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## How Can Embedded Grammar Instruction Support Student Writing?

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HOW CAN EMBEDDED GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION  
SUPPORT STUDENT WRITING?

By Lucia Marincel

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Art  
in English as a Second Language.

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

May 2018

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Overview**

This capstone seeks to answer the question, how can grammar instruction embedded into Writer’s Workshop help both ELs and non-ELs meet the Common Core State Standards for language conventions? This first, introductory chapter will be organized as follows: a rationale for the study, a brief history of American grammar instruction, an overview of Functional Linguistic Analysis, an overview of the current study, and a brief overview of chapter two, a review of the current literature.

#### **Introduction**

When working with a second grade student, I noticed that his writing did not have any end punctuation, something we had taught for the last few units. I reminded him to add a period, question mark, or exclamation mark at the end of each sentence. “But how am I supposed to know when it’s the end of the sentence!” the student replied, clearly frustrated. This offhand comment illuminated a key grammatical problem often found in American schools today; this student could produce stories with a beginning, a middle, and an end, but had no concept of a sentence. This seemed indicative of a larger problem: an overall lack of knowledge about grammar and the structure of language. This problem has a surprisingly long history in the American educational system.

#### **History of Grammar Instruction**

In 1954, educational theorist W. Nelson Francis urged teachers to focus more on how to teach grammatical form through writing, rather than teaching it through isolated skill drills. In

his article “Revolution in Grammar,” Francis (1954) rejected his contemporaries’ method for teaching grammar--listing grammar rules--arguing it was more useful with Latin than English.

Other scholars echoed this call to reform grammar instruction, but there was also a push to reject primary- and secondary-school grammar instruction altogether. A report commissioned by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), for example, concluded that teaching formalized grammar had negligible benefits and could even harm students (Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, Schoer, 1963, p. 37). The NCTE further solidified their opposition to formal grammar instruction with a 1985 position statement that stated that “ample evidence from 50 years of research has shown the teaching of grammar in isolation does not lead to improvement in students' speaking and writing, and that in fact, it hinders development of students' oral and written language” (NCTE, 1985).

This move away from grammar instruction greatly affected the K-12 Language Arts curriculum, and has resulted in both students and teachers knowing less and less about the structure of language over the intervening decades (Kolln & Hancock, 2005).

### **Grammar Instruction Today**

The focus on meaningful and effective grammar instruction has returned to US schools with the Common Core State Standards (2010). The standards devote an entire strand to language within the English Language Arts (ELA) Standards; within this strand are substrands on Conventions of English and Knowledge of Language, as well as Vocabulary Acquisition. This language strand holds teachers and students accountable for understanding how English’s structure and form create meaning, similar to Nelson Francis’s position over a half-century ago. With Common Core, students learn and practice these conventions not in isolation (as

grammar was taught in the past) but as a part of the larger ELA curriculum. Confronted with these standards, education professionals must find new and effective ways to engage students around grammar.

### **Role of Functional Linguistic Analysis**

Moving forward with the new mandate from the Common Core Standards, the question remains how best to engage students in meaningful learning about the structure of language. The field of Functional Linguistic Analysis (FLA) may provide one answer to this question and provides a theoretical framework for understanding how language structure informs meaning. The creation of the field of FLA is credited to the Australian scholar, Michael Halliday. Halliday's *Collected Works On Grammar* (2002) brings together many years of scholarship that he has devoted to developing the field. In short, FLA theorizes that all spoken or written language can have multiple meanings and can be explored from multiple points of view. Ultimately, Halliday (2014) holds that "language is... a resource for making meaning, so text is the process of making meaning in context" (p. 3). Halliday (2014) further posits that linguistics can focus on text as both an object to be understood in its own right and as an instrument through which to understand more about how language is used to make meaning.

Halliday applies this understanding of the function of language in a variety of contexts, including the interaction between students and the structure of language, or grammar. Halliday (2014) notes the importance of educators to understand linguistics in order to help increase their students' "competence in [his] native language, both the spoken and the written skills, including as an essential component the ability to use the language appropriately and effectively for a wide range of different purposes" (p. 27-28). Halliday also argues for

providing education about the functional structure of language in order to provide students with “the ability to produce and to respond to language that is creative, in which the pupil is involved as an active participant. Linguistic creativity is a reasonable goal for all children, irrespective of age and 'stream” (2014, p. 32). He is wary, however, of educators and students falling into the same problems that plagued traditional grammar instruction the NCTE reject so soundly. When writing of teaching grammar in the traditional sense, Halliday warns against simply replacing the old exercises and means of teaching with a new FLA version (2014). He notes that “productive teaching does not necessarily involve any overt reference to or discussion of linguistic categories at all; it can proceed without parsing, naming or analysing” (2014, pp. 31-32).

Linguists Frances Christie, Beverly Derewianka, and Ken Hyland (2008) have built upon Halliday’s work to make a case for using an FLA model for writing instruction. They argue for this model because “it is functional, in that it illuminates how meaning is realized in language, and because it provides tools for interpreting and explaining the nature of language development over time” (Christie, Derewianka, & Hyland, 2008, p. 1). Specifically, they build a model around Halliday’s work, to focus on the “relationship between linguistic form and the meanings being realized by those forms in context” (Christie, Derewianka, & Hyland, 2008, p. 4).

Using this model of how language functions, allows Christie, Derewianka, and Hyland to develop an understanding about the complexity of text created by students as they grow older. For example, they note that, “as they mature, students use a greater variety of clause types and combine these in different ways, allowing them to construe more complex kinds of

relationships between meanings” (Christie, Derewianka, & Hyland, 2008, p. 12). They also note that while children’s speech may include complex structures and grammar, their writing usually falls back to simple patterns and structures (Christie, Derewianka, & Hyland, 2008, p. 13). Thus, building on Halliday’s framework, Christie, Derewianka, and Hyland (2008) have developed an understanding of how students interact with language’s structure and functions, which can provide potential next steps to guide students as writers. The resulting teaching approach is very different from the traditional isolated grammar exercises decried by the NCTE.

Other scholars have begun to experiment with FLA approaches to writing instruction. Mary Ehrenworth explores the implications for teaching grammar in a writing workshop model. In Ehrenworth’s piece, *Grammar--Comma-- A New Beginning* (2003), she rejects teaching grammar as part of the editing process, or checking for mistakes, of student’s written work. Instead, she reimagines it as a writer’s craft move to be explored and emulated in student writing. Thus, Ehrenworth posits, by exploring the function of language structures in others’ writing, students can find new ways to use those structures in their own writing (2003).

The work of Halliday and others focused on FLA opens up new possibilities for helping students meet the academic demands laid out in the Common Core, without falling into the old patterns of grammar instruction. This study follows in that same path and builds upon the FLA framework as well. By doing so, it seeks to answer the question, does teaching language conventions embedded within the writing workshop model increase the use of those target language structures in the writing of the both the ELs and non-ELs?

## **The Current Study**

**Overview.** To answer this question, eighteen second grade students in a large urban elementary school were taught embedded lessons on three of the language conventions outlined in the Common Core Standards for second grade. These are: using adverbs correctly, producing compound sentences, and using apostrophes to form contractions. Unlike grammar instruction of the past, these lessons focused on the function and structure of these language conventions, following the model laid out by FLA.

**Methodology.** To gather data, students produced two writing samples. These writing samples were “on-demands.” An on-demand is a writing sample that students are asked to produce in a finite period of time without outside help from teachers or peers. On-demands are used to determine what a writer is able to do independently. The pretest was produced prior to any grammatical instruction and the second was written after the students have been taught and had time to practice the target language conventions. Both of the students’ two pieces were scored on a rubric designed to measure the prevalence and accuracy of those target structures throughout their writing. Then each student’s work was compared to see if there was an increase in the use of the target structures. To triangulate this data, interviews with the students’ two classroom teachers were conducted to gauge their observations about student growth before and after the lessons. Taken together the data shed light on the effectiveness of embedded grammar instruction to increase the use of target language structures within student writing.

## **Current Relevant Literature**

This study joins several larger discussions in educational academic literature. The first discussion is around the inclusion of grammar within the Common Core State Standards. The second debate is whether or not grammar should be taught at all in K-12 schools. The third debate centers around the process, proposed by many proponents in the previous section, of embedding grammar instruction within a larger context. The fourth discussion centers around the ways in which English learners' needs for grammar instruction may differ from their non-English learner peers and some of the major topics within the field of Second Language Acquisition. The final section looks at the ways in which the instructional model used in this study, Teachers College's Writing Workshop, helps to meet the goals laid out in the earlier discussions.

Despite a wealth of knowledge about these subtopics, there is still a need for more research that focuses on the effectiveness of teaching grammar to both English Learners and non-English Learners in an inclusive classroom model. While there is research about teaching both groups of students and what factors make it effective, there is very little research about how teaching both ELs and non-ELs may support their diverse needs differently. Therefore, this study sought to focus on precisely that; how can grammar instruction embedded into Writer's Workshop help both ELs and non-ELs meet the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for language conventions?

## **Conclusion**

This chapter began with the rationale for the current study. It continued with a history of American grammar instruction, and an overview of Functional Linguistic Analysis. It then

gave an overview of the current study, with a brief look at the contents of chapter two; a review of the current literature.

### **Looking Ahead**

The next chapter will include a review of current literature that is relevant to the current study. This includes the following topics; grammar and the Common Core State Standards, should Grammar be taught at all?, embedded grammar instruction within a context, grammar acquisition for english learners and the structure and philosophy of Writing Workshop.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Overview**

This chapter explores the relevant literature around the research question, how can grammar instruction embedded into Writer’s Workshop help both ELs and non-ELs meet the Common Core State Standards for language conventions? Chapter two, which includes a review of the current literature, is organized as follows: an introduction to the section, an overview of the relationship between grammar instruction and the Common Core State Standards, arguments both for and against teaching grammar, a discussion of how to embed grammar instruction within a meaningful context, a review of the some of the differences between ELs and non-ELs when acquiring grammar structures, the structure and philosophy of Writing Workshop and concludes with an overview of the third chapter.

#### **Introduction**

This chapter explores some of the current literature around the guiding question of this capstone; how can embedded grammar instruction within Writing Workshop support both English Learners and non-English Learners to meet the Common Core State Standards? To begin, there is a review of the inclusion of grammar in the Common Core State Standards and some of the critiques of those standards. These critiques include a concern about the unaddressed power dynamic put in place with a “correct” form of grammar.

The next section addresses the question of whether grammar should be taught at all in K-12 schools. This section looks at some of the historical ways that grammar has been taught

and the reasons behind the rejection of these methods. This section also looks at the arguments for a new way of teaching grammar.

The third section looks at one philosophy about how to teach grammar in a new way; embedding into a larger context. This section explores some of the ways that scholars and teachers have attempted to teach grammar in meaningful ways by embedding it and it looks at some of the principles of effectiveness for this practice.

The fourth section addresses the ways in which learning grammar may be different for English Learners than their non-English learner peers. This section looks at some of the overarching debates with the field of Second Language Acquisition and how the factors within those debates might affect student learning. The final section looks at the model of Writing Workshop and how it fits with the overarching goal of this study. This section notes the similarities between the philosophy that underlines Writing Workshop and the principles laid out for effective grammar instruction. Overall, this review of the literature provides a basis for the current study to build upon and to add to the current knowledge of these topics.

### **Grammar And The Common Core State Standards**

**Background.** The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were introduced in 2009 and have since been adopted by forty two states and the District of Columbia (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, Development process CCSS Initiative, 2017). Since their inception, the CCSS have generated debate and controversy as well as support. Some see the CCSS as a culmination of years of effort to improve the public school education, while detractors see the standards as a way for the federal government to control what is essentially a state's right (Shannon, 2013, p. 2-3). Despite these

controversies, the CCSS is implemented in the vast majority of places where students attend US public schools and thus dictate the realities of their education. For this reason, it is important to address the inclusion of grammar in the CCSS.

The Language Strand, one piece of the Common Core Standards, addresses grammar skills. The Language Strand is made up of three substrands: Conventions of Standard English, which lays out the rules of grammar; Knowledge of Language, which addresses the use of those grammatical rules; and Vocabulary Acquisition and Use, which addresses vocabulary. The creators of the CCSS grouped these three substrands within their own strand, the Language Strand, not because they “should be handled in isolation, but because their use extends across reading, writing, speaking, and listening” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, *Key Shifts in ELA*, section 1, 2017). Like the other CCSS strands, the Language Strand standards represent a “cumulative progression,” which helps students to gain greater knowledge across time to “meet college and career readiness expectations no later than the end of high school” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, *Key Design Consideration*, 2017).

**Critiques of language conventions in the CCSS.** The English Language Conventions have many critiques within their current form of the CCSS. One of these critiques is that the standards should go farther to teach language structure and, perhaps more importantly, provide enough context for what is important when teaching language conventions. Kristin Denham (2015), for example, calls these standards “frustrating and inadequate” (p. 139) because there is an “unevenness”; some standards outline very simple grammatical structures that students

should have had a complete command over for years by the grade outlined in the standard and others ask students to grapple with very complex structures. She also argues that the standards can very easily become a list of things to teach and check off without having students grapple with the meaning and thus do not help students actually grow their knowledge. This can lead not only to students not learning the convention, but also students “may doubt their intuitions and never realize their ability to analyze language” (Denham, 2013, p. 143). In their piece, *Language and the Common Core standards*, which focuses on the standards and English Learners (ELs), van Lier and Walqui (n.d.) concur that the CCSS could be implemented in a “narrow, accuracy-based way” (p. 7). They also contend that it is also possible for them to be implemented in a broader way that allows ELs, and presumably all students, to connect their language learning to the rest of their learning and the world around them.

Another critique of the Language Strand is the way that the Standards privilege some forms or varieties of the English language over others. Woodward and Kline (2016) note that the CCSS follows a prescriptive approach to grammar. Unlike a descriptive approach to grammar, which linguists apply to language, a prescriptive approach to grammar assumes that there are correct and incorrect ways to structure language and that students must learn a particular “standard” type of language. This approach is not only an inaccurate assessment about how language works, but also fails to acknowledge the power differential of ascribing correctness to a particular grammar that is most “typically associated with middle-class white speakers” (p. 212).

There is also the worry that CCSS does not take into account the lived experiences of many students, which has the potential to “exacerbate rather than address inequity”

(Compton-Lilly, Stewart, 2013, p. 70). Much of this power based critique of the CCSS builds off the seminal works of Lisa Delpit, who has been working on this subject since long before the CCSS was even a conception. Across many important works, including *The silenced dialogue* (1988) and *Language diversity and learning* (1990), Delpit has pointed out that no variety of English is better than another and speaking the “standard version” of English does not imply better aptitudes for learning. She also has noted the very real existence of a power dynamic between different varieties of English and Standard English.

**Support for language conventions in CCSS.** Despite these concerns about language conventions, there is support for the decision to include language conventions in the CCSS, since grammar knowledge is a key component of developing strong writers. For example, even with her criticism of the content of the language conventions of CCSS, Denham (2015) argues that the conventions do address a wide variety of grammatical categories which “could provide an opportunity to introduce more and better conversations about language in K-12 schools” (p. 139). Graham and Harris (2015) note that CCSS addresses many concerns about writing, which has long been a neglected part of literacy education in the United States. They note that improving student writing, “not only involves helping students learn how to plan, structure, craft, evaluate, and revise astutely what they write when completing such assignments and tests, but making sure that they master basic transcription and sentence construction skills” (p. 460). The language conventions laid out in CCSS are some of the sub-skills needed to accurately construct sentences.

While the CCSS specifies what students need to know, it does not address how teachers should teach to meet those standards (Graham and Harris, 2015). This leaves room for

educators and families to give input on how they ought to be implemented (Shannon 2013).

This lack of direction can also raise concerns about how educators chose to teach grammar in the past and its effectiveness. This debate is outlined in the next section.

### **Should Grammar Be Taught At All?**

**Anti-grammar stance** Some educators and scholars firmly believe that grammar should not be taught in the K-12 context. As noted in chapter one, opponents of any grammar instruction have long made the case that teaching grammar in a “traditional sense,” such as rote exercises, is at best ineffective and at worst “hinders development of students' oral and written language” (NCTE, 1985). This rejection by the National Council of Teachers of English was based on the concern that many grammar instructional practices did not relate to meaningful language tasks such as student writing and were therefore a waste of time that did nothing to help students grow as writers and may have even turned them away from their interest in writing and English as a discipline. In his meta-analysis, *What Works in Teaching Composition*, George Hillocks Jr. (1984) defines traditional grammar as “the definition of parts of speech, the parsing of sentences, etc.” (p. 160) and notes that there is evidence across the board that this type of instruction is not effective and can even have a “deleterious effect on student writing” (p. 160). This conclusion is confirmed in other sources, as well. In *Breaking the Rules: Liberating Writers through Innovative Grammar Instruction*, Edgar Schuster (2003) notes that traditional instruction, which he refers to as “definition, examples, and drill” (p. 21), does not help students learn and even undermines their “intuitive knowledge” (p. 21). Other scholars note the consensus in the research that this type of traditional grammar instruction ought to be avoided due to ineffectiveness (Mo, Kopke, Hawkins, Troia, Olinghouse; 2014).

**Pro-grammar stance.** This whole-cloth rejection of grammar instruction, however, caused new concerns about students' knowledge of language conventions and structure for writing. In their piece, *The Story of English in United States Schools*, Kolln and Hancock (2005) note that a tension continues between the rejection of "useless" grammar instruction and the need for students to understand the structure of writing. They argue that while there is an argument to be made that grammar is not just about being right, "there is an uncomfortable sense that correctness issues can't simply be wished away" (p. 25). This concern about the need for students to understand and use grammar is brought to the forefront by the inclusion of Language Conventions with the Common Core standards.

Other scholars have noted the need to find new, relevant ways to teach grammar. One argument for the inclusion of grammar instruction comes from Graham and Harris (1997), in their piece, *It can be taught, but it does not develop naturally: Myths and realities in writing instruction*. They argue that while they agree that rote grammar exercises do not serve the students well, students can and need to be taught language conventions through their own work. Anderson (2005) makes a similar argument with the claim that "grammar and mechanics are not rules to be mastered as much as tools to serve a writer in creating a text readers will understand" (p. 5). That is, that grammar needs to be taught in a new way in order to help students become better writers. In a similar vein, The Assembly for the Teaching of English Grammar devised several guiding questions to help teachers determine the best way to teach grammar. These questions include, "how can we teach grammar so that students discover its rules and principles on their own instead of hearing us impose those rules and principles upon them?" (Haussmen et al., xii).

Linguists have also lent their voices in support of grammar instruction in schools. In his piece, “Why Education Needs Linguistics (And Vice Versa)”, Richard Hudson (2004) argues that a scientific understanding of language, through the lens of linguistics, can benefit students’ knowledge and command over language. He notes that the study of linguistics can offer lots to the study of language in schools, including “general ideas about language, theoretical models of how it is organised and how it relates to other things, and specific and more or less technical descriptions” (p.115). He acknowledges the debate around whether grammar ought to be taught and lends the idea that, “the answer seems, therefore, to be that under the right circumstances explicit grammar teaching can be effective (in terms of writing skills). This is important for us as linguists because it is our responsibility to provide suitable descriptions of the patterns to be taught” (p. 118, 2004).

Choosing not to teach grammar also has ramifications for students’ interactions in the world outside of the classroom. Specifically, some scholars note that the grammar of Standard English has power within the larger society and thus must be taught to students to help them succeed in multiple settings. Others note that “grammar competency has always been linked with social power or the lack thereof” (Micciche, 2004, p.733). In *The Power of Grammar*, Ehrenworth and Vinton (2005), go even further to argue that not teaching grammar does a disservice to students by not providing them with the full range of tools they need to participate in society. They argue that the power of grammar is not found in memorizing a list of rules, but rather the “knowledge of grammar is knowledge of how to put words and punctuation next to each other in fluid and consequential ways” (Ehrenworth and Vinton, 2005, p. 52). The importance of teaching grammar is therefore particularly important for students who do not

have access to those patterns of grammar in other places in their lives outside of the school setting. In conclusion, they argue forcefully that “avoiding the teaching of grammar and conventions, is thus, an act of neglect that, whether we consciously intend it or not, abet a system of marginalization that denies some students the opportunities of full participation in the world” (Ehrenworth, Vinton, 2005, p. 87).

This tension around teaching a “standardized English” falls in a larger discussion about the value of language and dialect diversity. Barbara Birch (2005) states that believing that only the “standard variety” of English has value can be described as “Colonial/Imperialistic”; while seeing the value in multiple ways of using English and appreciating dialectical diversity can be described as an “Ecological Ideology” (p. 2-3). Birch argues that teachers may find themselves in conflict with the desire to promote their students’ use of “non-standard” dialects and their job to teach standard language. She argues that this can be overcome by taking a prescriptive approach, that is, acknowledging that “all languages and varieties have merit..but..people accept one variety of English in more public situations..than others” (p. 7). Another guiding question posed by The Assembly for the Teaching of English Grammar addresses this tension, asking, “how can we teach grammar so that we strengthen rather than undermine our efforts to honor the voices and cultures of all students?” (Haussmen et al., xii).

Acknowledging the power dynamic at play between standard English and other varieties of English, teacher educators Amy Benjamin and Tom Olivia (2017) argue for the necessity of teaching students Standard English, while celebrating the diversity of the many varieties of language. They point out that teachers can value both, while recognizing the reality that formal English holds power in many situations including tests like the SAT (XIV).

These scholars agree with the NCTE that the way that grammar instruction was often being taught was not effective. They disagree with the conclusion, however, that teachers should downplay or even completely reject grammar instruction in their practice. Instead, these scholars argue for a reconceptualization of grammar instruction (Ehrenworth, Vinton, 2005; Graham and Harris, 1997; Benjamin and Olivia, 2017). With some variation between them, they generally agree that this new type of instruction must be embedded within a context for it to be meaningful for students.

### **Embedded Grammar Instruction within a Context**

**Arguments against traditional grammar instruction.** Traditionally, grammar instruction has been taught through rote exercises, that include an explanation of a concept, followed by a worksheet of examples to practice using the grammatical point. This does not lead students to “notice, representation, storage, and retrieval of declarative and procedural knowledge” (Birch, 2005, p. 50). As noted above and in chapter one, there has been a tremendous amount of backlash against this type of instruction, including the National Council of Teachers of English pronouncing that they “affirm the position that the use of isolated grammar and usage exercises not supported by theory... that NCTE urge the discontinuance of testing practices that encourage the teaching of grammar rather than English language arts instruction” (NCTE, 1985). In response to this critique of traditional grammar instruction, some scholars have proposed an alternative to both this traditional way of teaching grammar and not teaching grammar at all. This alternative is loosely grouped under the concept of embedding grammar within a larger context through which teachers can “create seminal, relevant learning experiences, both teachers and learners will be more successful” (Birch,

2005, p. 50). Many scholars have addressed the reasons why this concept might be a better choice than the alternatives of traditional instruction and not teaching grammar at all.

One of the seminal arguments against traditional grammar instruction comes from Constance Weaver's piece, *Teaching Grammar in the Context of Writing* (1996). Weaver builds on a constructivist theory of learning to show that students "must form hypotheses about concepts in the process of coming to understand them" (p. 18). She also showed errors are a common and even necessary step in mastering a new grammatical concept. (Weaver, 1996) Her research applying this concept allows her to conclude that "teaching grammar" in the context of writing works better than teaching grammar as a formal system, if our aim is for students to use grammar more effectively and conventionally in their writing" (p. 23).

**The case for embedding grammar instruction.** Other scholars have built on this concept of embedding grammar in a meaningful context. In their study, "Grammar for writing?," Susan Jones, Debra Myhill, and Trevor Bailey (2013) argue that in order for a learning situation to be in context, it must take into account that "grammar is a meaning-making resource: supporting writers in making appropriate linguistic choices which help them to shape and craft text to satisfy their rhetorical intentions (Jones, Myhill, & Bailey, 2013, p. 1245).

Using these three principles, these scholars designed a mixed-method study to measure how well teaching grammar in context supported students understanding of grammar. They found that overall this type of teaching had a beneficial effect on student learning. They also found, however, that it has a stronger positive effect of students they designated as more skilled writers, rather than lower skilled writers (Jones, Myhill, & Bailey, 2013).

In a slightly earlier study, Myhill, Jones, and two other colleagues, Lines and Watson, (2012) also found support for the argument that embedding grammar within writing was effective and found that the principles of “explicitness, the use of discussion and the emphasis on playful experimentation to be the most salient features of the intervention” (p. 139).

While the scholarship mentioned above shows support for embedding grammar in context, the question that still lingers is, how do educators complete this task? The next section explores some of the findings to answer this question.

**How to embed grammar instruction.** The arguments for why it is important to embed grammar instruction within a larger language learning context give a few insights into the ‘how’, that is; what practices make this embedding effective? Some clarity comes from the definition itself. The grammar points must be part of the larger lesson and be focused on the task or function of the grammatical point. This baseline leaves many more questions unanswered. Including, what exactly does that look like? Luckily, other scholars have explored this question and their findings provide some guidance.

One important way to effectively embed grammar instruction to make learning meaningful for students is to engage them in the context of their own writing. This does not mean, however, simply pointing out student errors to fix. Rather, Vavra (1996) argues, teachers must help students engage in deeper work with their own writing. He advocates for students analyzing the syntax, or structure, of their own writing. This is not designed to be a punitive exercise, but rather to help students understand why they are making the choices that they do as writers. When students understand how much they intuitively understand about

language, Vavra notes, they can use the knowledge to further their writing development in a positive way.

Vavra is not the only scholar to come to the conclusion that connections to students' writing is key. Simply inserting grammar lessons into other content learning without much thought is not enough, however. Hancock (2009) argues that teaching grammatical points in context must go beyond teaching an isolated grammar lesson based on "a point of need" (p. 201), but rather should help students make connections throughout their writing. To move away from an anti-grammar stance, which Hancock (2009) sees as primarily an "anti-traditional-grammar stance" (p. 198-199), Hancock draws on a variety of methods to understand grammar, including relying heavily on Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), particularly the work of Mary Schleppegrell (2004, 2007). Although she sees limitations with many of the ways of engaging students around grammar, Hancock (2009) ultimately concludes that "There is no excuse for the continuation of blatantly harmful and inaccurate or incomplete descriptions of language in the name of expediency. We can and should lobby for the integration of a linguistically sound language study into the curriculum" (p. 206).

Fearn and Farnan (2007) came to a similar conclusion through their study looking at the effects of teaching grammar through writing instruction versus grammar for writing instruction. They taught one group of students grammar points through their own writing, which they called "grammar-driven writing instruction" (p. 75), while another teacher taught a similar group of students a traditional grammar lesson followed by time for writing. Fearn and Farnan found that both groups gained knowledge about grammar, including rules and names, etc. the grammar-driven writing instruction enhanced writing performance as measured by

holistic criteria, while traditional grammar instruction, separate from writing instruction, did not influence writing performance” (p. 75).

Another example of how to embed grammar comes from the college level. Laura Micciche (2004) had her college students record interesting pieces of text authored by others and had them analyze how those authors use grammar to alter the meaning of their writing. She then also had the students try on those same strategies in their own writing. She argued that this work is important because “the grammatical choices we make- including pronoun use, active or passive verb construction, and sentence patterns- represent relations between writers and the world they live in. Word choice and sentence structure are an expression of the way we attend to the words of others, the way we position ourselves in relation to others” (Micciche, 2004, p. 719).

When designing their mixed-methods study on the impact of teaching grammar in the context of writing, Myhill, Jones, Lines, and Watson (2012) followed several principles that they believed would result in effective instruction. Those principles included that “links are always made between the feature introduced and how it might enhance the writing being tackled” and “the use of ‘imitation’: offering model patterns for students to play with and then use in their own writing” (p. 148).

Some or all of these principles can be found in many of the other studies of contextualized grammar. This current study also takes into account these principles in the design of the methodology and in the analysis of results.

### **Grammar Acquisition for English Learners**

**Distinctions between English learners and non-English learners.** This study seeks to understand how embedding grammar instruction in the workshop model affects both English Language Learners and their English-proficient classmates. In order to fully understand the implications, it is necessary to explore the potential differences between how these groups of students may learn, or acquire, grammar skills. These differences fall within the much researched and debated topic of first language, which is often referred to as the student's L1, acquisition versus second (or more) language acquisition, known as L2. The debate about the differences makes up a substantial part of the literature in the field of Second Language Acquisition, or SLA. The subsequent section will discuss some of the distinctions between first and second language acquisition.

One major distinction between children learning a first language and a second language is that children learning their first language have had exposure to the language since the beginning of their lives (Hummel, 2013). They have been growing up learning the rules of this language, albeit usually through implicit means. Second language learners already have been exposed to the rules of another language (Hummel, 2013). While they may not have had the same length of time of exposure to the L2, exposure to a different first language means that students may have “metalinguistic awareness, meaning that they are able to reflect on language as a tool for thought or learning. Due to this awareness, L2 learners come to the language learning task equipped in a very different way from the L1 acquirer” (Hummel, 2013, p. 19). When a student learning a second language uses what he or she knows about his or her first language, this student may experience transfer, that is the successful use of L1 to support L2 learning, or interference, confusion of L2 rules based on different rules in the L1 (Hummel,

2013). Others disagree with this categorizing of interference being about confusion of rules between the languages, and rather argue that use of first language structures is actually an indication that the learner has not “acquired enough of the target language” (Krashen, 1981, p. 8).

**Language acquisition versus language learning.** Another important distinction found in SLA research is between language acquisition and language learning. Language acquisition comes from meaning-based interactions with a new language without explicit explanations about rules or correction of errors (Krashen, 1981, p.1). Language learning, however, includes the teaching of explicit rules and the inclusion of error correction (Krashen, 1981, p.1). Stephen Krashen, one of the foremost theorists in the field of SLA, argues that language acquisition of a second (or any additional) language is more closely tied to the process that children use when acquiring a first language (Krashen, 1981, p.1).

Krashen (1981) argues for the importance of acquisition through the data presented in many scholars’ studies on the order of students’ acquisition of morphemes. He states that there is a particular order, or difficulty order with which children learn morphemes in English. He notes that in his and others’ studies “the child second language order was not identical to the child first language order, but there were clear similarities among second language acquirers.” (Krashen, 1981, p. 51). He notes that in studies that focused on older learners, “again, adult performers showed a difficulty order similar to that seen in children acquiring ESL” (Krashen, 1981, p. 53).

**Critical period hypothesis.** This debate around learning and acquisition highlights another important factor within SLA research; the age of the learner. Many theorists subscribe

to the concept of a “critical period”, or a time when it is easiest for a student to learn a second language. The Critical Hypothesis theory is that “there is a limited developmental period during which it is possible to acquire a language, be it L1 or L2, to normal, nativelike levels. Once that window of opportunity is passed, however, the ability to learn language to a native-like fluency, declines (Birdsong, 1999).

The Critical Period Hypothesis has been tested with many different studies and a recent meta-analysis of this research found that there does seem to be some correlation between the age of the learner and the attainment of a second language grammar (Asif Qureshi, 2016). Rather than showing a straightforward relationship, however, this meta-analysis also revealed that many other factors may affect the effect of the age of the learner. These other factors include the setting of the language (as a foreign language or as immersion into a new language), the type of language task participants are asked to complete, as well as the modality (speaking, reading, writing, or listening) the learner is using (Asif Qureshi, 2016, p. 158). This meta-analysis shows that while The Critical Period Hypothesis has important implications for SLA, there is still plenty of room for further research into the interaction between learner age and other factors. Despite this need for further research, according to this theory, the ELs in this study will be at an advantage to learning the grammatical points in a similar fashion to their English proficient peers at their current ages, of seven and eight, than if they were adults.

**Focus on form and communicative instruction.** Despite their importance in the field, the theories of language acquisition over language learning and the related Critical Period Hypothesis are not taken completely at face value by all scholars in the field of SLA. Many

scholars subscribe to the importance of explicit grammatical instruction, often called “focus-on-form” within second language learning.

In their seminal study on focus-on-form instruction, Lightbrown and Spada (1990) focused on student learning in four English-intensive classrooms. In all the classrooms they studied, the main form of instruction came through communicative activities, where the focus was mostly on making meaning. Between the four classrooms, however, there was variation in how frequently the teacher in each classroom explicitly taught grammatical points in conjunction with the communicative activities. Lightbrown and Spada (1990) found that students who had the most focus-on-form instruction were the most accurate in the grammatical forms measures, while the students with the least focus-on-form instruction were the least accurate. Based on this research, Lightbrown and Spada (1990) advocate that “form-based instruction within a communicative context contributes to higher levels of linguistic knowledge and performance” (p. 323).

This debate about the importance of focus-on-form instruction has continued to be an important discussion within the field of SLA. Similar to the work on the Critical Period Hypothesis, scholars have investigated other factors of SLA that may intersect with this type of explicit grammar teaching. For example, in their meta-analysis of forty one studies of explicit versus implicit teaching, Spada and Tomita (2010) found that explicit teaching was more effective for both complex and simple structures. The debate does not only focus on the complexity of the target structures, however. Andringa, S., de Glopper, K., & Hacquebord, H. (2011) studied the effects of both explicit and implicit instruction on student acquisition and found that the similarity of a target structure to the same structure in the student’s first

language may have resulted in explicit instruction being more effective than implicit instruction. They also found some suggestion that the opposite was also true; that explicit instruction was less beneficial when the target structure from the new language was constructed very differently than in the student's first language. Still other scholars have argued that the quantity of content affects which method of instruction works best. Khamesipour (2015) studied both implicit and explicit methods for vocabulary instruction and found that they have similar effectiveness, but that implicit instruction was more efficient/appeared to be more efficient in helping students learn a larger quantity of words. With such a high number of potential contributing factors, there is clearly more need for research to determine when explicit instruction or implicit instruction is more effective. In their meta-review of literature on L2 acquisition, Dixon, Zhao, et al. (2012) found that learners benefited from explicit instruction to learn the grammar structure of language.

The field of SLA is filled with ongoing debates, including the role of learner age plays in student learning, the difference between acquiring and learning a language, and the role of explicit focus-on-form instruction. Many scholars are also focusing on how these larger factors may intersect and affect one another. Within the wider context of these studies and scholarship, this study will seek to add one more piece to the complex picture of Second Language Acquisition.

## **Writing Workshop**

**Background on writing workshop.** Knowing that context is an important part of any study of student learning, this next section explores Writing Workshop, the teaching model in

which this study will be conducted. The section will first look at what Writing Workshop is and then will address the question of why this model supports the work of this study.

The Writing Workshop model followed in this study is based upon the work of Lucy Calkins at the Teachers College at Columbia University and on the *Units of Study for Teaching Writing*. The program that supports this work, which is called The Reading and Writing Project, continues to support literacy growth through a workshop model. The Reading and Writing is used both nationally and internationally to help students grow their reading and writing skills and develop teachers' skills at supporting those students (The Reading and Writing Project, *Our History*, 2017).

**Philosophy of writing workshop.** There are a few key components of the philosophy that underlies Writing Workshop that relate directly to this study. The first is the importance of students getting to write every day (The Reading and Writing Project, 2017). They note that, “in order for students to improve as writers, and build stamina, it important for them to have long stretches of time to practice.” (The Reading and Writing Project, *Research Base*, 2017, section 8, paragraph 1). These longer stretches of writing allow students time to interact in a meaningful way with the structure of language and provides ample opportunities for students to draft, revise, and edit their work with the teach points and teacher guidance in mind.

Another important component of the philosophy of Writing Workshop is the emphasis on creating authentic pieces of writing with different purposes. They note that teachers “can teach students to progress through the authentic experience of composing that emulate[s] that of published authors” (The Reading and Writing Project, 2017, section 8, paragraph 3). This

emphasis on authentic writing in workshop aligns with the theme found time and time again throughout the literature on how to help students understand the structure of language.

One final important basis for writing workshop's design is the emphasis on individual writers and being responsive to their needs. The Reading and Writing Project notes that "In our mini-lessons, we teach writing strategies that will help students move independently through the writing process while we teach responsively in small groups and individual conferences" (2017, section 8, paragraph 4). This flexibility allows students to grow their own writing skills at a pace that works for them and allows teachers to make sure that each student is getting what he or she needs to grow, whether it be around content, organization or structure.

**Structure of writing workshop.** The structure of workshop is designed to maximize the amount of time that students are actually engaged in writing. In a typical workshop, the teacher will provide a mini-lesson on a specific writing skill or tool. This mini-lesson will usually take no longer than ten minutes and will contain a few key elements. The first of those is an explicit explanation of the teaching point. The second is a teacher model of how to use that teaching point. There is also an opportunity for students to try out the teaching point with a partner or as a whole group during the mini-lesson. This allows the students to receive immediate feedback from the teacher and allows the teacher to gauge how prepared the students are to go off and begin writing.

The next step of a workshop is independent time. During this time, the student go back to their seats or other writing location and continue their work. They may incorporate the new teaching point they just practiced, or they may not, if they are at a different point in the writing process. During this independent work, the teacher will either conference with individual

students or hold small groups to teach a particular strategy or skill. About half way through the work time, the teacher will give a mid-workshop interruption, which usually take the form of another, smaller teaching point, or to share something that a student is doing that others might benefit from. The independent work time, often between twenty and thirty minutes, should take up the majority of the workshop period. After the work time, the students come back together and participate in a share. This may be one student coming up and sharing how they used the new teaching point for the day or how they did something differently than they had before. The share can also be done with partners with all the students participating.

The conference, which the researcher and co-teachers will utilize throughout this study, takes a specific form. First, the teacher and student will discuss the student's current writing work. The student may talk about the writing process or read parts of it aloud to the teacher. During this time, the teacher notices the student is already doing well and what the student might be ready to try on next. The teacher then shares that information with the student in the form of a compliment and a tip. When the teacher gives the tip, he or she may model the skill or explain it and then provides the student the opportunity to try the skill with immediate feedback from the teacher (The Reading and Writing Project, 2017, K-8 Writing).

**Writing workshop and the current study.** The structure and philosophy of Writing Workshop aligns with the goals of this study. Specifically, the model of providing both explicit teaching points during the mini-lesson or conference and allowing for communicative practice through extensive time spent writing dovetails well with the findings of Lightbrown and Spada (1990) about the effectiveness of this combination for teaching language. In other words, the workshop model allows for students to receive explicit, focus-on-form lessons and

gives them time to practice using those forms to communicate meaning to an audience. This fits with not only Lightbrown and Spada's (1990) findings, but also with Myhill, Jones, Lines, and Watson (2012) principles of strong grammar instruction, including the use of examples and multiple modes of practice.

Writing Workshop also fits well with the aims of the this study in another way; the use of authentic writing experiences. Writing workshop gives students the opportunity to write for an audience. The research around effective grammar instruction as well as effective second language acquisition methods highlights the importance of authentic, communicative experiences to help learners develop their skills. Given these connections, Writing Workshop provides an ideal venue with which to support grammar instruction for both ELs and non-ELs.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter explored some of the current literature relating to the question, how can embedded grammar instruction within Writing Workshop support both English Learners and non-English Learners to meet the Common Core Standards? This chapter first explored the inclusion of grammar, in the form of language conventions, in the Common Core State Standards, and noted that while there are critiques about the current state of those standards, there appears to be some consensus that they represent a step forward for grammar instruction. The second section explored the current debate around whether or not grammar should be taught at all. This debate centered on the previous methods for grammar instruction and the need for new ways of teaching grammar so it is both effective and meaningful. The next section sought to address some of those questions about how to teach grammar by exploring the process of embedding grammar instruction within a meaningful context. Within this third

section it was noted that there are many models for how to embed grammar within content and lots of variation of how to do so successfully. The fourth section addressed some of the bigger debates in the field of Second Language Acquisition, noting what may be different or similar between native or proficient English speakers and their peers who are learning English in the pursuit of embedding grammar. The final section looked more closely at the model of Writing Workshop and showed how the goals of this model meshed with the goals of this study.

Overall, these different sections of current literature provide a starting point for the research laid out in this capstone.

### **Looking ahead**

Building off of all of the research listed above, the next chapter describes the methodology and parameters of this study. The next chapter includes: an introduction to methodology; a description of the study's setting and participants; an overview of the writing workshop model; a description of the data analysis; a rationale for the study design; and an overview of the fourth chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODS

#### **Overview**

This study seeks to answer the question, how can grammar instruction embedded into Writer's Workshop help both ELs and non-ELs meet the Common Core State Standards for language conventions? To answer this question, this chapter will outline the methodology for this study. This chapter will include: an introduction to the methods, a description of the setting and the participants in the study, an overview of Writing Workshop, an explanation of the analysis of the data, a description of the methodology, a rationale for the study design, and finally, an overview of the next chapter.

#### **Introduction**

This study was based around three Writing Workshop mini-lessons spaced throughout a month of instruction. The mini-lessons were based on a Functional Linguistics Analysis (FLA) model. That is, the lessons focused on teaching students the function and multiple uses of different language structures in a meaningful context. In this case, it was in the context of students writing their own narrative pieces. The lessons focused on three of the second grade English Language Arts Standards, under the Conventions of Standard English Strand. These language conventions are: correct usage of adjectives and adverbs, producing compound sentences, and using apostrophes to form contractions and possessives. These conventions were chosen for a few reasons. First, they have been identified as necessary and appropriate for second grade students to learn, based on their inclusion in the CCSS. Second, they are conventions that have immediate and important use in the production of writing. This means

that mastery of these language conventions will provide students with useful skills for many tasks throughout the year and the future.

### **Setting and Participants**

This study took place at a large elementary school in an urban school district. The participants were eighteen second grade students from two different classrooms in the school. The classrooms were chosen out of the five second grades at the school due to external factors, such as scheduling and timing. Students are assigned to different classrooms based on a wide variety of factors and there is an effort to make sure that there is balance across the five rooms in terms of different demographics and academic skills. Of the eighteen students, two of the students are either currently receiving or recently received ESL services.

### **Writing Workshop Model**

These three lessons were taught during the main writing instruction block of the day, Teachers College Writing Workshop. The school the students attend follows a workshop model for writing instruction, which means that students received a mini-lesson on the new language convention. The mini-lesson typically happens at the very beginning of the lesson and follows the structure of: a hook to engage and connect with the students, explicit explanation of the teaching point, a teacher model of how to use the teaching point, an activity that engages students to try the teaching point, and a reiteration of the teaching point. The entire mini-lesson takes around 10 minutes. The students then have time to write independently and incorporate the new convention in their writing. Teachers confer with individual students about their writing needs and teach small groups to support students with similar needs. The pretest and tests that made up the bulk of the data used in the study did not

have explicit teacher prompting or coaching. Students did, however, have access to anchor charts (APPENDIX F) and other paper resources to help them remember all the language conventions, as well as other teaching points they were given throughout the writing unit during the test (APPENDIX G).

The lessons were taught during the “drafting” phase of the writing cycle, rather than the revising or editing phase. This fits with the FLA framework of focusing on the function of language structures, rather than seeing grammar as a way to edit writing after the fact or to simply to “fix” a problem. This does not mean, however, that students cannot incorporate these structures at any point of the writing process, including editing. It simply means that students should be given the impression that language structures are an integral part of sharing meaning with their readers, rather than a chore to complete afterwards.

As noted above, students produced two test writing pieces, or on-demands. These were all administered in the classroom and students were given the same prompt each time. The prompt was “write a letter to persuade someone of your opinion”. Students were given the same amount of time to complete both pieces. The first on-demand was administered prior to any instruction on language conventions has been given. These writing pieces make up the pretest group. The second on-demand was administered after the students had received lessons on all three language conventions and had had time to use those conventions in their own writing. These writing pieces make up the test on-demand group.

### **Analysis of Data**

**Overview of rubric.** After all the groups of on demands have been gathered, the writing was scored using a rubric. This rubric is designed to measure the usage of the target

language conventions throughout the writing pieces. On the rubric for each language convention, the student received a 0 if there is no evidence of the structure, a 1 if the student attempts to use structure but does so incorrectly, a 2 if the structure is used correctly at least 1 time, a 3 if the structure is used correctly 2-3 times, and a 4 if the structure is used correctly 4 or more times (APPENDIX B). This design of the rubric takes into account both use of the target structure and accuracy. It also recognizes that student learning of language structures may take time and be gradual, rather than all at once.

**Quantitative data.** The data gathered from these rubrics was compared to see if the target mini-lessons increased both students' use and accuracy of those target structures. The data was also analyzed to determine if this type of explicit instruction had similar impact, larger impact or negative impact on students learning English as a second language compared to their non-EL peers.

**Qualitative data.** The two teachers whose students completed the pretests and tests were also interviewed. The purpose of these interviews was to determine what patterns the teachers, who know these students, noticed about their use of the target structures. Since these teachers were conferencing with the students and interacting with them as writers each day, their insights are invaluable in having a complete picture of the students' learning (APPENDIX C). The answers from the interview were also used to better analyze and understand the data found from the tests. They were also be used to develop next steps for teaching the students.

## **Methodology**

**Overview of methodology.** This study includes both quantitative and qualitative data, making it a mixed methods approach. A mixed methods approach is defined as “research in

which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study or program of inquiry” Tashakkori and Creswell (2007, p. 4, as found in Mackey and Gass, 2016). Using both quantitative and qualitative data allows for the strengths of both types to support any findings, while mitigating some of the weaknesses of each type. As noted in Mackey and Gass, “quantitative data can provide researchers with a large numerical database, but qualitative data often provide the richer contextualized data important for a fuller understanding” (p. 278). Thus, the strength of each type makes up for the relative weakness in another type. This mixed method study followed the model of quantitative pre and post tests followed by qualitative interviews. This model allows the qualitative data to enrich the quantitative data (Mackey and Gass, 2016, p. 283).

**Gathering of quantitative data.** The first type of data that was collected was quantitative data. This data was collected in the form of a pretest and test. An important consideration in the design of both tests is whether they present the same level of difficulty for the students (Mackey and Gass, 2016, p. 202). To ensure the same level of difficulty, students were given the same prompt each time.

The pretest and posttest allowed for the collection of quantitative data that could be directly compared to answer the question; did students make growth in their use of the target structures?

The quantitative data from the both tests was analyzed to determine the both frequency and the accuracy with which students are using the structures presented in the lessons. The data was gathered in a table (APPENDIX H) by student, using a student number for identification

purposes. Then, the mean and mode was determined for each grammar structure both pretests and tests. After all the data was gathered and recorded for both pretests and the tests, the change from the pretest to the test was measured for each student. The percentage change was calculated between the pretest and test for each target language structure. This raw data as well as the comparison data helped to illuminate trends within the data. These trends are explained in chapter 4 and the implications of the trends are discussed in chapter 5.

**Gathering of qualitative data.** After completing the gathering of the test quantitative data, the qualitative data of this study was gathered through the use of interviews. The classroom teachers who work with the students every day were interviewed to gather their reactions and observations of the lessons and their students' work. The interviews were structured, meaning that there were a set list of questions sent to the interviewees. Having the same questions sent to both teachers allowed for some comparison of responses and the opportunity to see trends in the data.

As noted above, the findings from the interviews were used in conjunction with the quantitative data to help shed some light on the findings. The advantages to using this qualitative data, is that it provided a deeper, more nuanced understanding of what the quantitative data show. A potential weakness in this method is that interviews can be provide biased information or incomplete pictures. Using the mixed methods approach of multiple types of data, as well as interviewing two teachers, helped to limit the effects of this concern.

### **Rationale for Study Design**

There are several reasons why the design of this study is best suited to answer the question posed. First and foremost, this study examined actual student writing over time. This

provided the most authentic understanding of what students can do by looking at what they produced. The experience was also authentic because it matched the form of the students' usual writing instruction. This reduced the concern that changes in routine or expectation may have an adverse effect on student production.

Additionally, using teacher interviews to better understand student data allowed the researcher to triangulate the findings. Findings of the data from student writing were compared to the teacher interview noticings to illuminate patterns and find or refute theories of interpretation. This meant that there were multiple ways to confirm the findings from the data. The data is presented and analyzed in the next chapter.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter included an introduction to the methodology, a description of the setting and participants of the study, an overview of the Writing Workshop model, a description of the analysis of the data, a description of the methodology used to analyze the data, and the rationale for the study design.

## **Looking Ahead**

In the next chapter, the data is presented and analyzed. The chapter will begin with a brief overview of the study and its rationale. Then, it will lay out the quantitative findings of the study. After that, it will explore the quantitative data for each grammatical point, using adverbs, creating compound sentences, and forming contractions in a narrative format. It will then discuss the qualitative data from the teacher interviews. Finally, it will give a brief overview of the next and final chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### **Overview**

This study seeks to answer the question, how can grammar instruction embedded into Writer's Workshop help both ELs and non-ELs meet the Common Core State Standards for language conventions? To answer this question, this chapter shares the data gathered through the study. This chapter includes: an introduction to the data, a description and rationale of the instruction and the data collection, a presentation of the quantitative data, an explanation of the quantitative data in narrative form, a discussion of the qualitative data of teacher interviews and finally, an overview of the next chapter.

#### **Introduction**

This study looks at student writing produced both before and after the students received instruction in three grammatical structures. These lessons were designed using a Functional Linguistic Analysis (FLA) lens, which means that they were designed to focus on the usage of the structure, rather than simply a rule to be followed. These lessons introduced students to three grammatical structures: using adverbs, creating compound sentences, and forming contractions. Students produced writing samples before the instruction (in a pretest) and right after the instruction (in posttest). This chapter shares the data collected from those writing samples. First, there will be brief overview of the study and the data.

#### **Overview of the study: description and rationale**

This study sought to answer the question, how can grammar instruction embedded into Writer's Workshop help both ELs and non-ELs meet the Common Core State Standards for

language conventions? The study was designed to incorporate the tenets of FLA of focusing on the function of a grammatical structure within the model and philosophy of Teachers College Writing Workshop. This philosophy and subsequent instructional model focus on student writing production and on using authentic tasks to bring meaning to student work. This study sought to harmonize with these two philosophies by designing lessons focused on the way that these three grammar structures could help the writers meet their goal, for this unit, persuading an audience through an opinion letter.

The first lesson focused on how adverbs could help a writer not only paint a picture through actions, but also *how* those actions happened. The second lesson taught the students that their writing could match their voice by using apostrophes to form contractions in their writing. The final lesson taught students how to use compound sentences to make writing flow more clearly.

These three lessons were designed around three of the Language Conventions laid out in the CCSS for second grade students. They were chosen as the focus for the study since they best matched the student goals for the writing unit. This fits with the FLA tenet that language structures should be taught in relation to a task that this structure can help complete, such as write persuasively.

### **Overview of the study: data collection**

In order to measure how effective these embedded grammar lessons were, two different writing pieces were analyzed to see if students made growth across time. The first piece was written before the instruction took place. The second piece was written after all three mini-lessons were taught in the context of a persuasive writing letter unit. Each student's

writing piece was then analyzed using a rubric focused on the three target language structures. The rubric was designed as follows: if there is no evidence of the language structure in the written piece, it is scored as a zero. If the structure is attempted but used incorrectly, such as a contraction without an apostrophe, it is scored as 1. This distinction from an absence of the structure is necessary because language learning takes time and errors can be evidence of (incomplete) learning. If there is at least one example of the structure used correctly in the writing, the writing scores a 2. For 2 or 3 examples of the target structure, the writing scores a 3. More than 3 examples results in a score of 4 (APPENDIX B). To compare the growth of individual students while maintaining anonymity, each student was randomly assigned a student number and the student's writing score for each target language convention was compared from the pre and post tests. The change from between the pre and posttests were also calculated. To see all the student data and all the the calculations of the averages, changes and percentage of changes are in APPENDIX H.

### **Narrative outline of the data**

**Overview.** The table contains data from eighteen second grade students. The data is organized by the students' numbers, which were randomly assigned to maintain the anonymity of the students. The chart is organized by target grammar structure. The organization of the chart and the corresponding data is outlined in detail below.

**Data on using adverbs.** Columns two through four relate to the target structure of using adverbs. The second column shows the student's score for using adverbs in the pretest. The mean score for this target structure on the pretest was .33 repeating. The third column shows that student's score for using adverbs in the test. The mean score for this target structure

on the test was .428. The fourth column shows the difference between the student's test score and that same student's pretest score. The mean score of the change from the pretest to test on using adverbs was .095. This represents a 2.38% positive change in the students' usage of adverbs in their writing.

**Data on creating compound sentences.** Columns five through seven relate to the target structure of creating compound sentences. The fifth column shows the student's score for creating compound sentences in the pretest. The mean score for this target structure on the pretest was 1. The sixth column shows the student's score for creating compound sentences in the test. The mean score for this target structure on the test was 1.19. The seventh column shows the difference between the student's test score and that same student's pretest, or test score - pretest score. The mean score of the change from pretest to test on creating compound sentences was .19. This represents a 4.76% positive change in the students' creation of compound sentences in their writing.

**Data on using apostrophes to create contractions.** Columns eight through ten relate to the target structure of using apostrophes to create contractions. The eighth column shows the student's score for creating contractions in the pretest. The mean score for this target structure on the pretest was .6 repeating. The ninth column shows the student's score for creating contractions in the test. The mean score for this target structure on the test was 1.14. The tenth column shows the difference between the student's test score and that same student's pretest, or test score - pretest score. The mean score of the change from pretest to test on using apostrophes to create contractions was .48 repeating. This represents a 11.90% positive change in the students' use of apostrophes to create contractions in their writing.

**A Note on English Learners in the study.** One of the components in this study is how this type of grammar instruction would particularly support the learning of English learners (ELs) within their mainstream classroom. Due to some logistical constraints, only four students who are either currently classified as ELs or had been in the recent past were included in the quantitative data. While this is obviously a limitation to the current study, it does provide some insight into this question, as well as present a huge opportunity for further research. The data of this small subset is as follows: the four students who were either currently classified as ELs or had been in the recent past, showed no growth in the target structure of adverb usage. Two showed a decrease in their use of compound sentences from the the pretest to the posttest, one showed no growth (from 0 usage to 0 usage) and one student grew from 0 to a 3. Three of the ELs showed growth in their use of apostrophes to form contractions, with one student making no growth in this area. Some potential reasons for these trends will be discussed in chapter 5, as well as the potential further research questions that this data raises.

**Summary of narrative of quantitative data.** Overall, the data shows a positive trend after the instruction. The amount of positive growth varies by target grammatical structure, however. This is based in part on the variability of how familiar the students were with the target structure before receiving the instruction, as seen through the the variation in the pretest data between students. Other potential reasons for the variability of the data and other ideas of next steps for this research will be explored in chapter five.

### **Qualitative Data: teacher interviews**

**Overview.** Both classroom teachers involved in this project were interviewed after the data collection was completed. The purpose of these interviews were twofold. First, to help

provide context for the quantitative findings of their students work. Second, to support the conversation about the usefulness of this model and looking forward to next steps. Both teachers were interviewed via email and provided answers to a set list of questions. The questions posed to the teachers in the interview were:

1. What had been your experiences teaching grammar before this study?
2. Do you see any challenges to teaching grammar in your classroom? If so, what are they?
3. What were some aspects of the target grammar instruction that worked well?
4. What are some ways that the target grammar instruction could be improved?
5. What effect do you think that the grammar instruction had on your students as writers?
6. What do you see as next steps for your students in terms of grammar?
7. What could make the lessons more user friendly for yourself or other teachers?

### **Overall trends: Teacher Interviews**

While the complete text of the teacher supplied interviews are attached in APPENDICES C and D, some of the overall trends that came out of both interviews are discussed in this section to give a general overview and tone of the responses. Three overarching themes emerged: the importance of finding new ways to teach grammar, the struggle to have time to incorporate grammar structures into the existing curriculum, and an interest in continuing to explore grammar teaching. All three of these themes will be explored below.

**Finding new ways to teach grammar.** Both teachers noted that the current methods of grammar instruction were minimal or somewhat limited in the current curriculum. When asked

about their previous experience teaching grammar, both teachers noted that it was usually incorporated into the editing process and was mainly focused on students fixing their mistakes. This experience fits with the findings of the existing research on this topic, including Vavra (1996) arguing that students must see grammar instruction as something more than a punitive exercise in fixing problems. One teacher noted in her answer that this type of grammar instruction that focuses on correcting the mistake can be “embarrassing for students.”

**Limitations of time.** Both teachers noted that it could be challenging to find time to incorporate grammar instruction within the existing demands of the writing curriculum. One teacher stated that “the challenge I face is finding time/space in the curriculum to focus on grammar.” The other teacher noted that, “There is always a push and pull for time in the classroom,” but also noted that the structure “of these embedded grammar as “craft moves” within the workshop model lent itself well to our established unit.” This very real concern the time that teaching grammar might take from other important instruction is reminiscent of the concerns of the NCTE in their 1985 resolution on grammar. This concern about limited instruction time illuminates one more potential benefit for embedding language conventions within the existing structure of Writing Workshop; it takes up no additional time of the school day than what is already being used to focus on student’s writing skills.

**Continued exploration of grammar teaching.** Both teachers also noted their interest in continuing to explore new ways to teach grammar after the completion of this study. One teacher stated that “I want to continue to teach grammar as part of Workshop during drafting so that students have the skills and awareness necessary to be successful as they write each day. The proactive instruction versus the reactive revision [stance] seems to be a more positive and

lasting model for the students.” The other teacher noted that she wanted to continue this work with her students, by stating “now that students were taught adverbs, I would like to use the tools created (the list of contractions and adverbs they have in their writing folders) during applicable lessons. For example, we could use them during lessons when they are describe actions or when they are adding dialogue. We could also use the same structure to introduce new parts of speech.” This enthusiasm for continuing this work is very encouraging in light of the potential next steps that are outlined in chapter five.

**Teacher Interview summary.** Overall, the teacher interviews provided support for many of the findings discussed in the current literature review of chapter two. The clearest trends from the two teacher interviews included: the current limitations of grammar instruction, the difficulty of finding time to include meaningful grammar instruction, and the desire to continue the work of embedding grammar instruction within the structure of Writing Workshop. The further implications of these trends will be discussed in the next chapter.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter began with a brief overview of the rationale and design of the study. The bulk of the chapter was a presentation of the quantitative data. First, the raw data was presented for each target language structure. Then, the quantitative data was presented in a narrative form, noting the overall data showed growth in all the structures, with variability between target structures and between individual students. The next section focused on the qualitative data of teacher interviews. Three major trends in the interview data were discussed: the issues with current grammar instruction, the constraints on time for grammar instruction, and the

desire to continue to try on embedding grammar structures within the Writer's Workshop model.

### **Looking ahead**

The next and final chapter will dive more deeply into the data presented in this chapter. It will include a brief overview of the study and will then explore what the data from this study adds to the current literature. It will then propose potential next steps for the schools to continue this work. Next, it will discuss further research needs. Finally, there will be a reflection on the original question and the learning from the entire process.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

#### **Overview**

This study seeks to answer the question, how can grammar instruction embedded into Writer's Workshop help both ELs and non-ELs meet the Common Core State Standards for language conventions? To answer this question, this chapter will discuss the results found in this study. This chapter will include: an overview of the study and a look at how the data from this study adds to the current literature. Then, it will propose potential next steps at the school level. Next, it will discuss further research needs based on the results. Finally, there will a reflection on the original question and the learning from the entire process.

#### **Introduction**

This study sought to understand how effective it would be to embed CCSS language conventions within a Teachers College Writing Workshop model. The rationale for this study came out of the concern that while the CCSS standards require that students are proficient in different language conventions throughout their K-12 education experience, English grammar instruction in the United States has often been found to be ineffective or inadequate. Bringing together the recommendations of a Functional Linguistic Model, as proposed by (Halliday, 2002, 2014; Schleppegrell 2004, 2007, 2013) and others, and the philosophy of Columbia University's Teachers College Writing Workshop Model, a different model of teaching language conventions was used to teach students three of the target language conventions for second grade students: using adverbs correctly, creating compound sentences, and using apostrophes to form contractions. After these three language conventions were taught, the

students were given posttests to determine if their writing reflected a growing use of these structures in comparison to the pretest they were given before they received the instruction. Then, their teachers were interviewed to gather more information about the process and potential next steps. This chapter will explore some of the trends in the findings and the implications for those trends, both for the school and for further research.

### **The results**

The results of the analysis of the students' writing samples is presented in chapter four in detail. The raw data can also be seen in APPENDIX H. Overall, there was a positive trend in the data for all three of the target grammar structures in the test in comparison to the pretest. While the positive trends exist overall, however, there is variability between different students and between the different language structures. There are various potential explanations for this variability.

**Variability between students.** There is a wide variety of scores between the different students. This variability could be caused by multiple reasons. First, different students came in with different levels of knowledge of these grammar structures. This is evident from the data of the pretest. Some students were already using the target language convention before the instruction. This is particularly true for the structure of compound sentences. If a student's writing already had a working knowledge of compound sentences, even if he or she was not always using it accurately, the lesson on how to create compound sentences would be less likely to change the student's use of the structure in his or her writing. It is also possible that some students did not show growth in using the target structures because they have other aspects of their writing that they are very focused on. For example, if a student was struggling

with producing writing, it is less likely that he or she will be attending to more detailed parts of writing, such as how to properly use an adverb than working on generating ideas and getting words down on the paper. Conversely, a student may be very ready to learn a new structure and may be looking for new ways to grow their writing.

This variability based on student choice is all part of using the Writing Workshop model. Students all receive the same teaching points, but during their independent work and in their conferences with teachers, they focus on what they are interested in and what the teacher sees as the next step for that individual student. While this may result in more unevenness in the results of the data, it is precisely this commitment to giving students space to try on different aspects of writing that make Writing Workshop an excellent structure to include new language structures.

**Variability between target language structures.** There was also a large variability in the data between the three target language structures. Using apostrophes to form contractions saw the biggest increase with a 11.9% change from the pretest to the test. Forming compound sentences had the next largest change with a 4.76% change. Using adverbs had the smallest increase with with a 2.38% change. One of the potential reasons for this variability is prior exposure to the structure. It was clear from the pretest that students were the most familiar with creating compound sentences. This additional knowledge about the structure may have resulted in a smaller increase in usage overall, because the target structure was already being used by the student.

Conversely, no prior knowledge of the target structure may have also had a damping effect on the growth. For example, the pretests showed that overall, the students had very few

instances of using adverbs before the lessons. This may signal that students had very little knowledge of adverbs prior to the lesson. Since they were unfamiliar with the structure, students may not have gotten enough exposure or practice with using adverbs to feel comfortable using them in their own writing. This possibility seems to be supported by the fact that the mode for the adverbs test was still 0 and the mean was 1. Students may need more exposure to this structure before they begin including it in their writing.

If being very familiar and not familiar at all with structures make it more likely that students will not make growth, then the structure of forming contractions with apostrophes seems to represent a happy medium. Students clearly had some knowledge of contractions prior to this instruction, with the mean being .6 repeating. Using this background knowledge, the students made the most growth with the structure of contractions with an 11.9% increase in their usage of contractions in the test from the pretest. Thus, there seems to be a clear advantage to having some prior knowledge about a structure before receiving instruction in that structure.

**Implications of variability.** The variability between students and target structures could have many different causes. One commonality seems to come up again and again, which is the prior exposure to the structure. One important implication of this is that continuing to teach students about different language structures should help increase students' knowledge of these structures and may result in continued growth. This supports the argument that students should continue to be taught grammar structures in a way that is accessible and is consistent. One of the classroom teachers had the same idea about the need for consistent grammar teaching and stated that students, "need ample practice and guidance for the instruction to transfer to their independent writing." It also shows the importance of using tools such as a

pretest to determine what students already have knowledge of, and what structures may need additional practice.

### **Next steps at the school level**

The student writing quantitative data as well as the teacher interview qualitative data all point to the importance of continuing to explore how to embed grammar into the structure of Writing Workshop. The data clearly shows a need on the part of the students and a desire on the part of the teachers to find some new ways to overcome the challenges of teaching grammar in a meaningful way. This fits with the existing research discussed at length in chapter 2. Next steps at the school level will be two fold. First, how to continue this work with the students currently in the study and how to implement what was learned in this study in a larger way in the school's curriculum.

**Continuing the work.** The student data shows that the students are growing with these embedded lessons. It also suggests that the students could benefit from additional instruction around these target structures, particularly on the uses of adverbs. It also opens up the possibility of teaching other language structures through similar models. This begins to address some of the concerns laid out by Denham (2013) and others about how to implement CCSS language in a meaningful way. Due to time and logistical constraints, this study was only able to approach three of the language structures included in the CCSS for second grade students. Next steps should definitely include addressing the other language conventions in the CCSS with a lens of Functional Language Analysis to determine the best ways to teach the structures, and the Writing Workshop scope and sequence to determine the best units to support the structures. In order to do this, next steps would include working with the students'

classroom teachers to map out which language conventions fit most closely with the goals of each writing unit.

**Growing the work.** Based on the current literature on the state of grammar instruction and the opinions of the teachers in the teacher interviews, it also seems important to have a larger conversation about embedding grammar within the Workshop model can support students throughout the writing curriculum. One of the challenges of this work, as noted before, are the constraints on time in the classroom. Having the data and experience from this study should help make the argument that embedding grammar instruction can be effective while not taking up lots of additional time during the school day. Looking ahead, thinking about where these language conventions could be taught throughout the year long scope and sequence will also help be proactive about including all the language conventions in a way that fits within the schedule.

### **Next steps for research**

Beyond thinking about how this study supports continuing this project at the school, the results provide many more questions for further research. Some of these further research ideas come from logistical limitations of this study, while others come from the new questions that arise from the completion of a study. This section will first discuss what further research would be completed if there were not constraints upon this study. The next part of the section will look at new opportunities for research.

**English Learners.** One clear next step to grow this study is to gather more data from English Learners (ELs). As noted in chapter 2, some theorists suggest there are ways in which English learners acquire language structures that differs from their non-EL peers (*See Krashen,*

1981 & Lightbrown and Spada, 1990). Due to constraints on data gathering and time, this study was only able to gather data on a few EL students. Getting a better understanding how embedding grammar in the Workshop Model affects ELs in particular is a very important question, since ELs are students that may benefit greatly from increased language instruction, particularly language instruction that is embedded in the mainstream classroom, rather than only learning these structures and then have to make the connections between their grammar instruction and the demands of their writing instruction independently. Additionally, the trend towards more and more co-teaching as a way to support all students in the classroom would greatly support ELs to they could receive the necessary language instruction through the workshop model. Overall, there is a tremendous amount of information that could be gathered about these models with more information specifically about ELs.

**Delayed posttests.** Another place for further research to support this study would be giving students a delayed posttest months after they received this instruction. A delayed posttest is a useful tool because it helps to measure what the students retained from the lessons after some time has passed. As Mackey and Gass (2016) note that while a pretest and test measure the immediate effects of the learning, “it is not always clear that the effects of that learning are long-lasting. To measure the longer-term effects, researchers often want to include delayed post-tests, that is, those that occur shortly after treatment” (p.202). A delayed posttest would provide some way to measure the important question of whether students retained the information they were exposed to during the lessons. Due to timing constraints, this was not a possibility for this study, but would be an important next step in supporting continued research.

**Different language conventions.** A question raised by the results of this study is how differences in language conventions may affect these structures. As noted before, this study was only able to address three of the language conventions laid out as important for second grade students in the CCSS. There are also many other conventions in the language conventions strand of the CCSS for all the grades K-12. Additional research is needed to learn more about how the type of language convention and students' familiarity with that convention may affect this instruction and, perhaps even more importantly, how to mitigate complications that arise from a lack of student knowledge or exposure to a target language convention. The scope of this further research question could be quite large and definitely deserves further exploration.

**Different genres of writing.** Another area for additional exploration from this study is how embedding these lessons into different genres of writing may alter the effectiveness of the lessons. All three of the target structures in this study were taught through the persuasive writing unit. While this consistency helps to allow for comparison between students and structures, it provides limited information on how the genre of writing may affect the usefulness of different language conventions. For example, it may be more effective to teach students about adverbs in a fiction unit rather than an informational unit, as this study did, since there is a greater emphasis on descriptive words and imagery in fiction writing than there typically is in informational writing. This further research could include mapping out all the K-12 language conventions throughout the scope and sequence of the grades.

**Summary of further research.** There are four major areas of further research raised at the completion of this study. The first is really diving into how these lessons could support

English Learners. The second is using a delayed posttest to determine how much of the students' growth in this study was retained beyond the time of the instruction. The third is exploring how different language conventions may affect the challenges of teaching students through an embedded model of grammar. Finally, this study also raises the question of how different genres of writing may lend themselves differently to different language conventions. All of these possibilities for further research raise interesting and exciting new opportunities for learning about how grammar can best be embedded in the existing writing framework.

### **Reflection**

At the conclusion of this study, there are several key reflections that are evident. The first is that, despite some limitations to the study and caveats to the data, overall, this study tentatively answered the question, *will grammar instruction embedded into Writer's Workshop help both ELs and non-ELs meet the Common Core State Standards for language conventions?* with an affirmative. This is very exciting and fits with the argument presented in most of the current literature that there can be a different way to teach grammar that both engages students and helps them learn. This opens up a whole new set of possibilities about how to educate students to be effective, powerful writers. Remembering the work of Ehrenworth and Vinton (2005), these findings are meaningful when connected to their argument that "knowledge of grammar is knowledge of how to put words and punctuation next to each other in fluid and consequential ways" (Ehrenworth, Vinton, p. 52). It is a reminder that finding new and innovative ways to teach grammar not only fulfills the CCSS requirements, but also gives students agency and power as writers.

Additionally, it is exciting that the model set out in this study brought together a powerful way to understand language, Functional Language Analysis (FLA) as explored by Halliday (2002, 2014) and a powerful way to use language, the Writing Workshop model, as designed by Teachers College (2017). The combination of these two important entities in their own right gives strength and support to this model as a viable new structure for this school's students with potential for growth. The possibilities for future research and experimentation open up room for other educators to become engaged and excited about teaching grammar, something that cannot always be assumed.

Despite all the optimism, there are still ways in which this study did not fully meet its potential as of yet. The biggest aspect of this is the small amount of data from ELs. A large part of the conception of this study came from the desire to find new ways to support ELs in their language development in their mainstream classroom. While anecdotally, it seems that ELs also benefited from this grammar instruction from this study, there are still lots of possibilities for research and learning about how these structures can best be implemented with English Learners and their distinct needs and strengths as learners.

Besides the lack of data from ELs, there were other constraints to time and other logistics that somewhat limited the scope of this study from its very design to the end of the study. While every researcher strives to answer questions to the best extent possible, these limitations do not ultimately seem to negate the overall findings of the study, and instead open up the potential for future research and discovery.

Overall, this study provided a huge opportunity for learning. Learning about language structures for students, learning about new ways to teach grammar for the educators involved,

and learning about the limitations and joys of designing and implementing research to further one's own teaching practice.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter explored the implications of the question, how can embedded grammar instruction within Writing Workshop support both English Learners and non-English Learners to meet the Common Core Standards? This chapter first explored the overall results from the study. It then focused on the variability in data, both between students and between target language structures. Next, it explored next steps at the school level, including continuing to support the students in the study in their knowledge of grammar conventions and in implementing the structures in a broader way through the year. Then, the chapter discussed implications for further research, including addressing the limitations by the results. Finally, the chapter contained the final reflections on the project, including the experience for the participants, the effects of some of the limitations and the overall opportunity of the study.

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APPENDIX A:  
Letter to Families

Dear Second Grade Families,

Hope that your school year is off to an excellent start! I am writing to you regarding a project in which I hope to have your help.

I am currently completing my Masters of Education in English as a Second Language (ESL) through Hamline University in Minnesota. As part of my coursework, I plan to teach some second-grade-specific language conventions to all 2- students. These language conventions are drawn directly from the second-grade standards:

- using adjectives and adverbs correctly
- producing compound sentences
- using apostrophes to form contractions and possessives.

For my research, I would like to compare students' writing before and after they learn about these conventions. This information will help us determine the effectiveness of different instruction modes for developing writers.

I am writing to ask your permission to include your child's data in my final work. I would not include any personal information for your child; the only potentially-identifying information will be whether a student receives or has ever received ESL instruction, and their grade-level. The names of students, the name of ----- School and -----Public schools will not appear anywhere in the study. Throughout, I will refer to students as "second grade students in an urban school district on the East Coast".

This study has been approved by the Human Subjects Research Committee of the School of Education at Hamline University and ----- Public Schools. Once completed, this research will be public scholarship and the abstract and final paper will be catalogued in Hamline's Bush Library's Digital Commons. This means that the final product can be checked out from Hamline's Bush Library. Further, results of the study may be included in an article in a professional journal or used as part of professional development. Again, your child's identity will not be linked to the study.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw your child at any time if you choose. If you choose to not have your child participate, he or she will still receive the same lessons and support as all other children in the classroom.

If you agree to participate in this study, please keep this letter for your records. Then, please sign and date the agreement below and return it to me. Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you so much for your help and consideration, and I look forward to continuing my work with your children!

Best,

Lucy Marincel  
Second Grade Co-teacher  
X Elementary School

APPENDIX B:  
Student Work Rubric

Student ID NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_ Assessment: Pre Post

EL	Non-EL	Former EL (monitor status)			
	<i>Student scores a 0 if..</i>	<i>Student scores a 1 if..</i>	<i>Student scores a 2 if..</i>	<i>Student scores a 3 if..</i>	<i>Student scores a 4 if..</i>
Language convention 1: <b>using adjectives and adverbs correctly</b>	There is no evidence of the convention.	There is incorrect or incomplete usage of the convention.	The student uses the convention correctly 1 time.	The student uses the convention correctly 2-3 times	The student uses the convention correctly 4 or more times.
Language convention 2: <b>producing compound sentences</b>	There is no evidence of the convention.	There is incorrect or incomplete usage of the convention.	The student uses the convention correctly 1 time.	The student uses the convention correctly 2-3 times	The student uses the convention correctly 4 or more times.
Language convention 3: <b>using apostrophes to form contractions</b>	There is no evidence of the convention.	There is incorrect or incomplete usage of the convention.	The student uses the convention correctly 1 time.	The student uses the convention correctly 2-3 times	The student uses the convention correctly 4 or more times.

**APPENDIX C:**

## Interview with Teachers

1. What had been your experiences teaching grammar before this study?
  
2. Do you see any challenges to teaching grammar in your classroom? If so, what are they?
  
3. What were some aspects of the target grammar instruction that worked well?
  
4. What are some ways that the target grammar instruction could be improved?
  
5. What effect do you think that the grammar instruction had on your students as writers?
  
6. What do you see as next steps for your students in terms of grammar?
  
7. What could make the lessons more user friendly for yourself or other teachers?

**APPENDIX D:**  
Teacher interview answers

Teacher Interview # 1

1) What have been your experiences teaching grammar before this study?

My experiences teaching grammar before this study were minimal. I was trained in graduate school using the Words Their Way: Word Study and the Daily Five method for literary instruction. When I came to {this school}, I was trained at the Teachers College of Columbia University in Reader's Workshop. Through school-based professional development, I was trained in Writer's Workshop. Across the years, I've found that sentence formation, particularly in composing either fragments or run on sentences, is a challenging skill for students. While we teach revising and editing in the workshop model for writing, it often focuses on a "brain dump" of ideas, and focusing on conventions and grammar after the fact. Going back into a students' writing to correct can be embarrassing for some difficult for others to "catch" the mistake. I would supplement school resources with my own grammar work on occasion but it was sporadic at best.

2) Do you see any challenges in teaching grammar in your classroom? If so, what are they?

There is always a push and pull for time in the classroom. However, the way that Ms. Marincel embedded grammar as "craft moves" within the workshop model lent itself well to our established unit. The students were still exposed to the language and elements of the Persuasive Writing genre, however, the intentional grammar instruction set them up for success before going to draft. We would certainly need to revise current units to include more grammar, but I can see it aligning well with the Common Core expectations and unit goals.

3) What were some aspects of the target grammar instruction that worked well?

Ms. Marincel did a wonderful job explicitly teaching the grammar as a 'craft move', showing an example ("think aloud") under the document camera, and allowing students to speak with their peers about her next steps as an author. They were able to discuss whole group and see their ideas get used in her persuasive letter during the mini-lesson. Students had access to an anchor chart and bank of examples for the contractions and adverbs, as well as ways to form compound sentences. This scaffolded instruction and resources helped students to independently apply the skills in their writing.

4) What are some ways that target grammar instruction can be improved?

For one, it needs to be consistent. This was a small taste for students but I aim to continue to embed age-appropriate grammar instruction in the drafting days of each Writing unit. Students should also receive immediate feedback (either day of or next day) on their grammar in writing so that the skills stick and misconceptions can be caught quickly. They need ample practice and guidance for the instruction to transfer to their independent writing.

5) What effect do you think that the grammar instruction had on your students as writers?

The explicit grammar instruction provided my students the skills to accurately use adverbs, contractions, and form compound sentences in their writing. The modeling, scaffolded practice, and resources were a big help during drafting. While they still need encouragement and continued feedback for the skills to fully stick, they have a heightened awareness of the different types of language they can use and why. For the students who employed the grammar skills, it helped it be more sophisticated and convincing.

6) What do you see for your students in terms of next steps?

I want to continue to teach grammar as part of Workshop during drafting so that students have the skills and awareness necessary to be successful as they write each day. The proactive instruction versus the reactive revision seems to be a more positive and lasting model for the students. I will need to continue to consult my team and Common Core resources for the skills that we feel are developmentally appropriate to introduce to second graders.

7) What could make the lessons more user friendly to yourself or other teachers?

Ms. Marincel's structure for the three grammar lessons worked great! The students engaged with the skills through an explicit "teach", model, guided practice, and independent practice. Students benefited from an anchor chart posted in the classroom as well as individual graphic organizers. Having a bank of related grammar lessons would be especially beneficial for general education teachers.

## Teacher Interview #2

1. What had been your experiences teaching grammar before this study?

Before this study, I had only taught grammar embedded in the revising and editing steps of our writing process. Students were only taught to check their work for clarity, not explicitly taught the parts of grammar and how to use them.

2. Do you see any challenges to teaching grammar in your classroom? If so, what are they?

The challenges I face is finding time/space in the curriculum to focus on grammar. I also find it challenging to teach grammar in a way that is meaningful to students.

3. What were some aspects of the target grammar instruction that worked well?

The target grammar instruction was taught as ways that students could make their writing better, not as a way to "fix" their writing. I think this allowed students to take ownership of the tools that they learned. It was also taught in context of the genres that they were writing. This allowed them to easily find places in their own writing to use the parts of grammar they were taught.

4. What are some ways that the target grammar instruction could be improved?

n/a

5. What effect do you think that the grammar instruction had on your students as writers?

I think students were more aware of the parts of grammar that they were taught. After the lesson, they continued to notice contractions in their own writing, in others' writing, and in the books that they were reading.

6. What do you see as next steps for your students in terms of

Now that students were taught adverbs, I would like to use the tools created (the list of contractions and adverbs they have in their writing folders) during applicable lessons. For example, we could use them during lessons when they are describe action or when they are adding dialogue. We could also use the same structure to introduce new parts of speech.

7. What could make the lessons more user friendly for yourself or other teachers?

Examples for different genres that are grade level appropriate. -- I'm not sure if the list that is in their writing folder is part of the lesson, but that was very helpful and should be included!

**APPENDIX E:**  
Scripted Lessons

**Lesson one: Using adverbs correctly**

<p>TP: Students will be able to use adverbs correctly</p>	
<p>Hook: I know that you have been working on writing letters to persuade others about our opinions and I know that you have been using evidence and reasons to help build up your argument. I want to teach you a few different ways that writers can use language to help make their writing even clearer. When writing persuasive letters, making your language really clear can help your reader understand your point, and persuade them to agree with you.</p>	
<p>Main teach: The first way that I want to teach you about how writers can use language to make a clear picture for their readers is through adverbs. Adverbs have a really special job. They are words that help describe how an action happens. What are our action words? <i>Take a few student responses</i> Yes! And we know that action words help to put a picture in our readers heads. Now, I want to teach you how adverbs help to do that job by telling how the action happened. Let me show you what I mean.</p>	
<p>Model/Think aloud: In my letter to Will, I am trying to convince him to adopt a dog. To do this, I want to help him have a picture of what it might look like for us to go for a walk with a dog. I wrote. "Can you see us, walking at the park with Eliana and our dog?" An adverb can help me really paint this picture. I am going to use the adverb, lazily, and I am going to add it write after the action word, walking, which is where our adverbs go. Now I have the sentence, "Can you see us, walking lazily at the park with Eliana and our dog?" Do you see how that changes how it feels? I have a list of adverbs right here for us to use: Let's try it together with this sentence: Eliana will play _____ with the dog. Which adverb could we add here that should how Eliana might play with the dog?</p>	
<p>Guided Practice: Now, I want you to try it with your own letters. Pull out a letter you have been working on and find one spot where you use an action word. What adverb could you add that would should how that action happened?</p>	

## Lesson 2: Creating compound sentences

TP: Students will be able to produce compound sentences	Materials: anchor chart
<p><b>Hook:</b> I know that we have been working on to how to write really persuasive letters so that we can convince other people of our ideas. We have been talking about different ways that writers can use words to help their reader of their ideas. Today I want to teach you another way that writers can make their writing easy to read, and therefore, even more convincing.</p>	
<p><b>Main teach:</b> One way that writers make their writing easy to read is by creating compound sentences. We can make compound sentences by combining two short sentences that go together into one longer, more interesting sentence. This makes our writing flow better and sound more interesting to our readers.</p>	
<p><b>Model/Think aloud:</b> Let me know show you what this looks like. In my letter, I have two sentences that are pretty short. This is what it sounds like: Read short sentences aloud. This is fine, and it gets my ideas across, but I want to make it sound even more interesting to my reader. To do this, I am going to combine these these two sentences. To combine them, I need to decide two things:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Notice what is the same in both sentences.</li> <li>2. Decide which joining word I need: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. And if the two things go together</li> <li>b. But if the two things don't go together</li> <li>c. Or if the two things are a choice you need to make.</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>A dog would entertain Eliana A dog would keep Wallace busy.</p> <p>Becomes A dog would entertain Eliana and keep Wallace busy.</p> <p><b>Second Example:</b> We could get a small dog in our apartment. We could get a medium sized dog in a bigger apartment.</p> <p>Becomes we could get a small dog in our apartment or a medium dog in a bigger apartment.</p>	
<p><b>Guided Practice:</b> Now you try. Pull out a letter and see if you a sentence that you can combine in your work. Follow the two steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Notice what is the same in both sentences.</li> <li>4. Decide which joining word I need: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. And if the two things go together</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	

- b. But if the two things don't go together
- c. Or if the two things are a choice you need to make.

### Lesson 3: Using apostrophes in contractions

TP: Students will be able to use apostrophes to form contractions	Materials: chart
<p>Hook/Intro</p> <p>In my letter, I want the words to sound like my voice. I think this will be the most convincing because my audience (Will) knows me and will more convinced if the letter sounds like I am talking to him.</p>	
<p>Main teach:</p> <p>Today I want to teach you a tool that writers use to write like they talk. The tool is call an apostrophe. We can use the apostrophe a few different ways, but the way I want to teach you about today, is that we can use it form a contraction. Does anyone know what a contraction is? When we put two words together and take out a letter to make a shorter word.</p> <p>Give three examples:</p> <p>Do not- don't</p> <p>Would not- won't</p> <p>They are- they're</p> <p>What do you notice about these contractions? *They combine the words, they take out some letters, they use the apostrophe to replace the missing letter.</p> <p>I also know as a writer, people use contractions frequently when they're talking Give me a thumb up if you say "don't" instead of "do not" when you are talking. (repeat for can't, we'll)</p> <p>Since I know this, I can decide as a writer that I want my character to use contractions when speaking.</p>	
<p>Model/Think aloud: Let me know show you how I can do this. In my letter, I want to say, "I don't think it will be too much work." (model with don't.) Show where the apostrophe goes.</p>	
<p>Guided Practice:</p> <p>You are going to help me with my next sentence. In this sentence, I want to continue to try to convince Will that getting a dog will make our family closer. What could I say using a contraction that might sound like my voice? T&amp;T. Share out a few ideas.</p>	
<p>Send off:</p> <p>So today and everyday, writers, when you are writing to show your own voice, I want you to remember that you can use contractions, to make your words match how you speak. Remember that when we form a contraction, we use an apostrophe to replace the missing letter or letters and both words become just one word.</p>	

## APPENDIX F: Anchor chart

Writers use language structures to **convince** their readers!

**Adverbs:**  
describe **how**  
an action happens  
ex: We will walk \_\_\_\_\_ down the path.

lazily  
carefully  
nicely  
happily  
slowly  
quickly

suddenly  
careless  
responsibly  
terribly  
extremely  
beautifully

**Contractions:**  
helps our words  
**match** our voice

Do not → don't  
should not → shouldn't  
They are → they're  
We will → we'll  
I would → I'd  
Can not → can't

**Compound sentences:**  
help our sentences  
**flow.**

And → if the two things go together  
But → if the two things don't go together  
Or → if the two things are a choice you can make

**APPENDIX G: Student Handout**

Contractions help our writing sound like our voice:

can not	can't
would not	won't
Do not	don't
They are	they're
I would	I'd
She would	she'd
You are	you're
Should not	shouldn't

**APPENDIX G: Student Handout (continued)**

Writers use language structures to write long and strong!  
Adverbs show how the action happened:

Quietly	Joyfully	Respectfully
quickly	happily	responsibly
lazily	comfortably	slowly
Bravely	Easily	Loudly
Silently	Calmly	Sadly

Compound sentences combine ideas:

And	If the two things go together
But	If the two things don't go together
Or	If the two things are a choice you need to make.

## APPENDIX H: Quantitative Data

Student Number	Adverbs pretest	Adverbs test	Adverbs: Change from Pretest to test	Compound sentences pretest	Compound Sentences: test	Compound Sentences: Change from pretest to test	Apostrophes in contractions: pretest	Apostrophes in contractions: test	Apostrophes in contractions: change from pretest to test
2	2	0	-2	2	1	-1	0	0	0
3	0	0	0	1	0	-1	0	1	1
4	0	2	2	2	0	-2	0	0	0
6	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
7	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
8	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	1	0
9	3	2	-1	0	2	2	0	2	2
10	0	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	0
12	2	0	-2	0	2	2	3	0	-3
15	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
16	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	3	3
18	0	0	0	1	0	-1	0	4	4
19	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0
20	0	2	2	1	0	-1	2	2	0
22	0	0	0	3	2	-1	3	3	0
23	0	0	0	2	0	-2	3	2	-1
24	0	1	1	3	2	-1	1	2	1
26	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1
27	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	0
28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
29	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	2
Mean	0.33	0.43	0.10	1.00	1.19	0.19	0.67	1.14	0.48
Percent Change:			2.38%			4.76%			11.90%