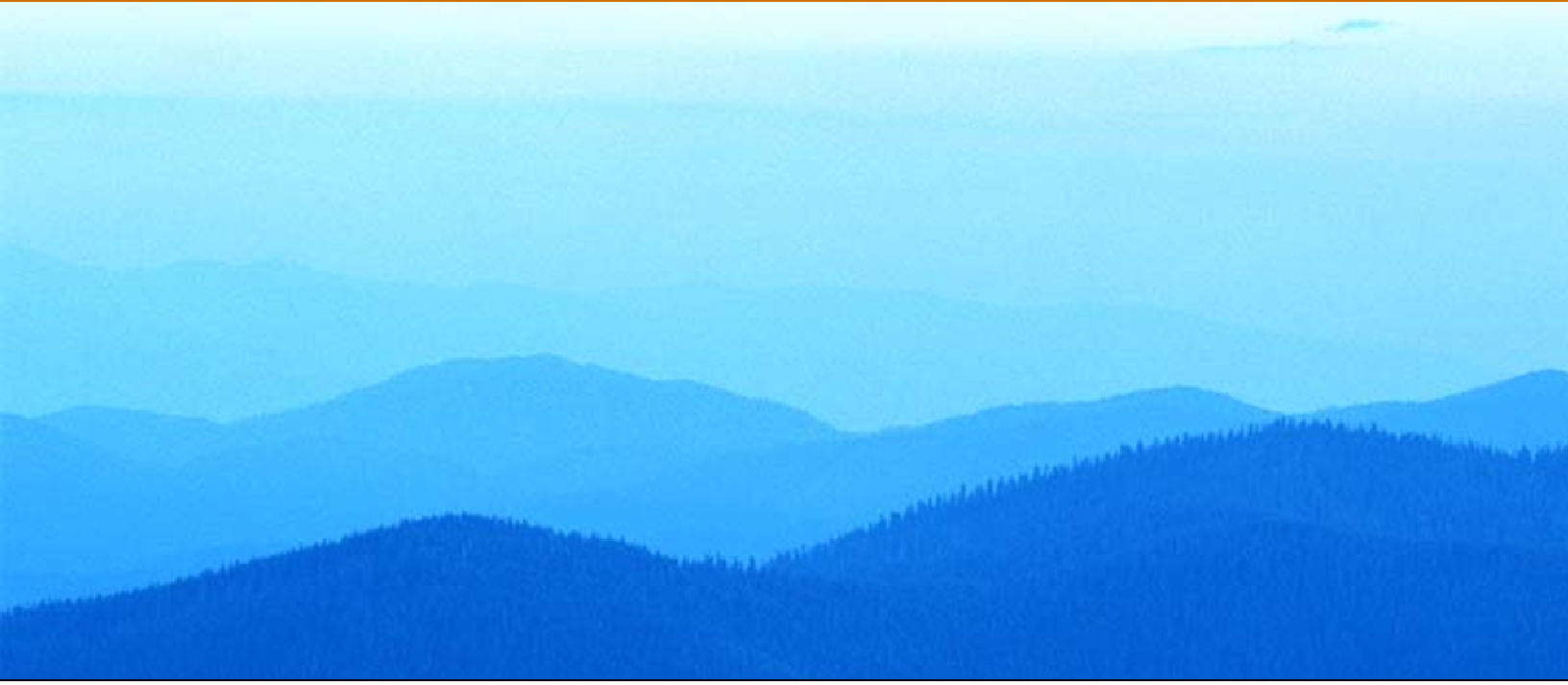

LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE FORUM JOURNAL

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Editorial Board

Language Experience Forum Journal is a refereed journal of the Language Experience Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association. The journal is aimed at teachers of literacy at all levels. It provides a forum for discussion of new ideas and issues related to the teaching of literacy to all groups of students.

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Message from the Editor

Recently two articles crossed my desk that addressed the question I posed to LESIG members in the last issue of our journal: How will students fare under the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS)? Timothy Shanahan (2011) wrote in the August/September issue of *Reading Today* about the new standards' requirement that students read more difficult materials. This notion goes against years of practice in which teachers have been advised to match students' reading levels with reading materials. Teachers believed that this practice lowered frustration and resulted in some degree of success, eventually leading to increases in fluency. While Shanahan says that there had been little research to support this idea, he is worried about what might happen if rigorous materials are required of beginning readers. He wonders if "Harder beginning reading books may stop many young readers in their tracks" (p. 21).

His second concern is that teachers may not know how to teach students how to tackle more difficult reading materials. He wonders if teachers are ready to provide the scaffolding to support the rigors of more difficult materials.

Lorna Collier (2011) writing for the National Council of Teachers of English sounds a similar refrain, insisting that teachers must keep students at the "center of instruction." She says, "…closer examination of the Common Core State Standards shows plenty of room for teachers to customize their teaching for their students' specific needs" (p. 7). Features of the standards, such as the recurrence of standards over time, the flexibility to determine the complexity of text, and the use of relevant informational text can all be customized to meet students' interests and needs. So Collier sounds an optimistic note about how the standards can work. The standards in the end do not tell teachers how to teach; they show teachers what should be taught. As always it is the challenge to teachers to develop and use strategies based on students' interests and needs.

The articles in this issue of *Language Experience Forum Journal* remind teachers how using text based on students' experiences creates both skills and motivation for language growth. Third space theory and the language experience approach have the potential to build students' confidence and success as they draw on their "funds of knowledge." LEA can be the prime means of creating the text to teach second language learners. And in our increasingly digital age, the definition of LEA can be expanded to include not only text but the ways in which texts are created.

I hope you enjoy reading these essays written by your colleagues and that you will send comments to the journal. The deadline for the spring 2012 issue is March 12, 2012. Please spread the word about this forum dedicated to the discussion of literacy, teaching, and research. Manuscripts should be sent to Jeanne McGlinn at jmcglinn@unca.edu.

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Language Experience, Poetry and English Language Learners: A Powerful Mix

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When English speaking teachers came together with Spanish speaking students in El Salvador, they were able to move beyond cultural and language differences and learn a great deal about each others' lives through the discussion and writing that emerged, in part, as a result of engaging in the language experience approach (Stauffer, 1980; Padak & Rasinski, 1999). Landis, Umolu and Mancha (2010) have described how developing suitable text through transcription of student story in northern Nigeria not only provided materials for instruction where there were few but also how the language experience approach "can create opportunities for learning that bridge different languages, cultural expectations, and values about diverse events and life experiences"(p. 580). Similarly, this was the case presented here about teaching and learning in the small mountain village of Agua Caliente, El Salvador, where there was limited relevant text around which to develop lessons to learn English. Powerful teaching and learning emerged through the use of poetry and the language experience approach as text was collaboratively developed by students who talked, wrote and illustrated about what was relevant and important in their lives and experiences.

Much has been written about bilingual and second language learning and teaching in classrooms in the United States (Freeman & Freeman, 1998; Gibbons, 2002; Samway, 2006) but less has been written about ways to develop second language instruction in countries with limited resources and access to education in general. Programs that have taken place out of the United States are often trainer-of-trainer models like the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking project (Klooster, Steele & Bloem, 2001), where strategies, including the language experience approach, are taught to administrators and teacher leaders who then work with teachers, who in turn will develop these with their students in their first language.

Among the issues raised in the position paper on *Second Language Literacy Instruction* by International Reading Association (2001) are suggestions "to facilitate learning through joint productive activity among teachers and students" (p. 3) and to "contextualize teaching and curriculum in the experiences and skills of home and community"(p. 3). This is consistent with what Crawford (2003) emphasizes in using communicative approaches with second-language acquisition that converge with a constructivist paradigm, where learning is embedded in meaningful context. A collaborative language experience approach that builds on oral language, where text is constructed, recorded, read, reread and extended based on personal experience and using personal language can facilitate understanding and remembering of the second language (Cramer, N.D.). Integrating the language experience approach (LEA) for second language learners became a purposeful part of the curriculum for the "English Scholars" program.

Agua Caliente, El Salvador

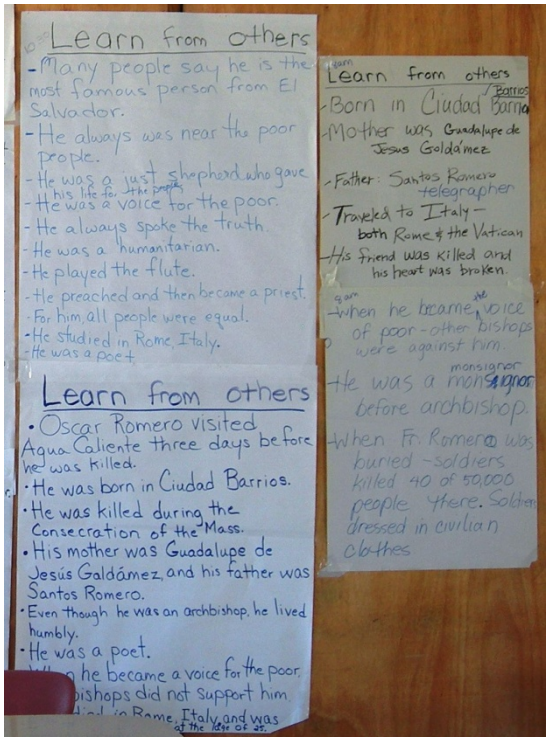
El Salvador is a country in transition still recovering from a twelve year war (1980-1992) and control by military regime that left families with much loss and in poverty with few resources. Often members of the family leave the country for work elsewhere to earn money to send home to support the extended family. This leaves families split not by war as in previous decades but by economics. Learning English is a piece of the puzzle of hope for the children's future, for work in the larger world community and for the future of this small Central American nation. There is a renewed commitment to education by the administration of the recently democratically elected President Mauricio Funes. His campaign platform included a promise to provide shoes and uniforms for all children who wanted to go to school. Students are increasingly showing up in overcrowded classrooms often taught with traditional skills approaches through the use of workbooks and outdated textbooks.

We were fortunate to be invited to teach English in the small mountain town, Agua Caliente in Chalatanango province, one of the regions hardest hit by the twelve year war. We traveled during our winter break which was the interim break between school years in El Salvador. We worked with 60-75 middle and secondary students who walked, rode busses and bikes to come to class daily to learn English. We had only the materials and ideas we carried with us. The students in our English Scholars program came to us with traditional experiences in education, which required us to create many scaffolds into student centered learning and, ultimately, the language experience approach we report here as we developed and implemented our curriculum. We engaged in reading, often using an adapted Fluency Development Lesson (FDL) approach (Rasinski, Padak, Linek & Sturtevant, 1994), word activities like Making Words (Cunningham, 2009), word searches, crossword puzzles and keeping personal dictionaries, and soon found that one of the most powerful approaches we could use was the LEA. We moved from oral language in both Spanish and English to written language in both Spanish and English and developed culturally relevant and personal poems.

Poetry and Language Experience

Included in the content of our planned curriculum was a study of Oscar Romero, an El Salvadorian bishop who stood and spoke for the people during the war and ultimately lost his life. As a Catholic priest he traveled to all parts of El Salvador, was well known and loved by the people. We developed a K-W-L (Ogle, 1986) about Bishop Romero, his life and work. While discussing the text about Romero we realized the students had personal stories to share. We adapted the strategy, invited students to go home and learn what they could from family and community members and return to class. Using the LEA we recorded findings and stories shared in an added column of the KWL, the fourth becoming "LO- Learn from others" (Figure 1). One of the first stories a student told was learned from her mother who was confirmed by Bishop Romero when he visited Agua Caliente, just three days before he was killed. This expansion of the KWL was a beginning scaffold into language experience, supported by discussion and recorded by teachers.

Figure 1: Adding an "LO" to the KWL chart

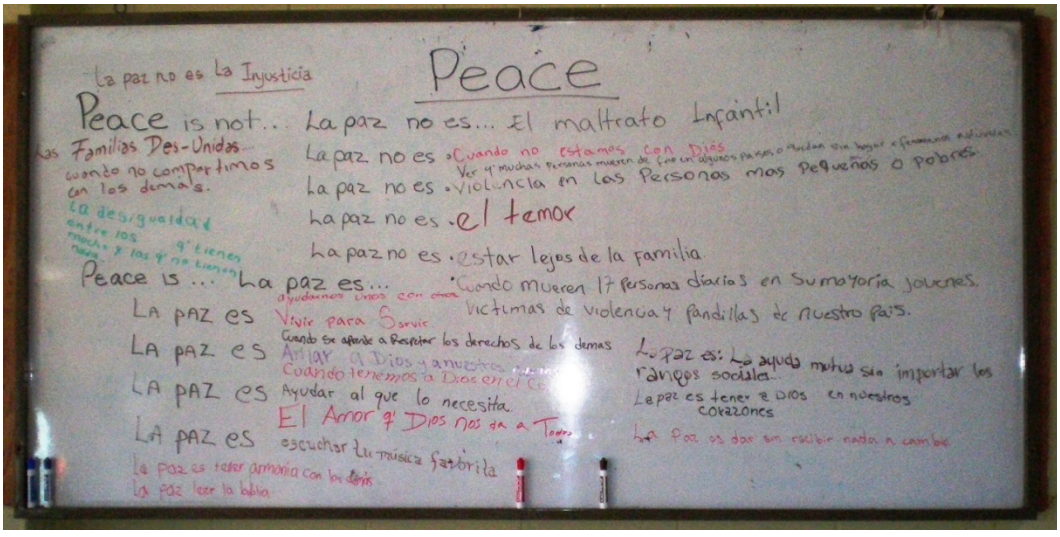


Bishop Romero (1988) was a prolific writer and since his death much had been published about him, including his essays and poetry. Considering the experiences of the students and their telling about families separated during the war, we chose to read his "Peace Poem" written, January 8, 1978.

> Peace is not the product of terror or fear.
> Peace is not the silence of cemeteries.
> Peace is not the silent result of violent repression.
> Peace is the generous,
> tranquil contribution of all
> to the good of all.
> Peace is dynamism.
> Peace is generosity.
> It is right and it is duty. (p. 27)

We discussed both the content and structure of the poem and then invited students to think about what peace is and peace is not for them. They wrote these individually and then as we shared them as a group and started to take dictation on their ideas, they wanted to write it themselves on the white board in the classroom. They filled the board with their own LEA developed peace poems (Figure 2) that reflected their lives and perspectives. Peace was not living in fear or in the midst of violence or being separated from family; peace was living to serve, helping those in need and listening to your favorite music. We had decided to have students write about their experience in their first language to encourage their ease and flow of ideas. This became the text of our lesson as we read and reread it.

Figure 2: LEA Peace Poem



The patterns, rhythms and descriptions of poetry seemed to be effective in supporting acquisition of second language. We continued our work with poetry using Alma Flor Ada's (1997) *Gathering the Sun: An Alphabet in Spanish and English*. This collection of poems takes the reader into the fields, orchards and lives of workers on fruit and vegetable farms. We read through the poems using the FDL (teacher models reading, students echo reading, then choral reading) then individual and small groups of students volunteered, initially reluctantly, to read and perform the poems. We decided to make our own collection of poems and structured the process based on the LEA, concluding we would create an alphabet book for the younger children in the community.

A whole group brainstorming of possible topics to write about for each letter of the alphabet started the process and topics related to life in El Salvador, in Agua Caliente and in their homes. We talked about the structures of the poems and developed a few as a class to model the process. With the help of our translator we moved back and forth from English to Spanish as we composed from their discussion of experiences. We were able to talk about how language worked and what ideas we really wanted to convey. As we read and reread the student-generated text, we listened for structure in English and Spanish and for the intended meaning. For the letter "A" we wrote about "arroz," rice, the staple in students' diet. What came through was the value of family as they described that Mom cooked the rice and they did too, and cultural foods like tortillas with which it was often eaten. We wrote of their "beloved" El Salvador "in our hearts" for the letter "E" with pride in the land and its people. All ideas came from the students, including revisions as they worked to express what was relevant to them and their community (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Whole group LEA Poems

We had created an opportunity for students to talk about their own experiences and what was relevant and of interest to them. What emerged reflected their lives and interests, with elements that distinguished their experiences from ours. After developing poems with the whole class, small groups of students worked to create poetry for the remainder of the alphabet (Figure 4). The cultural spirit of collectivism came through with "J" juguetes, toys, as students emphasized the joy of having these to share with their friends. After struggling with a relevant "V" idea, rejecting "vowels" the small group decided on "vacation." However, this was out of their personal experience, so they framed the idea as something the school children "dreamed of" wanting to do. There are very few words beginning with "W" in the Spanish language and so the students working on this cleverly asked "What is W?" and went on to describe its position in the alphabet but again brought in the value of collectivism by referring to friends whose names began with "W."

Figure 4: Small group LEA poems

Extending the text developed from LEA continued the process of personal expression, language and literacy learning. The students purposefully designed the pages of their alphabet poetry to illustrate the messages they conveyed, attending to detail in layout, selection of images and position of text. They used the magazines we had brought but excitedly went home between classes to collect drawings and images to add to their work. In their small groups they continued the discussion of the content and language, words and images in English and Spanish, as they created their pages. They presented these to the class, as their LEA text became the focus of instruction. The ownership of content and form was evident in their enthusiastic, often dramatic readings. The pride in their work was shared by peers as they applauded the presentations of their poetry.

Conclusions

Implementing the language experience approach with second language learners provided highly engaging opportunities for students to work with meaning, structure and usage of language. The forms of poetry uniquely functioned to access language and ideas in challenging, succinct but purposeful ways. The LEA strategy functioned to scaffold second language learning of English by the students and Spanish by the teachers as we moved between languages to tell and clarify personal stories and relevant ideas. This process allowed for rehearsal of language as we talked, listened, read, wrote and created visuals. And bridges were built that linked cultures and language, insight into both emerging as the LEA text was discussed and constructed. The use of LEA with poetry proved to be a powerful blend with second language learning.

Importantly, the level of engagement in language learning increased, evident in both process and product emerging with LEA. Students came to see themselves as authors and poets. A final performance of their own poetry was an exciting event filled with pride in their work and commitment to share it. They rehearsed before giving dramatic and expressive readings of their poetry to the class. Some were read chorally or taking turns by lines and language or with one reader while others acted out the ideas. But almost all, at all levels of second language ability, chose to read their work in English.

We took the scanned pages of the created text back to the United States, reproduced it and sent copies of the whole book back to the school. Delightfully, we have learned that students have borrowed *Alfabeto de Agua Caliente* to take home and share with families. Teachers of the younger students are reading the book in their classrooms. The text that emerged from the language experience approach not only became powerful teaching and learning material for use in our English Scholars program but continues to bring together community through shared experience and language.

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Widening Classroom Practices for English Language Learners through Third Space

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The Academic Under-Achievement of Immigrant and English Language Learners

Since the 1970s the United States has experienced a rapid change in its student population due to the immigration and transmigration of peoples across national and state borders. In 2009, 17 million school-aged children reported speaking a language other than English at home, and one out of five, or 11 million, children were considered children of immigrants (Rong & Preissle, 2009). These students bring a diversity of experiences; background knowledge; and cultural, religious, and linguistic practices that often times clash with the "monocultural and monolinguistic" (Rong & Preissle, 2009, p. 57) orientation of American schools and teachers. In addition these students face pressure to adapt rapidly to American culture, to learn English, and to continue to learn course content when they enroll in school. Rong and Preissle (2009) reviewed the current state of schooling for immigrant children and concluded "the current 'sink or swim' philosophy and practice are devastating for many immigrants" (p. ix.). The 9.9% dropout rate of immigrant children from high school, which is almost double the 5.6% dropout rate of all children, supports this conclusion (Rong & Preissle, 2009).

The underachievement of ELLs begins early in elementary school where 30-40% of ELLs fail to meet reading goals (Grant & Wong, 2003). The lack of reading fluency and comprehension escalates and eventually contributes to the high ELL dropout rate from high school. In 2000 the dropout rate for Hispanic males was 10.6% for all generations of immigrants and 18.1% of all Hispanic males who were first generation immigrants (Rong & Preissle, 2009). This was higher than all other groups' dropout rates including Black males (7.9%) and Asian males (3.1%). Stein (1986) added that immigrant students often drop out emotionally from school years prior to their official dropout date. This can occur as early as elementary school as students withdraw mentally from being engaged at school. He described the sequence in which "first the child's enthusiasm wanes, and he mentally and spiritually removes himself from the lesson plan. He then finds himself being held back a grade, and finally, several years later, he is apt to withdraw physically" (Stein, 1986, pp. 107-108).

Instructional Revisions: Drawing on Third Space

Current statistics about the dropout and failure rate of immigrant children in school indicate that more work to accommodate instruction to meet the needs of these students is imperative. One strategy that researchers have identified as effective for reengaging ELLs in school and moving them towards academic success is to identify and incorporate students' home-based and culturally relevant knowledge, called *funds of knowledge*, during classroom instruction (Grant & Wong, 2003; Gutiérrez, 2008;

Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo, & Collazo, 2004; Moll & Gonzales, 2004; Rong & Preissle, 2009). Four different sources of funds of knowledge were identified in the research including: family, community, peer, and popular culture (Moje et al., 2004).

Bhabha's (1994) theory on third spaces has been added to this discussion to name the collective social space which is created in the classroom when drawing on students' funds of knowledge (Benson, 2004; Moje et al., 2004). Third space theory originated from Bhabha's (1994) *The Location of Culture* in which he explained that third spaces are "in-between" spaces created within the official space. The goal of third spaces is to move past the status quo so that students will "…reconceive who they are and what they might be able to accomplish academically and beyond" (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 148). This is particularly relevant to instruction of ELLs who can, if given the opportunity, contribute substantially to the classroom discourse because they bring unique life experiences and perspectives (Rong & Preissle, 2009). Third spaces also open new possibilities for students to redefine their image of their future selves creating alternative identities and carving out space to honor both old and new parts of their evolving identity. Therefore, the opening of third spaces should be the goal of all classrooms to "enhanc[e] the education of youth whose experiences have not traditionally been valued at schools" (Moje et al., 2004, p. 48).

While teachers often fail to plan for third spaces in their classroom (Moje et al., 2004), students do initiate their creation through counterscripts, or ways of resisting or talking back to school assignments and the dominant discourse. A student counterscript could be a public question of the teacher's declarations, refusal to complete an assignment as intended, or side conversations that push back against the classroom discourse (Benson, 2010; Gutiérrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995; Moje, 2000). For example, Gutiérrez et al. (1995) documented student-initiated attempts to create third spaces in a high school social studies classroom. The researchers used discourse analysis of the teacher script and the student counterscripts that centered on a weekly current events activity to examine the attempts and failures of third space creation. While the student counterscript was put forth as an attempt to build a third space and the opportunity for authentic learning in which both teacher and students would work to create new knowledge about their world, the teacher/ school script dominated and silenced any talk that pushed against it.

Implications of Opening a Third Space: Achievement, Revision of Self, Re-engagement with School and Learning

To create a "third space" in the classroom, the teacher must relinquish some control in exchange for greater student engagement and authentic learning. The teacher must encourage and capitalize on times when student counterscripts emerge and allow questions about the validity and truth of texts and conversations presented in the curriculum (Moje et al., 2004).

The classroom is redefined from one that is teacher-centered to one in which the teacher and student are co-creators of knowledge. This has been shown to validate students' knowledge and unique contributions and creates a place from which to build new knowledge and literacies (Gutiérrez, 2008). It has also been hypothesized as a way to reduce student resistance and encourage re-engagement in learning and school (Benson, 2010). Benson (2010) and Gutiérrez (2008) have shown

that multimodal and autobiographical projects are more likely to tap into student expertise. Benson (2010) provided an example of a student completing the few research assignments that had a multimodal component. In those assignments the student was able to incorporate his knowledge of the band Guns N' Roses and movie watching.

Third Space and Language Experience

Third space theory advocates creating a place of collective knowledge building and sharing for marginalized students which has parallels to the Language Experience approach. Using Language Experience students draw on their experiences to create text which becomes the object of study. Many language experience projects ask students to create autobiographical accounts. For example, students can trace their family tree, interview a family member and present his or her life, or create a photo document or autobiographical video of their family's life history. Each of these activities is geared towards learning more about the students' background and family and also allows the student to reconsider their family's contributions. Rather than approaching the students through a deficit perspective looking at what they are missing, teachers carefully design class activities to highlight the knowledge that immigrant families bring with them. Students are given more control over their work when they are required to do all parts of the project even if it requires extra time. For example, when creating an autobiographical video with text, students should scan and import the pictures. In order to be authentic, the students should create their own narratives rather than following a designated list of prompts. The narration must originate with the students, communicating their ideas and experiences. Likewise, the students should be graded on their content and messages relayed instead of grammatical accuracy. When language is used to meet communicative goals, students are motivated to take risks and to communicate ideas that are authentic for them. A wider audience than the ESL class should be considered for the class project. Inviting family members or other students and adults from the school to view the projects would be helpful in making this an authentic and worthwhile experience for the students. Finally, teachers should enter into this project as learners as well. They should present similar projects about their own families or life experiences so that students could also learn more about them. The teacher and students would, therefore, have the potential of moving into third spaces in which their home and academic environments meet.

While third space theory and language experience will not solve all the serious issues and barriers encountered by ELLs in the schools, these strategies provide a lens for imagining how classroom activities could be better designed with the goal of co-creation of knowledge between the teacher and students. Especially within an ESL classroom that is designed to provide some relief and a safe refuge for the ELLs during the school day, creating authentic third spaces must be the goal. Teachers have the ability to open these spaces in order to help students become re-engaged with their learning and to reconsider the great possibilities that they have for the future.

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Using Students' Experience with Technology to Promote Writing

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The new wave of students entering middle and high school have not grown up on the cutting edge of internet and social media development—they have never lived in a world where it didn't exist. They are digital natives. On the other hand, teachers are often digital immigrants. Many teachers in the current workforce recall a time when typewriters were the norm, phones were attached to cords, and a text was synonymous with a book.

This disconnect between the two worlds of students and teachers often results in two unfortunate realities: academic writing becomes tedious and draining for the average student, and the intricacies of digital native language are dismissed as lazy and irrelevant by the average teacher. If teachers expect students to move out of their comfort zones in writing and reading, then it is only fair that teachers too move toward integrating technology into their writing curriculum. And there is no time like the present when the Common Core, the new curriculum standards, demands that students use technology "to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically." Technology is moving forward quickly, irrevocably impacting the way students think about composition. Savvy teachers can use students' natural interest in digital formats of writing to improve their writing across all modes, both the formal and informal. Using the Language Experience Approach in this digital age now suggests that teachers not only ask students to write from their experiences but that teachers also use the tools with which students are familiar. With this in mind, several teacher researchers have described ways in which they have met the challenge of utilizing students' interests and technological skills to develop their writing skills.

Tracy Tarasiuk (2010) in "Combining Traditional and Contemporary Texts: Moving My English Class to the Computer Lab" explains her process of moving her class into the computer lab for a project in which the students created wikis – "webpages where collaborators contribute and modify information about specific subjects" (p. 547) – for the books they read in small groups.

Once in the computer lab, Tarasiuk admits to feeling insecure about releasing her unquestioned authority, explaining, "As a traditional teacher, instilled with the mantra 'stay on task,' it took much effort for me to interfere as little as possible. This was a struggle, until I observed that the work the students completed seemed unaffected by their multitasking" (p. 545). Completing their wikis quickly, easily, and with far more effort than they put into worksheets, the students enjoyed integrating the technology with their work. Constructing their pages, they worked together to use sources effectively. They also were much more "deliberate and thoughtful" as they added to and edited each other's work (p. 548). The

author attributes this to the public nature of a wiki. Knowing their information could and would be viewed by anyone on the Internet made the students sit up and take pride in their work.

Kristin Hawley Turner (2010) discusses the idea of code switching in "Digitalk: A New Literacy for a Digital Generation." She introduces the idea of digitalk, defining it as, "a complex and fascinating combination of written and conversational languages in a digital setting" (p. 42). Digitalk can be seen when students "substitute '2' for 'too' or 'u' for 'you' in their school writing" (p. 42). Turner claims that students, being naturally proficient at digitalk, need to be taught the art of code switching before they can be expected to generate traditionally acceptable grammar in academic assignments. Her research involved teaching the conventions of digitalk and Standard English and then integrating both into the curriculum.

Giving the concept of digitalk a name and referring to it in the linguistic terminology of a code gives it a weight that it generally lacks otherwise. Turner argues that students are aware of the unwritten rules, but that they, "merge multiple language systems, break rules systematically, create and manipulate language and usage, and effectively communicate ideas with an intended audience" (p. 44). This shows an advanced innate understanding of the rules of grammar and language composition. By teaching students to identify these patterns, students can make conscious choices about when to use which dialect and why.

She goes on to state that, "permitting students to take notes, write drafts, or complete other low-stakes writing assignments in whatever form of language is most comfortable places the emphasis on the content of the writing rather than the mechanics" (p. 46). This gives the digital form of writing a place in the classroom, bridging the gap between in and out of school writing. In her experience, she states that students produced "a rich blend of the two discourses" (p. 43).

Tina Bacci (2008) in "Invention and Drafting in the Digital Age: New Approaches to Thinking About Writing" discusses how utilizing the various programs available in basic Microsoft Office software can ease the composition process for students. She suggests that Microsoft Publisher, Microsoft Powerpoint, and Microsoft Excel can be utilized for everything from outlining to visualizing development to organization.

When using Microsoft Publisher, Bacci asks students to create a web page for their research that creates the pages About Us or Home, Current Situation, Process, and Additional Resources and Contact Information, thus forcing them to address whom they represent, the position they are taking, the step-by-step development of their argument, and the network for their topic. It also has students consider "tone and audience when they choose their background style; font … and images that will be incorporated" (p. 77). Creating a PowerPoint of five slides forces students to brainstorm their five main points, consider the integration of media and how that alters perspective, and present the draft to their peers through oral communication. Students create a visual of their desired outcome, realizing the end goals of the research paper. Microsoft Excel can be used to create an outline by listing the main points in individual cells running down the page. By hyper-linking each cell to an individual word document, students realize that this large task can be broken down into manageable tasks and that it does not have to be written in order.

Shelbie Witte (2007), a middle school teacher and technology liaison for her school, discusses trials and successes with integrating technology in her article, "'That's Online Writing, Not Boring School Writing': Writing with Blogs and the Talkback Project." After hearing that her students, who refused to write in class, were investing hours a night composing creative writing, essays, and poems to post online, she decided to bridge the gap between the academic and blogging worlds. She developed "The Talkback Project," which involved both middle school students and pre-service teachers, under the guise of assigned pseudonyms, posting in private blog space about the novels the middle school class read.

Witte discovered that establishing roles for the various parties involved proved to be the most difficult. The student teachers had a difficult time abandoning their red pens and simply encouraging active communication and thought through writing. However, ultimately, they found the balance, and "worked hard to develop questions that allowed middle school students to make text-to-text, text-to- world, and text-to-self connections" (p. 84). The blog space provided a journalistic environment in which every student's thoughts could be heard and responded to by peers and teachers alike. Witte points out that "the middle school students appreciated the preservice teacher's thoroughness and the time that they were spending to respond to their questions and reflections about the texts" (p. 84). Students had a hard time later in the semester, when they had to go back to a pencil and paper journal, for "as one middle school student so eloquently expressed, 'It's like we've gone back to using leeches instead of nuclear medicine'" (p. 95).

The possibilities for technology integration into the writing process are endless; however, it takes work and a new mindset. Including technology in the curriculum is not as easy as stating, "pull out a piece of paper, students" and expecting results. It involves work – gathering permissions, setting up blog space, teaching students what is and is not appropriate on a computer in class, and ensuring that students are safe at all times are just a few examples of the work that awaits the teacher who integrates technology into the student writing experience. However, what also awaits this teacher is as of yet untapped potential.

Students think of composition differently. According to several of these articles, adolescents are composing more today than they ever have before, but it is in a different format and a different language than the average Language Arts teacher expects. Students are fluent in digitalk and now use it to express themselves in casual ways. This is a link between verbal and written expression that has yet to be fully tapped. Perhaps these students are more prepared than any other generation to articulate their thoughts in composition, but they have separated in school and out of school writing in their minds.

Because such a strong, bold line has been drawn between "appropriate" academic prose and casual composition, students dismiss school writing. If teachers take the time to incorporate and utilize the technology that students are not only familiar with, but will undoubtedly need after graduation, then quite a bit stands to be gained. Students who learn to code switch between dialogues will soon develop an eye and an ear for audience, word choice, phrasing, and structure. Students who are encouraged to work on and with computers will be validated in their strengths and

challenges will be set in an environment in which they feel more at ease. The more confident students feel about their ability to succeed, the more open they will be to honing the "old fashioned" art of composition.

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