level thinking skills while expanding students’ subject area knowledge. I found that these higher-level thinking skills could not be taught in isolation, but had to be practiced and learned in the context of the learning content. I found that when my students were engaged in a project designed to build their understanding of sentence structure, it provided them with the background for becoming better writers and built familiarity with the language and content. I had to make sure that the projects were challenging, and not childish or dumbed down.

In summary, looking at project-based learning through the MALP® lens, I saw how it allowed me to introduce and reinforce academic skills by building on familiar language and content. It allowed me to create meaningful learning, based on meaningful activities within the constraints of delivering the required curriculum, while developing the English language proficiency, content knowledge, and literacy skills.

Cultural Dissonance

I laid the foundation of the MALP® instructional model by valuing my students’ cultures and languages demonstrating an openness and willingness to accept differences, and by knowing
my students, their experiences, and their cultural backgrounds, which allowed me to utilize this knowledge to facilitate learning. In addition to focusing exclusively on the aspects of language that my students learned to develop proficiency, how they approached learning, and what I needed to do to facilitate this learning, good instructional strategies had to be combined with an understanding of social contexts of language, learning, and meaning. My classroom became a community, one with many interacting factors: social interaction; the beliefs, assumptions, and practices of my students; the types of activities, their construction, their implementation; and the nature of the relationships among my students on the one hand, and between my students and myself on the other (Brown, 2003; DeCapua & Marshall, 2010a, 2010b; Hawkins, 2004; Marshall & DeCapua, 2010; Norton & Toohey, 2004).

With the MALP®, I was not seen as the principle dispenser of knowledge but as one who learned with and from my students, by identifying with them as learners, and planned and revisited lessons accordingly. My role became both that of teacher and learner, based on relationships and interactions deriving from this relationship. It became clear to me that methods and technical lessons are not as important as interpersonal relationships with commitment, clear expectations, active engagement, and mutual respect because I valued my students and what they brought to the classroom (Clarke, 2006; Gay, 200).

I developed strong relationships with my students and adapted my lessons and activities to meet the needs and abilities of each student. I became sensitive to issues in my students’ lives outside the classroom (Clarke, Davis, Rhodes, & Baker, 1996, cited in Clarke, 2006, p.151). The way I delivered curriculum within the context of my classroom and with my students to create a positive learning environment was exceedingly important (Patterson, Hale, & Stessman, 2007/2008).
The use of the MALP® in my classroom was also informed by culturally responsive pedagogy, which was shown in the way I taught, and how my students perceived the curriculum. Culturally responsive pedagogy focused on me developing close relationships with my students and accommodating, and responding to my students’ academic, cultural, linguistic, and social needs through my teaching approaches and strategies (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

To address cultural dissonance in my classroom, I established and maintained ongoing two-way communication between myself, students, and families. I found that the parents of my students were more willing to share information and viewpoints when they were approached in a warm and friendly manner and with general rather than specific questions. Once I established this communication with students and families, I obtained a great deal of knowledge that assisted in building associations between the familiar and unfamiliar when accommodations were not feasible and new priorities had to be established.

Activating prior knowledge was one of the most important strategies that helped my students learn. I learned that they came to my class with substantial world experiences. When I related the academic knowledge and experiences of my students to the curriculum content, my students formed a bridge between the familiar and unfamiliar material (Trumball, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001).

Connections with the literature review and examples of my classroom activities using content and familiar language:

I agree with Walsh (1999) who described in detail the importance of how teachers interacted with students, noting such factors as relevance, relationships, connecting oral and print
modes, introducing individualistic aspects to students who are more comfortable relying on each other, and, ultimately, focusing on new activities required for success.

My students understood new information within the context of what they already know, which is why it was difficult for them to understand abstract academic concepts and apply them to new tasks (Willingham, 2009). They were less likely to recall information that did not fit their schemata (Kee & Davies, 1990). They came from a variety of learning paradigms with different schemata, academic ways of thinking were particularly difficult. In my classroom, I found that comparison and contrast, analysis, synthesis, and similar academic ways of thinking were integral to Western-style formal education. I also found that a key to improving my students’ ability to understand the abstract thinking underlying academic activities was for them to do these new activities repeatedly with different information and within different contexts. It was through extended practice, as in the MALP® instructional model, that my students became proficient in academic ways of thinking and writing. I totally agree that critical-thinking skills, or academic ways of thinking, are closely tied to background knowledge (Echevarria, 2003; Willingham, 2007). It was critical for me to help my students acquire content knowledge and develop their academic or critical thinking skills, while at the same time developing academic language proficiency. I have discovered that a new learning paradigm can be thought of as a cluster of schemata that people from different backgrounds bring to the task of learning. My students brought to their learning activities three kinds of schemata: linguistic schemata, content schemata, and their formal learning schemata from their own prior learning paradigm.

I taught academic ways of thinking using familiar language and content and built associations. In one example, I taught a lesson entitled finding your own place “Kids Like Me, Voices of the Immigrant Experiences.” We started the lesson with a brief class discussion about
why we move to new places, what motivates us to move, how we survive once we arrive. My students shared very good stories, learning more about each other (building those social relationships) and sharing some funny experiences they had when they arrived and had to communicate, shop for groceries, etc. Students were encouraged to share the reasons why their families immigrated to the United States, first verbally and then in writing. This created environment of respect and rapport and established a culture of learning. The reading strategy was activating prior knowledge. The students viewed, responded, and interpreted visuals. One of the objectives of the lesson was teaching organization of ideas, comparing and contrasting, and using context clues. The vocabulary taught included the words: adjust, appreciate, culture, different, opportunity, relative, understand, and value. We started the lesson by listening and speaking and expressed ideas effectively by speaking using sentence frames and sentence starters, then in writing.

Following the above lesson, the students were asked to tell and write a culturally traditional folktale in their language. In this activity, the students used familiar language, content, and formal schemata. Using schemata theory, all three schemata were familiar to my students: The language was familiar because it is the native language; the content was familiar because it asked to recount a folktale they know; and the formal schema was familiar as well because it was a story from the native culture and based on a rhetorical form familiar to my students. This activity was an opportunity for my students to share with others.

The balancing of schemata required that the new formal schema of the academic task be the primary unfamiliar aspect of the activity. Thus, to help my students learn the academic ways of thinking, I introduced only the formal learning schema, while making sure that language and content were familiar. Each academic learning activity occurred in the context of familiar
linguistic and content schemata, allowing my students to focus on academic ways of thinking without the added complications of unfamiliar language and content. While my students needed to develop their language proficiency and subject matter knowledge, from the MALP® perspective, linguistic and content learning activities were separate from learning academic ways of thinking.

The MALP® instructional model incorporated elements from both the learning paradigm of my students and from the learning paradigm of United States schools, creating a third learning paradigm in which both sides adapt. Neither my students nor myself had to completely change the approach to the classroom. By accepting the conditions of learning from my students learning paradigms, I adapted my instruction to accommodate the needs of my students by explicitly combining key processes from both paradigms, individual accountability, and print. By scaffolding activities that introduced and practiced academic ways of thinking, my students learned to think academically not just pragmatically.

On Mondays, I always asked my students to share and talk about their weekends, first verbally and then in writing. I shared my weekend as well, and we learned a great deal about each other setting the stage for learning, thus I learned some of my students L1’s and it enhanced the learning greatly as I used it in planning and executing my lesson plans.

In my collaborative classes, we selected novels for our students to read with content and familiar language for literature circles as we were about to start. I taught my students paragraph structure: comparing and contrasting using signal words to signal their ideas. They used the following words to compare: both, like, alike, same, too, also, similar, and similarly. They also used the following words to contrast: but, different, differently, unlike, however, although, while, in contrast, and on the other hand.
Using think-pair-share strategy, my students discussed and then wrote about traditional and favorite foods from their respective countries. I assisted with describing these dishes as I became familiar with some of those dishes myself. *Mahshi*, which is stuffed vegetables like zucchini, tomatoes, grape leaves, and peppers, stuffed with rice, ground beef, parsley, tomatoes, and onions with salt and pepper. Another dish my students discussed and wrote about was *kofta*, which is ground beef with onions, parsley, and spices. Students needed assistance explaining these dishes in English. We also discussed different customs people have and the reasons behind them. As an example, people take off their shoes when entering a home for cleanliness and comfort reasons. All students were engaged and participated.

Using the MALP® in my classroom explicitly addressed the three principles for addressing cultural dissonance: Maintaining two-way communication, identifying priorities, and building associations. I established interconnectedness in my MALP® classroom. The identification of priorities from both cultures was evident in the way the MALP® accommodated some priorities from my students’ learning paradigms while requiring them to adapt key priorities from the United States teachers’ paradigms, namely individual accountability, using the written word, and academic tasks. I encouraged the development of individual accountability and familiarity with print, by associating them with familiar processes to them-namely shared responsibility and oral transmission. I introduced academic ways of thinking through learning activities based on familiar language and content to assist my students in making associations, even as they develop new schemata. Finally, building associations between familiar and unfamiliar was clearly integral. By creating a MALP® classroom, I maximized the opportunity for my students to succeed in their classroom setting. The MALP® approach ensured that both
my students and I work together to create a classroom environment that is a positive, challenging, yet supporting setting.

Summary

My primary research question was: Can MALP® help our ELs in moving up the EL proficiency ladder in linguistic complexity in writing?

This chapter detailed the results of the study. First, I documented data analysis in these ways: I described systematically the information collected about my students, the themes or patterns that emerged. Then I explained systematically the results and their interrelationships. I presented results that were consistent with the methods and procedures stated in the methods chapter. I documented connections with the literature review, i.e. agreement, disagreement, and discovery. Finally, I documented how the results responded to my study question. Chapter Five will restate the research question, discuss major findings, revisits the literature review, and considers possible implications for the study. It will also consider the limitations of the study, recommend future research, indicate how findings can be used, and I will reflect on the value of the study to my professional practice.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This study was designed to explore whether the MALP® can help EL students in moving up the EL proficiency ladder in writing. In this study, I wanted to know the distinctions between culturally-based and school-based learning systems and potential ramifications of these differences. I wanted to understand the use of MALP® in the classroom. My study question was: *Can MALP® help our EL students in moving up the EL proficiency ladder in linguistic complexity in writing?* I assessed this using the W-APT Grades 6-8 Writing Test. This chapter will include a discussion of the study’s findings, limitations, implications for educators, and suggestions for further research.

Findings

This study was conducted to answer the following question: *Can MALP® help raise the ELP of our EL students in writing by focusing on new activities for learning to improve linguistic complexity?* Based on the existing literature, I designed my study to incorporate tried strategies pertaining to the implementation of the MALP® in writing with a focus on linguistic complexity in the classroom. I carefully documented my students’ progress using established assessments. At the end of five months, more than fifty percent of my students rose to the next level on the ELP rubric for writing (See Table 2: *Total Student Progress Gain/Loss*) in Chapter Four, a much more promising progress compared to previous results, leading me to conclude that the MALP® is indeed an effective instructional model.

With the MALP® and balancing of language, content, and culture in addressing the needs of my students, I could answer most of my research questions. Both my literature review and classroom activities provided more depth as my students adapted to formal education, using print as a primary resource for information, as a vehicle for communication, and to be individually
accountable for their work. I found that the best ways to transition my students was to incorporate their preferred ways, oral transmission, and shared responsibility, into my teaching, gradually accustoming them to the ways of U.S. schools.

The use of the MALP® in my classroom transitioned my students to print- not just by teaching and rehearsing the basics of literacy, but by making strong connections between oral transmission and the written word. My students were unfamiliar with academic ways of thinking, so I provided them with extensive opportunities to learn and to practice via academic tasks that used familiar language and content, allowing the students to focus on the task itself and not be distracted by other unfamiliar elements. As my students progressed in linguistic complexity in writing, I continued to balance the three schemata: linguistic, content, and formal.

Limitations

One of the biggest limitations of my study was the small sample size. I taught nine students; therefore, it is difficult to generalize these findings. I also focused on just one area of the MALP®, making it fair to say that these findings are limited to focusing only on new activities for learning. These included focusing on tasks requiring academic ways of thinking and making these tasks accessible with familiar language and content, namely in writing. Another limitation was that my study addressed linguistic complexity in writing. In addition, the MALP® is a cultural framework, and not a curriculum, so I had to research activities that addressed the writing needs of my students within their cultural framework. Within that framework, this study concentrated on the types and variety of grammatical structures, the organization and cohesion of ideas, and, at the higher levels of language proficiency, the use of text structures in expository writing.
Another limitation of my study is that my participants were all 7\textsuperscript{th} graders. This was intentional since I wanted to address the specific challenges of teaching EL in a secondary setting. It would be helpful to conduct this study with older and/or younger students. Even though my students were not SLIFE, which is who the MALP\textsuperscript{®} was designed for, I found it useful with my refugee and immigrant students.

Implications

There were several implications as I interpreted how the MALP\textsuperscript{®} helped my EL students in moving up the EL proficiency ladder in linguistic complexity in writing. As I reviewed the sequence of steps for planning my lessons (See Appendix C: MALP\textsuperscript{®} Teacher Planning Checklist), I had to identify specific aspects of my teaching that incorporated the students use of familiar language and content with a focus on new activities for learning and academic ways of thinking. Teachers can benefit perceptively from this study in their daily use as they teach academic ways of thinking with the help of activities discussed in this study.

Projects addressing academic thinking:

I worked with my students on academic ways of thinking, and I had to transition them to U.S. schooling as these ways of thinking are needed for them to succeed academically. I focused on new activities for learning, which consisted of academic tasks and had to entail academic ways of thinking, instead of the pragmatic ways of thinking more common to my students’ prior learning experiences.

Academic tasks and ways of thinking concepts have been associated with Bloom’s taxonomy (see Appendix F). This taxonomy initially identified six levels of complexity of
thinking (Bloom, 1956) from least complex to most complex: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Bloom’s taxonomy was later revised to align with more recent research about learning. While the six levels of complexity remain, they were slightly reordered and renamed (Anderson et al., 2001). The names of the levels were also changed from nouns to verbs to reflect their active use in learning objectives. In the revised version, the six levels were: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. I had to focus on tasks at all the levels and scaffold them carefully for my students.

To make the new tasks accessible to my students, I embedded them in language and content that is familiar to them from previous work or from real-world experience.

Reasons for targeting academic thinking:

I believe it is essential that EL teachers introduce and practice academic ways of thinking so that students become accustomed to and comfortable with them. EL teachers can select a project related to the type of academic thinking on which they intend to focus on at that time. These projects can be implemented with any level of language and literacy proficiency if they are appropriately scaffolded and supported. With MALP® projects, in addition to focusing on the traditional areas of language and content, the goal should be to build new schemata for these unfamiliar ways of thinking.

The compartmentalization of time that U.S. teachers take for granted is not something EL students are necessarily familiar with or accept (Jegede, 1994). My students were frequently unaware of historical events, whether in their own country or in the world at large. Thus, I wanted to develop a sense of linear, historical time, which focused on the academic task of sequencing.
When I taught the academic task of *sequence*, we mapped time as a project and our sample activity was timelines. For academic tasks *classify, compare and contrast*, and *define*; our project was collections and we used a mystery bag as a sample activity. For academic tasks *evaluate* and *explain*, our project was an autobiography and our sample activity was transitions.

**Timelines:**

The most common activity associated with mapping time is creating a timeline, namely a linear representation of the occurrence of events over a specified period. The way this fit in with my study was how it taught my students academic ways of thinking, and here it was sequencing. With time, sequencing became familiar language and content. I incorporated timelines into many lessons, and they were very simple, yet effective in introducing and fostering the sense of time expected in U.S. schools. I used a timeline of a simple graphic representation of student data of arrival in the United States. We created it early in the school year and added to it as new events occurred in the lives of the students or as they learned new information. Timelines were posted where the students saw them and used them as resources.

I began with timelines that showed personal information and other events that the students deemed important. Personal timelines provided immediate relevance and encouraged interconnectedness, as students shared their information with each other while developing academic and U.S. way of conceptualizing time. Once my students have mastered the concept of timelines, they used it for many different topics in the curriculum. We used the timelines in English Language Arts to show the chronology of the life and works of an author.
I decided that by creating a timeline activity focusing on birthdays, I would include cultural information that would enhance the experience for my students. We used sentence frames and focused on linguistic complexity using simple and compound sentences.

Once my students have completed posters showing the different timelines, the next step was to decide with a partner whose birthday comes first. After verifying that they have done this step correctly, the students arranged themselves physically into a class timeline. They lined themselves up in the front of the classroom in order of their birthdays. Collaboratively, they examined the posters in pairs, each pair holding it up for everyone to see and arranged themselves in the correct chronological order.

This project focused on a key academic way of thinking, which is sequencing. Later in the month, I built on this initial timeline activity and used it to teach sequencing and asking questions as my students created simple and compound sentences, which were used in each of the three W-APT writing tests. In addition, my students used what they have learned on how to write an essay with a topic sentence, details, and a conclusion.

**Mystery Bag:**

Another implication I discovered through this study was that my students had to perceive categories, as well as define terms and concepts. One of the most common questions asked in U.S. schools is, “What is X?” (Heath, 1983; Pridham, 2001). For my EL students, the response to such a question is often either a translation of that word into their native language or an example of the word, rather than a definition. I discovered that defining something based on abstract categories or concepts was an unfamiliar academic task. The mystery bag activity introduced my
students to the act of defining by teaching them about classifications and important characteristics.

One kind of mystery bag was a collection of laminated strips of paper with samples of both simple and compound sentences, each of which had to be identified separately. This introduced three academic skills: classification, comparing and contrasting, and defining. Another kind of mystery bag had different books. My students discussed how the books were similar and different from each other; overall appearance, material, type of book, and so on. They listed adjectives and other descriptive words on the board as they came up. I then introduced more targeted comparison and contrast tasks that further reinforced using academic language and ways of thinking by examining simple and compound sentences more closely. My students worked in pairs, they prepared to talk about sentence structure and how the sentences were the same as or different from each other. The students developed academic language proficiency and academic ways of thinking.

Transitions:

I taught the academic tasks of explaining and evaluating through transitions. I found that autobiographies were a popular activity for my students because they were meaningful to them and drew on what they already knew (Pierce & Brisk, 2002). As a MALP® project, the autobiography became more than a way of depicting a series of life events. I structured the autobiography in such a way as to bring into focus some aspect of my students’ lives that, in turn, could be subject to critical thinking. A list of ways that provided structure to the autobiographical project was to include a focus on influential people in the students’ lives, special places in their memory, or life-altering experiences or transitions.
In this study, the students were asked to write about countries they learned about. They had to choose their favorite country and why they liked learning about this country. The students had to find specific times in their lives when important events occurred, and they made choices, they researched their own lives, something immediately relevant to them. At the same time, when they shared their projects, they learned about what was most important to each other, causing them to become more interconnected. The display for this project was a written description. The key was to display the insights gained from the process of reflecting on transitions. The project required academic ways of thinking, as the students needed to reflect on which events and choices were the most important to them, and they analyzed those events and choices in terms of why each was significant.

This project began by identifying events in their lives. This activity asked that they evaluate which events were truly transitions-events that changed their lives in some important way. To introduce the concept of transitions, I compared an event that was a transition to the action of opening a door and going through the doorway to a new place. Using the metaphor of a doorway helped the students relate the concept to their lives. Several of my students mentioned their coming to the U.S. as a transition in their lives.

Once my students had the general idea of a transition, I turned their attention to the focus of our transitions project. The students worked together to talk about their own lives. After they had time to share, each student examined and wrote about the country they grew up in, in more detail. I asked my students to elaborate, requiring them to develop and practice the concept of explaining by providing support, which is essential to academic work. Because this was an autobiography project, the focus was on the individual, and students needed to generate their own explanations, but the students worked as partners or in groups to assist each other in
elaborating on their transitions. My students learned that to explain in an academic way, they needed to ask themselves specific types of questions. The answers to those questions provided an explanation of their decision.

In this project, my students had the opportunity to develop the academic tasks of evaluating and explaining. I was developing these academic ways of thinking using familiar language and content. Once the students learned this process, I could apply this type of thinking to other topics that were less familiar. The academic ways of thinking introduced and practiced with this project were useful for all subjects where my students learned about the relative impact of specific events or ideas.

Further Research

This was a very small study, so it would be useful to conduct a similar study with a wider sampling of EL students from a variety of grades. For future research, I would like to see more strategies on how to use MALP® in the classroom. I would also consider researching the use of MALP® to increase the ELP in reading comprehension, as well as nontraditional approaches to the teaching of grammar and the incorporation of instructional technology in language teaching. As I mentioned in the limitations section, this study was done with nine seventh grade students. Also, the focus of this study was on Component C of the MALP® instructional model, namely focusing on new activities for learning. Perhaps future studies can focus on components A or B of the MALP® model and their use in the classroom.

Conclusion

This study proved to be very valuable in the school district where I am presently employed as the goals of my district are very much in line with the MALP® instructional model.
The professional development in my school district this year focused on the importance of making the learning relevant to all students, for the students to develop and maintain interconnectedness, for scaffolding the written word through oral interaction, and finally focusing on academic ways of thinking by using familiar language and content. I actually suggested using MALP® for professional development, and it was well received by the administration. As I reflect upon the study, the research I used and classroom activities that I introduced, stand out as evidence that MALP® can in fact increase writing scores for more than just the EL students. I see the study being useful to all educators. The biggest success of this study was that four out of my nine participants exited the EL program as a result of a noticeable increase in their writing scores. Some of my students started the school year doubting their ability to write well enough to graduate high school. Advancing through the strategies we used with this instructional model has given them the confidence needed to know that they can and will graduate high school successfully. Following this model, we combined processes such as shared responsibility, and oral transmission along with more traditional learning methods. I allowed and encouraged my students to share and learn informally from each other and from me, which increased the sense of community in our classroom.

Even though this study is by no means exhaustive or conclusive, I have had many indications during the duration of this study that the recommendations given by similar studies on, possess much merit as was supported by my own results. My own experience indicated both qualitatively and quantitatively that MALP® is a very useful instructional model that should be considered by all schools as part of their professional development as it does seem to produce desired results in the classroom.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

W-APT Grades 6-8 Writing Test
W-APT™
Grades 6–8
Writing Test

Intended for students in
2nd semester Grade 6
through
1st semester Grade 9

Date: ___________ School District: ___________
First Name: ___________ Last Name: ___________
Age: ___________ Student ID: ___________
Home Language: ___________ DOB: ___________
APPENDIX A

W-APT Grades 6-8 Writing Test continued
Part A: What Countries have I Learned about?

Sunita wrote a list of countries she has learned about in school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries I Have Learned About</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Read what Sunita wrote about her favorite country, Australia.

My favorite country is Australia.

I liked learning about this country because Australia is a beautiful country.

Sunita wrote about her favorite country. Here is how she began.

I liked learning about Australia because.......

...
APPENDIX A

*W-APT Grades 6-8 Writing Test* continued
Now it's your turn to write!

1 Write a list of countries you have learned about.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries I Have Learned About</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Complete the following sentences about your favorite country.

My favorite country is __________________________.

I liked learning about this country because __________________________.

3 Write some more about your favorite country. Write 3-5 sentences.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX B

Verb Cheat Sheet
# Verb Cheat Sheet

**VERB PHRASE**: all helping, linking, or action verbs that are working together within a sentence.

## HELPING VERBS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>could</th>
<th>can</th>
<th>do</th>
<th>is</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>should</td>
<td>shall</td>
<td>does</td>
<td>am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>would</td>
<td>will</td>
<td>did</td>
<td>are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have</td>
<td>may</td>
<td>were</td>
<td>was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has</td>
<td>might</td>
<td>be</td>
<td>were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>had</td>
<td>must</td>
<td>were</td>
<td>were</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## LINKING VERBS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>is</th>
<th>was</th>
<th>be</th>
<th>become</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>am</td>
<td>were</td>
<td>being</td>
<td>seem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are</td>
<td>were</td>
<td>been</td>
<td>appear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>remain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## ACTION VERBS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>run</th>
<th>jump</th>
<th>think</th>
<th>do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>have</td>
<td>drive</td>
<td>eat</td>
<td>move</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dance</td>
<td>cheat</td>
<td>applaud</td>
<td>juggle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(There are thousands of action verbs in the English language)*
APPENDIX C

MALP Teacher Planning Checklist
# MALP® Teacher Planning Checklist

## A. Accept Conditions for Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A1.</th>
<th>I am making this lesson/project immediately relevant to my students.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A2.</td>
<td>I am helping students develop and maintain interconnectedness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## B. Combine Processes for Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B1.</th>
<th>I am incorporating both shared responsibility and individual accountability.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B2.</td>
<td>I am scaffolding the written word through oral interaction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## C. Focus on New Activities for Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C1.</th>
<th>I am focusing on tasks requiring academic ways of thinking.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C2.</td>
<td>I am making these tasks accessible with familiar language and content.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX D

_Bloom’s Taxonomy_
Bloom’s Taxonomy

- **remember**: Recall facts and basic concepts
  - define, duplicate, list, memorize, repeat, state
- **understand**: Explain ideas or concepts
  - classify, describe, discuss, explain, identify, isolate, recognize, report, select, translate
- **apply**: Use information in new situations
  - execute, implement, solve, use, demonstrate, interpret, operate, schedule, sketch
- **analyze**: Draw connections among ideas
  - differentiate, organize, relate, compare, contrast, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test
- **evaluate**: Justify a stand or decision
  - appraise, argue, defend, judge, select, support, value, critique, weigh
- **create**: Produce new or original work
  - design, assemble, construct, conjecture, develop, formulate, author, investigate

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