Transforming Thoughts into Words:
Using Photography and Dialogue to Help Immigrant Students Write with Voice

By

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Title: Transforming Thoughts into Words: Using Photography and Dialogue to Help Immigrant Students Write with Voice

Research Question

How might a student photography project on home and community, scaffolded with instruction on photo captions, help students develop voice in their writing?

Subquestions

1) How does teaching students to revise help them use revision strategies on their own?

2) To what degree do students engage in a purposeful afterschool photo project designed for an authentic audience?

Research Activities: Context: This study was part of a voluntary afterschool activity for students from Outdoor Education Literacy Program (OELP). Six students in grades 10th through 12th from OELP participated in the inquiry project as well as one other 10th grade student from Judah High School. All students were from immigrant families who spoke Spanish as their first language, but varied in levels of English language development. Three students were designated as ELs, one was R-FEP and two had never been designated as ELs. Methods: The intervention lasted a period of 8 weeks with students meeting afterschool three hours per week. The intervention scaffolded instruction of the writing process through modeling and dialogue of four photo captions. Students identified issues important in their lives, took photographs to represent key themes, and wrote guided free-writes for each photograph. Students changed these to paragraph form and revised through one-on-one teacher instruction and feedback. The comparable text type targeted throughout the development of each caption was personal narrative. Data: Data sets included a baseline and outcome writing sample on personal narrative, in-the-midst writing samples, an attitudinal survey and an observational teacher journal focusing on student engagement. Results: Results showed that a photography-based writing project with teacher feedback increased students’ ability to write with voice. The integration of the writing process, one-on-one teacher
instruction and an art-based project related to the students’ lives increased students’ ability to write more personal text successfully. Scaffolding revision of the captions helped them to use some strategies independently like recognizing redundancy and using accurate and descriptive nouns. The integration of photography and personal narrative served to keep students engaged with attendance rates of about 70%. All students completed their project.

**Grade Level:** Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Grades

**Data Collection Methods:** Writing samples, Attitude surveys, Attendance tallies, Observation-Teacher research journal, Observation-Selective verbatim

**Curriculum Areas:** Writing

**Instructional Approaches:** Art-based project, Writing- personal narratives, Writing-Revision, Writing-Teacher response/feedback
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Introduction: Teaching and Learning Can Be Fun

Morgan, the outreach coordinator for Outdoor Education Literacy Program (OELP), asked the internship students a question, “Why do you choose to be a part of (OELP) internships?” Morgan answered the question first and Tania volunteered to go next, “Because I like to be a part of (OELP). I get to reconnect with people because I don’t really see them at school…” I answered that I loved learning about the students and how to work with students their age. Ricardo answered the question next, “Because it’s fun.” Everybody chuckled. Ricardo turned to me and said, “Didn’t we have fun?!?” I smiled, “Yeah. We had fun.”

Throughout OELP’s fall internship, which was also my intervention, the students enjoyed what they were doing. They communicated their views through writing and worked with adults and peers that challenged and encouraged them. The fall internship was a voluntary afterschool program for immigrant students who had attended OELP. The students wrote photo captions about issues in their lives to be presented at an OELP fundraiser at the end of March. This internship provided an afterschool environment that was safe for immigrant students to share their feelings and thoughts. The students were part Judah-Bailey Unified School District (JBUSD). 27 percent of the students in JBUSD were English Learners (ELs). This was one percent higher than the state of California (Callahan, 2005). At the high school level, 17 percent of students at JBUSD were English ELs. Most of them either emigrated from Mexico, or are first generation Mexican-American immigrants. English learners typically score low on academic achievement tests, although it has been debated whether it is due to language proficiency or academic proficiency (Callahan, 2005). In JBUSD Latinos make up the EL population and only about 60 percent of Latino students passed the CAHSEE the first time, compared to about 98 percent of White students. OELP has been primarily a summer program, but they wanted to extend their

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1 Pseudonyms are used for all persons, places, and programs
support during the school year to keep Latino immigrant students on track. This year they began afterschool internships that encompassed youth development and continued English language support.

Along with limited support for immigrant students, there was only one afterschool facility, in Tanner Beach, for adolescent students to attend. If students did not participate in extracurricular activities provided by the school, then they had nothing to do after school. By offering internships for students to participate in, OELP not only gave the students a place to go and something to do, but they helped students develop leadership in their community, personal responsibility, and academic support.

Morgan and the Director of OELP, Meg, had begun to plan a literacy-based internship for the fall of 2008/2009 to keep students involved with OELP throughout the school year. I had been working with some of these students during the summer and was in the process of planning what I would do for my inquiry project. After meeting with Morgan, we realized that many of our intentions for working with these students were similar. I wanted the students to participate in some sort of service-learning project to make it interesting and enjoyable, and focus my academic instruction on writing. The internship was a digital storytelling project that encompassed academic writing, youth development, and community outreach. We joined forces and together, Morgan, Meg and I developed a project that met all our objectives. The project evolved in many ways as we put the pieces together. In the end, the students each compiled a photo essay of four pictures that explored issues in their lives that affected them or their community. Each student wrote detailed captions for their photographs so people viewing their photo essay could appreciate the pictures through their eyes.
Context: Diversity in Mountain Towns

The Communities

This inquiry project included high school students, grades 10, 11 and 12 from two different schools within Judah-Bailey Unified School District (JBUSD). The school district served three main towns (Judah, Bailey City and Tanner Beach) which were all located in a rural mountain area in California that thrived off seasonal tourism. The students who participated in this inquiry project lived in either Judah or Tanner Beach. Of the 13,864 people in the town of Judah, 12 percent were Latino and 88 percent were White. Tanner Beach had a population of 4,037 people of which 30 percent were Latino and 70 percent were White.

The District

In 2008, 2,764 students in grades K-12 attended JBUSD. There were four elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools. The district’s Academic Performance Index (API) score had consistently risen until 2008 when it declined 3 points dropping to 789. The demographics of JBUSD were 30 percent Latino, 69 percent White and 1 percent other ethnicities. A graph of the demographics for the district can be found in Appendix A. Over the last four years the overall number of students in JBUSD decreased by 425 students. However, the Latino student population has increased while the White student population has decreased. The district’s California English Language Development Test CELDT scores for students in grades 9 through 12 showed that there was a consistent number of beginner level ELs (approximately 8) in the district every year. The total number of ELs at the high school level in JBUSD increased by 52 students in 2008.
Two Similar Schools

South Bailey High School

There were 261 students enrolled in grades 9 through 12 at South Bailey High. The students from Tanner Beach were bused to Bailey City. South Bailey had attained their Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) for the last three years and their API had significantly risen every year, jumping 39 points in 2008 to 765 points. The Latino/Hispanic subgroup increased by 52 points and the White subgroup increased by 21 points. While there was not much diversity at South Bailey High, 32 percent of the students were Latino, the majority living in Tanner Beach. See Appendix A for a graph of the schools’ demographics. In 2008, 59 percent of Latino 10th grade students passed the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) and 94 percent of White 10th grade students passed.

Judah High School

There were 530 students in grades 9 through 12 enrolled at Judah High. Students who lived in Judah attended Judah High. They had attained their AYP for the last four years, but their API scores had fluctuated throughout the years in all subgroups. In 2008 Judah High’s API dropped by 8 points to 778. Latino students made up 22 percent of the population at Judah High. See Appendix A for a graph of the schools’ demographics. In 2008, 66 percent of Latino 10th grade students passed the CAHSEE and 98 percent of White 10th grade students passed.

Academic Environment of OELP

This study was performed as part of an internship for the Outdoor Education Literacy Program (OELP), a summer program designed for 9th and 10th grade English as second language students. OELP combined outdoor education youth development with English academics in a program that lasted 40 days from late June to early August. The students spent approximately 20 days backpacking in the wilderness learning group leadership skills, environmental science and
first aid. During these expeditions the students responded to structured journal prompts related to their experiences and began writing a metaphorical poem. The rest of the days were spent at base camp completing specific English grammar and CAHSEE lessons, reading novels, and working on science and writing projects. The students produced three writing pieces during OELP including a metaphorical poem, a biographical essay about a community member that each student interviewed and a narrative of how they changed over the summer. For science, the students wrote interpretive signs about native animals and taught a lesson to students from the Boys and Girls Club of Tanner Beach.

Although OELP was a summer program, the director and coordinator facilitated community service activities and internships for students throughout the school year. The students received a $150 stipend for finishing the summer program and another $150 after finishing 60 hours of community service or internship work during the following school year.
Instructional Culture: A Place Where Everyone Contributes to Learning

OELP’s summer program built an instructional culture based on many different types of educational philosophies. However, student-centered learning and experiential education combined with specific instructional strategies for ELs was at the heart of all their teaching. OELP followed Shihmei Shu Barger’s (2005) Student-Centered Model of Inclusive Teaching and Learning. In this model the students are at the center of the learning process and the instructor is a facilitator for the students to acquire knowledge. This is similar to Pauline Gibbons (2002) idea of collaborative learning that builds on the work of Lev Vygotsky.

In addition, OELP afforded experiences for students to learn from and direct instruction towards English language development. By integrating different types of EL instruction, OELP successfully paralleled Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) methods which have been proven effective for second language learners. According to Lynn T. Diaz-Rico (2006) there are four major parts to the guiding framework of SDAIE teaching methods: 1) the content must be “selected, adapted, and organized with language learners in mind,” 2) the instruction must use explicit strategies to aid comprehension by modeling, contextualizing, and frequently checking for comprehension, 3) the curriculum must be based on students’ experiences, and 4) students must have frequent opportunities to talk about the lesson and “re-represent learning through a variety of ways” (p. 105). English language instruction, combined with lessons in community building and youth development taught in a wilderness setting created a positive and safe learning environment for these immigrant students. OELP provided adult role models who helped students create a future consistent with their goals and dreams and encouraged students to use their voice to make change in their communities.

For the literacy based internship, OELP sought to construct this same type of instructional culture. The students were in a much different environment than they were during the summer program with conflicting influences from families and peers. This forced the
instructors to be more flexible with meeting times and places. I had to change my instruction from group work to individual and pair work because of students’ obligations. Even with outside factors, we were successful in creating a positive and safe learning environment for every student exemplified by personal anecdotes students shared with me.

The Teacher

I worked with various students from OELP afterschool over the last six months. I was drawn to work with OELP because I shared many of the same teaching philosophies that were a key component of their curriculum. During the summer I spent 20 days at OELP’s base camp observing the teachers’ instructional strategies and helping students with their writing projects. This was the first time that I had worked with high school students or ELs. I knew from the beginning that if I was going to be able to use the students from the OELP program for this inquiry project I needed to build up a trusting relationship with the students. Throughout the summer I spent time learning students’ academic and personal needs.

The Students

All students who took part in this inquiry project were Latino immigrants either from Mexico or first generation Mexican-American. Although some students were not designated as ELs all students spoke Spanish as their first language. There were five students who went to OELP during three different summers. Eduardo participated in OELP during the summer of 2006, Adriana participated in 2007 and Tania, Mariela and Ricardo participated in 2008. One student who had not participated in OELP, Jose, was a friend of a 2008 graduate. Jose plans to attend the program in the summer of 2009.

Four of the students attended South Bailey High and the other two attended Judah High. Three students were in 10th grade, one student was in 11th, and two students were in 12th grade. Not only were the students in different grade levels, they varied significantly in levels of English
language development. Although all of the students spoke Spanish as their first language, three students were designated as ELs, one student was Redesignated Fluent English Proficient (R-FEP), and two had never been designated as ELs. Table 1 shows all six participants’ school, grade level, English language development (ELD) level, and when they came to the United States. Because of the differences in grade levels and ELD levels, I had the challenging task of accommodating for low as well as high academic performance throughout the inquiry project.

**Table 1: Student Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Year at OELP</th>
<th>ELD Level</th>
<th>When student came to US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Tania</em></td>
<td>South Bailey</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Never designated as EL</td>
<td>3 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mariela</em></td>
<td>South Bailey</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>R-FEP designated EL 2003 to 2006</td>
<td>Born in US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ricardo</em></td>
<td>Judah</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>EL Level 2</td>
<td>11 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jose</td>
<td>Judah</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>Never attended</td>
<td>EL Level 2</td>
<td>13 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriana</td>
<td>South Bailey</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Never designated as EL</td>
<td>Born in US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eduardo</td>
<td>South Bailey</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>EL with learning disability (unknown LD)</td>
<td>Born in US</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Focus students*

**Focus Students**

I chose to focus this study on the three students who most recently graduated from OELP in the summer of 2008 for three different reasons. Foremost, these students all went through the exact same summer program that I observed with identical teachers. Secondly, since I volunteered with OELP for 20 days throughout the summer I developed a stronger rapport with these three students. In addition, these students represented a range of academic levels.

**Tania**

Tania was an 11th grade female from South Bailey High who was a very social and active person, participating in JV volleyball, Varsity basketball, and volunteering at Planned Parenthood. Spanish was the primary language spoken in Tania’s home since she came to the
United States from Mexico when she was three. However, Tania was never designated as an EL throughout her schooling. Tania had a GPA of 2.69 and was a strong English student, but struggled in History and Science. In writing samples, Tania had a clear understanding of English grammar rules and organization in her essays, but she did not add much description or personalize her writing through commentary. From my observation, Tania completed assignments with minimal effort, doing only what was required of her and not using assignments as a means for personal growth. For example, during OELP’s summer program she did not follow much of the English teacher’s instructions for scaffolded essay writing, but just began writing.

Mariela

Mariela was a very motivated 10th grade female from South Bailey High who participated in JV soccer and basketball. She started a club at her high school, *Las Mariposas*, which was a group of female students who met once a week to talk about their goals, dreams and steps they needed to take to achieve them. Mariela was born in Tanner Beach, CA, but Spanish was the primary language spoken in her home. Although she had been enrolled in JBUSD her entire life, she was not designated as an EL until 2003. In 2006 she was designated as R-FEP. Mariela had a GPA of 3.14 and her strongest subject was mathematics and she was a year ahead of her class. Her two weaker subjects were Science and English. Mariela could write her thoughts very well, but it was more in a stream of consciousness than writing with an organized structure. She struggled in many different aspects of her writing including organization of her essays, adding concrete details, confusion of tenses, and spelling.

Ricardo

Ricardo was a 10th grade male from Judah High who did not participate in any afterschool activities until he began the OELP program. This year he participated in the fall internship, tutoring and community service. Sometimes he missed events because of family obligations. Ricardo came from Mexico to the United States four years ago and was still
designated as Level 2 ELD this school year. He was below average with a GPA of 1.8. He struggled in most academic subjects, retaking Pre-Algebra for the third time and Biology for the second time. The only English class that Ricardo had been enrolled in the last two years was ELD and he did very little reading and writing in these classes. Post-tests from the OELP summer course showed few improvements in reading comprehension and writing, however his reading fluency and speaking skills improved tremendously over the summer course. In his writing he struggled with organization and general grammar rules for English, and became very discouraged when asked to write a paragraph.
Preliminary Data for Focus Students

During tutoring sessions I helped the students with many English writing assignments on different topics assigned by various teachers. For a comparable writing sample for this inquiry project and to assist the students in brainstorming issues to use for their photo essay, the students were given three writing prompts with guided questions about their home, community, and school. An example is shown below in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Example of Preliminary Data Writing Prompt

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Describe your home:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Who do you live with?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What kind of space do you live in? Where is your home located?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What does it feel like to come home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is your home a part of your identity? Does it define who you are?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If you had it your way, would you change anything about your home?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tania was focused and to the point in her responses, as shown in Figure 2. She did not disclose much information about herself or the person behind the writing. There was no mention of how she felt about her home, but only gave facts. Tania wrote about her neighbors, rather than her own home illustrating her pattern of elusiveness throughout her writing. Tania’s writing was free of most grammatical and spelling errors. I learned from this sample, English papers, and OELP’s summer post-test that Tania did not need much instruction in the rules of writing, but needed more guidance in expressing her ideas from her point of view.

Figure 2: Tania’s Preliminary Data

In my house I live with both my parents and little sister, we also have a little cousin that we have taken to be part of our family. I live in a town with many ethnicity races that mainly is Hispanic. I live in a house with no* many people around because they are vacation people. The closest neighbors are also hispanic*. They are really nice people, but they are living in a big pack of men in one house. They treat each other well, and are friends with my dad. My house is kind of my indentity* in some ways, such as when walking in it has a sweet aroma that would describe my family as cheerful.

*Grammatical/spelling errors in student’s written work.
Mariela answered in bullet points for each prompt, as shown in Figure 3. She easily disclosed information about herself and wrote everything that came into her mind. Mariela willing self-disclosed in many discussions as well, while other students did not. I do not know why some students were more willing to reveal information than others, but found it to be an individual difference in the students that I worked with. Through this writing sample and others from school and OELP, I realized that it was easy for Mariela to include personal details in her writing, but she had to improve on communicating her ideas in a paragraph and essay format. Mariela’s English vocabulary was also limited which I felt was a hindrance in her writing as a way of communicating.

Figure 3: Mariela’s Preliminary Data

- I live with my Mom, Dad, Sister, and brother and Dog.
- I live in an apartment with 2 rooms that are not that big. I share my room with my sister & its* not that big its* really small.
- I love coming* home because I see my family & that’s where I live but sometime I just wish I had my own room or more space & frustrating because my dad is always drunk not drunk drunk but drunk.
- Well it dose* because we are not rich and that what we can afford.
- Yes. I would like to have more space and my own room like spaced out.

*Grammatical/spelling errors in student’s written work.

Ricardo approached the task with one brief sentence for each prompt as shown in Figure 4. Each responded to the essence of the question and all responses were appropriate and comprehensible, though not always grammatically correct. The most challenging prompt targeted the issue of home as part of identity. This prompt was probably challenging both linguistically and culturally and Ricardo’s response illustrated this in powerful ways. Ricardo was able to disclose that he “loves to come home” as shown in Figure 4. In the prompt: Is your home a part of your identity, Ricardo processed what the term meant in a very personal and powerful way. “My home is my identity cuz* I can talk to everyone there.” It was both an affirming message of how safe he seemed to feel at home but at the same time he conveyed the alienation that he felt in other critical settings of his life. His response was that of an EL but he did much with the
language he had. Ricardo wrote the poem and essays during OELP, but he had not written an essay prior to or after the program as he was not part of a regular English class at Judah High.

**Figure 4: Ricardo’s Preliminary Data**

- I live with my parent* and brother and sisters
- I live in a* apartment in Truckee
- I love to come home.
- Yes my home identity* myself cuz* I can talk to everyone there
- No I am good

*Grammatical/spelling errors in student’s written work.
Research Question: Giving Students a Voice

During the OELP summer program the students expressed themselves through a metaphorical poem about their life and performed a public reading to an audience of strangers at the end of the summer. This was the most difficult task for many of these students during OELP, even though they performed much more physically and psychologically challenging tasks like camping in the wilderness solo for 24 hours and coordinating a student lead backpacking trip. Much of the audience, including me, was moved to tears hearing these students read their poems with strength and confidence. After the students read their poems they were given the opportunity to read a portion of their transformational essay if they desired. The students felt such power from voicing their poem that every single student chose to take this opportunity.

This inquiry project built off of the students’ experience of voicing their feelings and thoughts through writing. With the students back at home and in their communities, OELP wanted to encourage the students to use the leadership skills they developed over the summer to improve their lives in Tanner Beach and Judah. Morgan, Meg and I developed a project that encompassed academic writing and community outreach with the objective being for students to build self empowerment through telling their story. After constructing the idea of a photography and writing project about an issue important to the students, I established the writing needs of the students based on writing samples and areas of OELP’s writing curriculum that were not present in their summer program because of time constraints.

Putting the elements of the project together I formed one main research question and two subquestions:

Research Question

How might a student photography project on home and community, scaffolded with instruction on photo captions help students develop voice in their writing?
Subquestions

1) How does teaching students to revise help them use revision strategies on their own?

2) To what degree do students engage in a purposeful afterschool photo project designed for an authentic audience?

Key Terms Research Question

Scaffolded instruction: The students went through the entire writing process for each caption with steps being modeled by the teacher and practiced by the students. They began with a guided free-write for each picture, changed their free-writes into a more direct and simplified caption, and revised each caption individually.

Photo captions: Students included a variety of text types in their captions, but the one text type that was integrated into the students’ captions was personal narrative. Since the main goal of this project was for the students to “find inspiration and empowerment in their own story” the main focus was on personal narrative. The more advanced English students also added in elements of explanatory and persuasive writing, but this was done in a scaffolded way, adding various text types at different points of the writing process.

Voice: I measured how the “writer connects strongly with the audience through the intriguing focus of the topic, selection of relevant details, and the use of natural, engaging language” (“6 + 1 Traits”). The student photography and student-chosen issues provided an “intriguing focus of the topic” that enhanced students’ voice in the community. The latter element, along with scaffolded instruction of the writing process to develop “natural, engaging language,” was used to improve students’ voice in their writing.
Key Terms Subquestions

Revision strategies: The students were given a checklist (See Appendix B) of key revision rules and strategies taken from weeklyreader.com (“With a little help”).

Purposeful afterschool photo project: Students volunteered their time to work on this inquiry project afterschool. Even though many of the students were very involved in extra-curricular activities and had family responsibilities, they spent time working on this project because it had a purposeful outcome. They were motivated by the idea of sharing their point of view and their story with the community.

Authentic audience: The photo essay project will be shown as a slideshow for an OELP fundraiser at the end of March. Some of the photographs and captions will also be published concurrently in the local newspaper.
Literature and Rationale: Encouraging Students to Use Their Voice

In many urban areas, afterschool writing programs have been developed as a way of teaching students to “learn to use writing as a tool to exercise their voice and articulate their stories” (Busch, 2004, p. 64). By teaching students the power of their voice, these afterschool writing programs have provided a safe place for students to express themselves. Being among positive adult role models and peers helped them accomplish their goals and stay away from gangs and violence (Busch, 2004). Many times schools do not teach students that writing is a way of expressing themselves, but only teach students the rules and formulas for writing.

Although the students in this inquiry project were not from an urban area, they were all Latino students, an at-risk demographic, who have not had the opportunity to express themselves in writing through their academic studies. When I asked my students if they felt they had a voice at their school, one student wrote, “I think I have a voice, but I don’t use it…” This is not unique to the students I worked with, but is a problem among many Latino immigrant students. Pamela Quiroz (2001) studied 27 Latino immigrant students’ narratives in the 8th grade and then again in the 11th grade to determine why so many Latino students fail in our schools. After studying the narratives she found that the students mentioned no “particular institutional agent in the school as assisting them in making firm connections between their aspirations and engagement in schooling” (Quiroz, 2001, p. 343). In the 8th grade the students wrote of ambitious goals, but throughout their schooling the students were never taught how to achieve these goals. By the time the students got into 11th grade their narratives were describing ways that their goals had been modified so that they could graduate from high school (Quiroz, 2001).

Even if students do get the chance to express themselves in writing or dialogue Quiroz (2001) points out that “for voice to be empowering, it must be heard, not simply spoken” (p. 328). Motivated Latino students very easily slip through the cracks of the school system without help from the school simply because of language barriers. Not surprisingly, the teachers that have had the most impact on my students are their Spanish and ELD teachers because they can freely
communicate with them in their native language. These teachers listen to the students, so the students feel empowered to use their voice. Working with these students outside of a school setting I learned that they freely spoke their thoughts and feelings in discussions, but when it came to writing these same ideas they became stuck. I wanted the students to learn to express themselves and use their authentic voice, not just in dialogue but in written text as well.

There have been many different definitions of voice in writing. Maura Stetson (1996) wrote in *Freedom of Voice*, “Howard Gardner implies that voice appears as a ‘certain freedom, flexibility and exploratory flavor’” (p. 74). This definition inserts stylistic elements and can be problematic if the writer does not choose to use the flexibility offered in an assignment. Quiroz (2001) presents an abstract definition that “voice implies having power over the presentation of reality and meaning, and the ability to construct, articulate, and therefore shape one’s experience as it is presented to others” (p. 328). She went on to write that language is simply a tool through which people express this voice. This definition separates what is implied in a context and medium and offers voice as the ability to communicate effectively. The students I worked with witnessed the power of expressing their voice through speech by connecting it with the composition of their poems while at OELP. Through this inquiry project the students explored a different avenue or modality of connecting their writing with a visual mode of communication, photographs. Using photo captions as a mode or text type simplified the language demands of the communication task which is essential in second language development (Halliday, as cited in Gibbons, 2002). The students’ projects were centered on a community or personal issue that had an impact on their lives. The topic of the project was selected purposefully as one that had the potential to engage students on writing as communication.

By using a photography-writing project to explore social issues the students learned that writing “is not remote abstractions of real life, but expressions of it” (Stetson, 1996, p. 75). Stetson wrote that students are more likely to be compelled to write authentically and with voice when they are asked to write about real life. Exposing their own thoughts and exploring new
ideas is a key component to students developing voice in their writing (Stetson, 1996). As Donald Graves wrote, voice is one of the most important aspects of writing because it is “the imprint of ourselves on our writing… take the voice away and the writing collapses of its own weight. There is no writing, just words following words” (as cited in Stetson, 1996, p. 74).

Stetson wrote that the most effective method for nurturing voice in a student’s writing is simply to know your student and to understand what they want to write about. Teachers should be there to “help ‘coach’ ideas by listening and reflecting back to students what they already know best: their own lives” (Stetson, 1996, p. 75). I had the opportunity of working with each student individually and have had extensive conversations with students about their lives and issues they struggle with which helped me coach the students in writing their true, authentic voice. Gibbons (2002) wrote that learning is not an individual venture but a collaborative and social process between the student and the teacher. In this instructional model the teacher’s role is more of a mentor or coach for the student, providing scaffolding to help support the student in completing the given task. In second language learning scaffolding must be provided for the student at the appropriate level. Many times curriculum is simplified in hopes that it will help the students understand, but the task must be cognitively challenging in order for the students to stay engaged (Gibbons 2002).

Literature on instructional strategies for English learners is quite extensive, but relies heavily on extensions from research on monolinguals or on methods that have not been investigated empirically. Ken Hyland (2003), in a recent synthesis, relied on empirical studies testing a variety of theoretical frameworks in second language classrooms and explored strategies in teaching writing of targeted text types or genres. In his view, teachers must address content, system, process, genre and context to teach writing effectively and cover all areas of writing knowledge. Hyland (2003) listed three different types of assignments that embed the revision process in effective ways: revision of a draft in response to someone else’s comments,
writing an essay that requires multiple drafts, and research, writing and revising an essay for a specific audience.

I included all of the above tasks to provide students with the five key elements of effective writing. So that the project was accessible to all levels of ELs, the students wrote photo captions instead of a full essay. The project followed the SDAIE model by basing the students’ writing on their own experiences, using modeling and reviewing as explicit teaching strategies and having the students share what they accomplished and learned with their peers. In addition, the art-based aspect of this project expanded learning opportunities for diverse students (Cornett, 2007). Researchers have found that by integrating art into academic curriculum “students who have struggled with traditional modes of instruction find success in inclusive environments that build on commonalities, while respecting differences” (Cornett, 2007, p.37). The common theme throughout this inquiry project was issues that affect Latino high school students. By encouraging and teaching the students to write with their voice and from their point of view the differences amongst the students was recognized and encouraged.

A fundamental part of my instructional strategy for writing was teaching students to revise on their own. When I asked the students how they go about revising their papers, every student answered in some form that a teacher or tutor told them what to fix and they changed it. Revision is the part of the writing process where students should transform their writing. Drafting and revision should be seen as steps toward the same piece of writing, but often times they are seen as either separate entities or as an exact, cleaner replica (Calkins, 1994). If the students anticipate that there will be another chance to transform their writing during revision, then they will let their words flow when writing the first draft (Calkins, 1994). Randy Bomer wrote, “I’m rushing them past trying to feel they must solve all the problems of their piece in the first draft. I want them to be unsatisfied with what they can do in one draft so that the possibility of revision remains open, so that they don’t think the making of a piece of writing begins at the top of page one and ends at the bottom of the final page” (as cited in Calkins, 1994, p.209).
Many of my students had never considered writing a second, revised draft of any paper. They were *not* unsatisfied with their first draft, but were astonished at how much they could improve their writing by re-reading and revising. To teach the students their potential for writing I scaffolded instruction of revision and gave the students a revision checklist of important things to look for when revising. This was formed from a checklist from weeklyreader.com and the 6 + 1 Traits voice and word choice rubric (“With a little” & “6 + 1”). I assisted the students in the revision of each caption by modeling and giving feedback orally and in writing. My goal for instruction was to not only teach students the revision process for this project, but give the students tools to use for their academic work.

Hattie and Timperley (2007) wrote that the three main questions that need to be answered to make feedback effective for students are “where am I going, how am I doing, and where to next” (p. 87). I tried to keep this powerful insight in mind when I worked with my students. Lucy Calkins (1994) wrote that “the writer needs to see (the) possibilities for publication early and then write toward these possibilities” (p.269). The ultimate goal of this project was a slide show to be presented at a fundraiser for OELP and for the photographs and captions to be published in the local newspaper. Because these pieces of writing were going public, they needed to be revised and edited, but I wanted the students to learn the work of revision that went into a published piece. I constantly reminded them of the ultimate goal of their work during drafting and revision.

Peter Elbow (1998) states that there are two types of feedback for writers: criterion-based feedback (how the writing measures up) and reader-based feedback (how the reader reacts to the writing). Although criterion-based feedback can be helpful in some situations, reader-based feedback puts you in the shoes of the reader. My reader-based feedback was always with the audience in mind. The students many times assumed that their audience knew what they were talking about in their writing, and I had to frequently remind them that their audience was not necessarily going to be of a similar background or age group. It notably helped that I was of a
different background and age because the students had to explain things much more thoroughly. I also focused on giving feedback directed toward the process of the task which Hattie and Timperley (2007) found to be one of the most effective types of feedback. The process of each step (free-write, rough draft, final draft) was repeated four times with feedback given about where the students were going, how the students were doing in their present writing, and what the next step was. The other most effective type of feedback is directed towards self-regulation (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Scaffolded instruction of revision was intended to teach students to self-regulate specific aspects of their writing that would help them create voice.
Description of Photo Essay Project

The photo essay project began in September as a digital storytelling project, but as it progressed we realized that the digital storytelling was not only overwhelming for the students, but also for the staff (Morgan and me) who were working on it. Some students still wanted to work on the full digital story, so Morgan and I split them into two separate groups. I worked with the students who wanted to complete the photo essay project, and encouraged other OELP students I tutored to join the internship, and Morgan worked with the students who wanted to complete the full digital story. Since some of the students began this project earlier than others they wrote about different issues.

Group 1- The students who had begun the digital storytelling project at the beginning of the internship researched an issue in the community in October. I wanted to make sure they used the information they had already gathered, so I left it as an expository element that they added to the personal narrative of their caption. They also had an element of persuasive writing, since they were writing to convince the community that this problem existed.

Group 2- The students that joined the internship later were of lower academic and ELD levels than the students who began the internship. Because of this and the time it took for Group 1 to brainstorm and research their community issues (from September to October), I chose to have Group 2 focus on an issue in their personal lives so that the research component would not be necessary.

Although the students wrote about various issues and used a variety of text types in their photo captions, the consistent text type used by all the students throughout was personal narrative. Throughout the inquiry project, the instruction was focused on the students writing from their point of view.

The planning of this internship was a little different than the actual implementation because of various issues. These included: (1) the different starting dates (2) the difficulty
negotiating attendance after school when students had other commitments (3) the location for the meetings. First, Group 1 started at an earlier date than Group 2. To accommodate for the less amount of time that Group 2 had to finish the project, I altered the content that these students wrote about. Secondly, the students were involved in many other afterschool activities on top of family obligations. Because I had a more flexible schedule, I ended up accommodating to the students’ schedule in many instances. I met with the students who could not meet during the weekdays on weekends. Lastly, the students lived in two different towns, Judah and Tanner Beach, which were about 15 minutes away. The students could not drive and their parents were not able to provide transportation, so I ended up meeting with the students at the Family Resource Centers in their hometowns on different days. A table of the meeting times and reasons for absences can be found in Appendix C.

**Overview of Key Guiding Principles**

1. Provide Latino immigrant students the opportunity to express their perspective on home/community issues.
2. Scaffolded learning of text types through models, guided writing, structured feedback and writing as a process.
3. Opportunities to engage in the revision process

**Outline of Instruction**

- *Students brainstormed ideas for project.*
  - The students answered guiding questions about issues in their homes, schools and communities. Next, we had a group discussion about what issues were most important to each student. The students then chose two issues they wanted to write about and eventually narrowed it down to one.

- *Showed examples of various photography projects* (“Photovoice”).
• Students took photographs related to the issue they chose.

I do not have formal training in photography, but spent time with each student taking photographs in and around their communities. All the students had prior experience using a camera, so I did not need to teach the students this step. I helped the students brainstorm pictures to take and assisted in arranging different articles (like trash and beer cans) to create a better picture. I took some pictures of the students doing activities that they wanted to write about.

• Students chose four photographs to use for their project.

The students were given copies of every picture they took and chose the four they wanted to write about. The first caption they wrote about was used as the baseline data.

• Students wrote a free-write with guiding questions for each photograph.

The guiding questions, SHOWD free-write, were taken from a model used by HerStory (“Photovoice”). In the project HerStory, women documented their lives through a photography project and recorded their experience during the project. The objective of HerStory was to “give women a voice and to create a space for dialogue, in which the women themselves would identify constricting social norms and practices” (Gurecki, 2006, p. 1). This internship project was born from a Master’s thesis that the director of ARC did with HerStory, but was transformed to work with these high school students on academic writing. The project was also similar to a UC Davis teacher researcher, Natalie Smith (2008) who used photography to enhance students’ personal narratives. The questions used for students focusing on a community issue are listed in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: SHOWD Questions- Guiding Questions for Free-Write**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Describe the picture. What do you see?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What’s really happening?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How does this picture relate to you or your community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Why does this problem/strength exist?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What can we do about this?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The questions used for the students focusing on a personal issue were altered because a small pilot revealed that students tended to respond neutrally to the prompts relating to their community and others. Moreover, some of the questions from SHOWD did not seem relevant to their issue. The questions used for students focusing on a personal issue are listed in Figure 6.

**Figure 6: Modified SHOWD Questions**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Describe the picture. What is happening in the picture or what is the picture of?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>How does this picture relate to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Why is this photo significant?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>How does this photo relate to other people in the community?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- *Free-write to paragraph form.*

One paragraph was supposed to describe the picture and the other paragraph explained how the picture related to their issue. The students had a limited response about the description because the photographs conveyed more information than they thought they needed. They did not need to describe the picture to the viewer since the observer could see for themselves what the picture looked like. For this reason I had the students give more attention to the explanation of what the photograph represented through their eyes.

- *Students revised each caption with the guidance of the teacher*

I spent time with each student individually revising their captions. I intended to use peer revision strategies, but because difficulties with meeting times and places it could not happen. The students felt safe working with me and were able to ask questions and improve their writing. Since the people attending the meetings were inconsistent I did not think that there was a safe enough environment for the students to feel comfortable enough taking feedback from their peers. Two pairs of students consistently worked together throughout the drafting and revision of each caption: Tania and Mariela, and Ricardo and Jose.
Data Collection Procedures

Achievement Data

Baseline/Outcome Data Collection Procedures

Baseline Data: Given on November 18, 2008

The baseline data was the first rough draft of one caption the students wrote. I made sure that all of the work the students completed was used for their photo essay project. Since this was an afterschool activity and the students had no obligation to attend, it was important to me to make their time productive and meaningful. The students selected the item to photograph and responded to the photo prompts. All responses were used in the analysis.

Outcome Data: Given January 4, 2009

The students did not use this photograph and caption for the final product. By the time I needed to give the post assessment I had developed a strong relationship with each student so they were willing to complete the post-assessment because I needed it for my project.

The baseline and outcome data for the students’ writing was measured by two comparable writing assessments. Each assessment consisted of identical prompts, where the students answered two questions about a photograph they had taken. I gave students the option to answer both questions in one paragraph or answer the questions separately. One small difference in the writing prompt was the format. The baseline prompt was given in the format as seen in Figure 7, while the outcome prompt had room for the students to answer the questions separately. The baseline and outcome assessments were given at the local Family Resource Center and the students were given 20 minutes to complete the writing for both assessments. The only variance in the baseline and outcome data was the photographs the students wrote about. The photographs were chosen by the student who took the writing assessment.
Figure 7: Baseline and Outcome Writing Prompt

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In a paragraph:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Describe the picture. What is happening in the picture or what is the picture of?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Explain how the picture relates to you or your issue. What does this picture represent to you?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In-the-Midst Data

In the midst data sources included: free-writes, rough drafts and revised drafts of each caption. The purposes of this data were to document implementation and engagement as well as track development and compare the changes over the course of the intervention. Throughout the intervention I documented my interaction with the students in a daily teacher’s journal.

Attitudinal Data

Pre-assessment Survey

Given on November 18, 2008

1. Does a picture help you when you are writing? How?
2. What do you feel is your strength in writing?
3. What do you feel is difficult for you in writing?
4. Would you prefer to do school work in a group or individually? Why?
5. Do you like getting feedback from your peers?
6. How do you usually go about revising your papers for school?
7. What do you know about the revising a paper?

Post-Assessment Survey

Given January 4, 2009

1. How did your writing improve working on this project?
2. What did you learn about the revision process from working on this project?
3. What had you already learned from your English classes at school?
4. Did it/would it help to work with other students? How?
5. What did you learn about writing that you will use in your school work?
6. What was your motivation to complete this project? Explain.
7. What did you like most about working on this project?

**Observational Data**

I took notes on student engagement during peer revision and with other adults helping with this project. I tracked attendance and reasons for absences. I kept a daily teacher’s journal throughout the duration of this project. I made entries after each meeting following the protocol of R. Murray Thomas’s (2005) “Postponed notetaking” (p. 96).
Story of Intervention: How the Students Found their Voice

The Issues

The brainstorming happened at different times for each group of students. Tania, Mariela and Adriana (Group 1) brainstormed and researched their topics in October when it was going to be a digital storytelling project. Since I encouraged Ricardo, Jose and Eduardo to participate in the internship in November, they did not have as much time to brainstorm topics and research. Instead of focusing on a community issue they focused their writing on a personal issue which made the project more accessible for their writing levels. Each student came up with a topic that had affected them in some way. I found as the intervention progressed that it was very challenging for the students to disclose their thoughts and feelings about these issues. The issues that the students chose to write about and how they came up with the ideas follow:

- Tania- drug and alcohol use amongst adolescents in the community.
  
  Although Tania never disclosed the fact that she had used drugs and alcohol in her photo essay, I knew she had partaken in these activities because of discussions during the summer program. She finally wrote about her involvement with alcohol in the outcome assessment because she knew it would not go public and that the assessment was anonymous.

- Mariela- combined the lack of decent affordable housing with the problem trash in the poor areas of town.
  
  It took Mariela a while to connect these two ideas. She was initially only concerned about the trash and lack of recycling in her community. However, when she attended a youth development conference with OELP she learned about gentrification. Mariela became very concerned with this issue because her house is supposed to be torn down soon and replaced with a new housing development. During the intervention Mariela learned that her house is actually going to be replaced with affordable housing.
She brought the two ideas together through her realization that the poor areas of town were dirty and had much more trash because they did not have the resources to put in such things as bear boxes. Although I saw a strong connection between gentrification and trash in the community, it took many meetings to help Mariela realize this connection.

- Ricardo- limited opportunities for him because of finances and his age.

  Working with Ricardo during tutoring sessions, he constantly talked about how he needed money and he needed a job, but he could not get one. After discussing with him why he need money the topic of his photo essay came to light. Ricardo had many realizations during this intervention, especially the fact that he was going to have to make money as soon as possible to achieve his goals. Since the intervention, he has been much more intent on looking for a job so he can begin to work towards these goals.

  *See Appendix D for all students’ photo essay topics.*

**The Photography**

As stated previously, I do not have a formal background in photography so I could not be of too much assistance in this element of the project. Prior to taking pictures I brainstormed with each student and they made a list of what they were going to take pictures of. I walked and drove around town with each student to take pictures and students also took pictures on their own. A few of the students also used pictures from the past that related to their issue. Table 2 briefly describes all photographs taken by students. Tania, Mariela and I all went together to take some of the photographs. Tania was very interested in taking pictures and actually took pictures for other students’ projects as well. I was impressed by her enthusiasm for photography and have encouraged her to take a class in the future. While Tania was taking as many pictures as possible, Mariela was very methodical about her photography. Mariela had her list and was checking off what she had and had not completed. I also spent much time with Jose and Ricardo taking
pictures for their project. Ricardo was fairly uninterested in the photography while Jose excitedly jumped in to take pictures for him. Adriana and Eduardo took photos primarily independently and used many pictures from their past. They were not very engaged in the photography portion of this project.

Table 2: Content of Photographs Taken by Each Student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Photo 2</th>
<th>Photo 3</th>
<th>Photo 4</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tania</td>
<td>Beer can at beach</td>
<td>Tania dancing at a club for teens*</td>
<td>Boys and Girls Club</td>
<td>Poster of fundraiser with alcohol</td>
<td>Cigarettes and bottle caps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariela</td>
<td>New house being built at Tanner Beach</td>
<td>Her own house</td>
<td>Affordable housing in neighborhood</td>
<td>Bear proof trash and recycling bin</td>
<td>Trash on ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricardo</td>
<td>Car in parking lot</td>
<td>Change on ground</td>
<td>Ricardo and Jose at a junior college</td>
<td>Safeway sign- dad’s work</td>
<td>Ricardo on Bike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jose</td>
<td>Jose and his ELD teacher</td>
<td>English books in ELD class</td>
<td>School books from Mexico</td>
<td>Outside of junior college</td>
<td>Picture of model motorcycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eduardo</td>
<td>Boys and Girls Club</td>
<td>Immediate family*</td>
<td>Mentors</td>
<td>School books</td>
<td>Extended family*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriana</td>
<td>Graffiti on picnic table</td>
<td>Tattooed former gang member friend</td>
<td>Collage of high school students doing gang signs*</td>
<td>Picture of two hands-shaking</td>
<td>Tattooed gang member*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Pictures students used from their past

What the Students’ Writing “SHOWD”

All of the students did a guided free-write for all four of their captions. Tania wrote her SHOWD writing with very little personal details. I could tell by her writing that she was going through the motions to get it done. The first day of SHOWD writing Tania decided that she needed to leave this meeting early, illustrating disengagement with the task. I wanted the students to include statistics and other information that they had gathered during the digital storytelling phase. In Figure 8 you can find an example of one of Tania’s SHOWD free-writes.
### Tania’s SHOWD Free-Write

**What do you see here?**
A place to hang out. The Deep End Club.

**What’s really happening here?**
A lot of teens having fun, but many of them being part of our 56% underage drinking statistics in our area.

**How does this relate to our lives?**
This relates to our lives because adults are trying to do something, but many youth abuse of it by selling drugs and getting drunk.

**Why does this problem exist?**
I think many youth sell drugs and drink alcohol because they want to have more fun and try to fit in with the rest of our peers.

**A place to hang out.**
The Deep End Club.

**A lot of teens having fun, but many of them being part of our 56% underage drinking statistics in our area.**

**This relates to our lives because adults are trying to do something, but many youth abuse of it by selling drugs and getting drunk.**

**I think many youth sell drugs and drink alcohol because they want to have more fun and try to fit in with the rest of our peers.**
While Tania was going through the motions, writing whatever came to mind, Mariela was very thoughtful about everything that she wrote. Figure 9 illustrates Mariela’s writing. You could tell that she was very concerned about the issue of trash in her community of Tanner Beach. In our discussions she talked about how Bailey City had bear boxes and it was always really clean. She wanted her town to look like that. Mariela brought up many good questions in her free-write and a variety of solutions as well.

Ricardo really struggled with his free-write as shown in Figure 10. His questions were a bit modified because he was writing about a personal issue instead of a community issue. There was one more question at the end about how it relates to the community, but he could not think of anything to write so he did not answer that question. I could tell that there was a large disconnect between communicating and writing. On numerous occasions Ricardo had discussed with me how he didn’t have money to pay for driving school, so even when he turned 16 he would not be able to get his license. He was concerned that even if he got his license he would not be able to buy a car. Not much of this information came out in Ricardo’s writing, although he did communicate the essentials components. Since Ricardo came to the United States four years ago his second language acquisition is challenging and he is at a low level of English in reading and writing. His responses are often caption like. Ricardo’s explanation of the cars significance is practical, persuasive and grammatically complex with two embedded clauses: “This is my dream car. It is a Volkswagen.” Even though Ricardo’s writing is not profound, the core message of frustration is personal and very convincing.
Figure 9: Mariela- SHOWD writing

- You see a bear pruff* Trash and recycleing bin with a lock.

- Tanner Beach is improving by putting bear pruff* Trash and recycleing* bins. But do people know how to recycle or do they even care about recycleing* or throwing their trash away properly. Why is there only bear pruff* trash and recycleing* bins at the beach.

- This relates to our lives because we should want to live in a nice clean community and we should keep our area clean, green, blue, etc.

- This problem exist maybe because people (not all/most) are not educated about recycleing* & why is it important, why should they do it. Lack of education.

- Something we can Do about this is we can educate people why it is important to recycle, throw trash away. Just the importance of it OR more community clean up days OR maybe put recycleing* bear pruff* bins at homes or maybe by the sts* (streets).

*Grammatical/spelling errors in student’s written work.
This is my Dream car (it)* is a Volkswagen (scanning cut off)

How does this picture relate to you?
this picture relate* to me because I want a good car that run well.

Why is this photo significant?
I am tired of reding* my bike and walking I have to make some money to buy a car.

*Grammatical/spelling errors in student’s written work.

**First Drafts of Captions**

To make the transition from free-writing to a more structured paragraph I gave the students more specific guidelines to follow than in the baseline and outcome assessments. For this first draft, Tania went into much more detail about each of her photo captions, but still struggled to make it personal even when she was writing about a picture of herself. I was constantly having a dialogue with students asking them questions to get them to write more details about their thoughts. As an example, I asked Mariela, “What does the bear box look
like?” She said “It’s brown and there is a lock on it.” I asked, “Why is there a lock on it?” With these questions she came up with her paragraph that described the picture in her eyes. An example of Mariela’s first draft can be found in Figure 11. As all the students were writing their descriptive paragraphs I noticed that they were not using descriptive writing as I had imagined in the planning of the intervention. The students and I recognized that it would be pointless to describe the picture when the audience was given the picture to look at. I realized I wanted the students to explain through personal narrative what their pictures meant to them. For example, when you see a picture of bear box at a beach the audience would not think that Mariela was writing about how her neighborhood does not have bear boxes. I wanted her and the rest of the students to spend more time writing their thoughts than describing the picture.

Ricardo and Jose needed a lot of extra support to be able to finish this project. In retrospect I should have cut down the number of captions I had them write and scaffolded the instruction for them to work more independently. Ricardo and Jose were at low ELD levels and had not written a paragraph once during this school year. I learned in the post-survey that Jose had never written a paragraph before this project and Ricardo had only written during the OELP summer program. Both of these students had ELD as their only English class. I helped them more than any of the other students when writing their first draft. My main goal in this project was for the students to express themselves and voice their thoughts and Ricardo and Jose were getting stuck on using the correct English words. If I asked Ricardo and Jose an open-ended question of how or why they would talk for a long time answering the question. When Jose could not express his thoughts in English, he would say them in Spanish and Ricardo would translate for me. They both had a lot of thoughts, but were not able to write them out.
This is a bear proof* bear bin that is both for trash and recycling*. It has a lock so people wont* come and stuff it with their own trash, and that way animals wont* come and take the trash away and litter. You can find a bear proof* bin in any public place and in any new home.

Scince* it’s a requirement* and Bear Proof* Bins must be instult* with any knew* home. They will be a big part of keeping the community clean when affordible* housing is built. Not will it only help keep the community clean but it will also help the bears to not become dependent on human food. The people who live in rundown homes dont* have $ or access to a bear proof* Bin, thats* why theres* trash in the community know*.

*Grammatical/spelling errors in student’s written work.
I used Herrell and Jordan’s (2008) strategy of language experience approach which “helps students see the connections between experiences, what is spoken, and the written language” (p. 213). I engaged Jose and Ricardo in discussions about their experiences surrounding their photographs and they would enthusiastically talk about it. They would even suggest details to add for one another’s captions. As they talked I would type what they said. After we finished a sentence they would re-read it. Ricardo and Jose reading their captions aloud was not something I instructed, but something they automatically did every time I typed their words. I felt like this not only helped them express their thoughts and voice, but also helped them with vocabulary development. The most important development for these students in using the language experience approach was that they began to understand the connection between the written word and the spoken word. Although I do believe this approach was very helpful for Ricardo and Jose, I should have taken more steps to help them feel like independent writers.

It is not ironic that my research question is how might a student photography project on home and community, scaffolded with instruction on photo captions help students develop voice in their writing and the main tool that I used to help students expand on their writing was their voice. At one time, before they had even begun this project, they voiced that their issue was something they were passionate about. Vygotsky theorizes that the “external, social dialogue is gradually internalized to become a resource for individual thinking, or what he refers to as ‘inner speech’” (Gibbons, 2002, p. 8). By using dialogue between teacher and student as a scaffold, students learned not just what to think, but how to use this knowledge in various contexts (Gibbons, 2002). According to Quirroz (2001), students’ voices have been stifled in the schools. When students like Jose and Ricardo are not given the opportunity to communicate their thoughts either through dialogue or writing, how do they learn what the true intention of writing is, to communicate your ideas and thoughts to other people? Students, of any ethnicity and any language, know how to communicate through speaking. I found that there was a connection missing for most of these students between the spoken word and the written word. I wanted to
show all of them that they did have a voice and that not only can they speak what they think, they can also put it in written form. From a socio-cultural theory, learning is inherently social rather than individualistic and cognition is developed from the participation with others in activities that are goal-directed (Gibbons, 2002). I did not intend for dialogue to be a key teaching strategy, but it came more naturally to these students to talk rather than write.

The Revision

I worked side by side with all the students during the revision to teach the students that revision is meant to transform their first draft into something more precise and in their voice. When Ken Hyland (2003) studied second language classrooms he found that the most effective strategies for teaching writing had revision embedded in them. All of my students were second language learners, but none of them students had ever learned how to revise their written work. I made a revision checklist combining different strategies, but when I went through the checklist with Tania and Mariela, I learned that I included too many things for the students to look for during their revision. I could tell that it was overwhelming to them. Instead of going through all of the steps for revision, I focused only on a few strategies: redundancies, replacing general nouns with specific nouns, making it personal, and adding details. I chose these specific strategies as my focus for revision based on the students’ first drafts and the areas of the rubric.

As we revised, each student began to pick out changes that needed to be made without my help. Ricardo and Jose’s captions were about their life, so they had no trouble making it personal. However, at the beginning they had many repetitions in their writing. After revising the first caption focusing the on redundancies, Jose read-aloud the second caption and exclaimed, “English, English, English. I say it over and over!” I was very excited that he recognized it right away. While Ricardo and Jose improved in recognizing and eliminating redundancies, Tania and Mariela improved their ability to add personal details to their writing. They had a hard time including personal detail in the first draft. We also worked on redundancies and sentence
combining to put common ideas together. In the final revision, as shown in Figure 12, Mariela did most of the revisions on her own. To get her to write more personally, I asked Mariela how she felt when the “guy” came to her house to tell them that her family’s house was going to be torn down. Mariela’s family being affected by this was the heart of the project and she really needed to express her feelings in her writing.

**Figure 12: Mariela’s Revisions**
Baseline and Outcome Data

Students were assessed based on a rubric that measured voice and word choice in their writing. The rubric was slightly altered from the 6 + 1 Traits writing rubric (“6 + 1”). My rubric combined voice and word choice from 6 +1 Traits because I found that there were parts of the word choice rubric that carried over to teaching students to write with voice. I changed the rubric from a five point domain assessment to a three point to make the differences between scores more apparent. The rubric measured if the students used the following six qualities in their writing: specific nouns and modifiers, words specific and accurate, individual and compelling content, inclusion of personal detail, strongly connects with audience, and personal and engaging. See Appendix E for full rubric.

Focus Students

Analysis of Tania’s Writing

Tania’s writing became much more personal and specific. Figure 13 shows a comparison of the baseline and outcome assessments. In the baseline assessment Tania used specific nouns by naming the town and the lake and used a lot of descriptive language and varied sentence structure. This was a very strongly baseline writing sample. However, she was vague in her description of the actual problem. Tania wrote, “Not many people notice the youth involvement in alcohol. Lake Bailey is full of young adults getting in trouble and having no place to hang out, but what if someone did something…” She gave no specificity to what the actual problem was and who should do something or what should be done. In Tania’s outcome assessment I was thrilled that she wrote, “I know this because I myself use to do this (drinking) with my friends when we were bored…” Although I knew that she had been involved in alcohol and drug related activities in the past, throughout the intervention she had not written about it. Although this might have been because the project was going public, she had not even talked to me about how
Figure 13: Tania’s Baseline and Outcome Data

**Baseline Assessment**

In the picture there's an open can of beer: a tecate. Look far away and see the precious Lake Bailey. Lake Bailey is a tourist town, but if you look close and notice their* are many families living here. Not many people notice the youth involvement in Alcohol*. Lake Bailey is full of young adults getting in trouble and having no place to hang out, but what if someone did something and all you could see was the picture of a beautiful lake with many young people having fun, and not a beer can in the horizon of our town.

**Outcome Assessment**

I took this picture while walking on the community dog beach that is open to the public. I found cigarette and beer litter on the ground. It showed that in my community a lot of teens are going out to drink and abusing of public places like the beach to get together to drink alcohol. I know this because I myself use to do this with my friends, when we were bored and didn’t have many activities planned for us to attend. I believe that not having any activities for us teens to attend is becoming a problem within our community.

This picture relates to my issue of Alcohol Drinking in the Tahoe community by showing that teens really go to our public beaches to drink because of the lack of events the community provides. When me and my friends can’t attend an event, either because its too expensive or too far we decide to make our own events, that sometimes* include Alcohol. Not only do we get bored because of the lack of activities, but are also causing trouble. This problem could be prevented by planning more events for teens during weekends & nights.

*Grammatical/spelling errors in student’s written work.
she was part of the teenage drinking at the dog beach. I felt like the inclusion of this one sentence was a huge step for Tania. Figure 14 shows the rubric scores of Tania’s baseline and outcome assessments.

Figure 14: Tania’s Rubric Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Individual and compelling content</th>
<th>Inclusion of personal detail</th>
<th>Strongly connects with audience</th>
<th>Personal and Engaging</th>
<th>Specific nouns and modifiers</th>
<th>Words specific and accurate</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Mariela’s Writing

Figure 15 shows a comparison of Mariela’s baseline and outcome writing assessments. Mariela received a score of 9.5 for the Baseline Assessment and an 11 for the Outcome Assessment, as shown in Figure 16. She had very little improvement in her voice based on the rubric. Mariela’s score improved for using *specific nouns and modifiers* because she wrote the name of the community, Tanner Beach. She actually decreased the amount of modifiers she used, which is an improvement because Mariela wrote unneeded modifiers in the baseline assessment, like “it’s pretty big” and “probably not big enough for the family.” These are very unspecific where in the outcome assessment Mariela did not use any vague language. This accounts for the
increased score in *words specific and accurate* as well. Although Mariela did not increase her score in the other categories, these two changes make her writing much more direct and purposeful which definitely gives her more voice in her writing.

In all of Mariela’s captions there was a call to action. In the baseline assessment it was that “We should start building new homes, ‘affordable’ housing instead of just building new big expensive homes and trying to sell them when nobody can afford them. Just try to make knew affordable housing for people” (translated). Although there is a call to action here, Mariela does not give any suggestions for *how* this should be done. In the outcome assessment she wrote, “We should do more community clean up days or even teach people the importance it is to keep the community clean… dispose of our trash correctly and use trash cans and recycling bins the correct way” (translated with correct spelling).

Mariela did not include any personal detail in either of her assessments. This was a big struggle for her throughout the intervention. As stated in previously, it took time for Mariela to disclose that she was worried about new housing projects because the landlord told her family that her house was going to be torn down for new housing to be built. Mariela significantly improved on her ability to add personal details and how *she* felt in the midst of the intervention, but it does not show in the outcome data.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baseline Assessment</th>
<th>Outcome Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.jpg" alt="Baseline Assessment Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.jpg" alt="Outcome Assessment Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In this picture a knew* home is being built. It’s a 2 story home and it’s pretty big. And its next to an old home. They don’t even have a spot to park their car. Probably* it’s not big enough* for the family. This picture relates to my topic because there are big homes being built. And we should start building knew* homes “affordable”* housing insted* of just building knew big expensive homes &amp; trying to sel* them when nobody can afford them. Just try to make knew affordable housing for people.</td>
<td>In this picture there’s trash on the ground. What’s really happening is that people don’t care about disposing of their trash in the right way, so they just throw it on the ground. Many streets in Tanner Beach have trash on the side walk. We should do more community clean up days or even teach people the importance it is to keep the community clean. This picture relates to my issue because it has to do with keeping the community clean, dispose* of our trash correctly* and use trash cans &amp; recycling bins the correct* way.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Grammatical/spelling errors in student’s written work.
Figure 16: Mariela’s Rubric Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Individual and compelling content</th>
<th>Inclusion of personal detail</th>
<th>Strongly connects with audience</th>
<th>Personal and Engaging</th>
<th>Specific nouns and modifiers</th>
<th>Words specific and accurate</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual and compelling content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion of personal detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly connects with audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal and Engaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Nouns and Modifiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words specific and accurate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Ricardo’s Writing

Ricardo not only increased the amount of words he wrote, from 57 to 84, he increased the amount of ideas he wrote about. Ricardo’s ability to include more detail in his writing from baseline to outcome data illustrates growth in using writing as a means of communication. For the baseline data, Ricardo became stuck while writing. He was very discouraged when I asked him to write a paragraph, so I told Ricardo that he could answer the questions separately. He still had a difficult time thinking about what to write, asking me for input. For the outcome assessment, Ricardo did not hesitate when asked to begin writing. He did not ask me for any help and was very focused.

Ricardo increased his score by one point for individual and compelling content by selecting content and structures that reflected his purpose for writing. Figure 17 shows the Ricardo’s rubric scores. Ricardo’s writing for his outcome assessment was still unstructured and
as more of a stream of consciousness. The content that he wrote for the outcome assessment was very similar to what he wrote for one of his captions. This represents his increased background knowledge and understanding of writing as a means of communication. He was writing his thoughts instead of just discussing them. A comparison of Ricardo’s baseline and outcome assessments can be found in Figure 18. Ricardo also increased by one point for making his writing personal and engaging. In the baseline assessment Ricardo wrote so little that he did not develop a discernable point of view, but for the outcome assessment he attempts to tell the audience his point of view by describing why instead of just the facts. It should also be noted that Ricardo did not repeat any of his ideas in the outcome assessment, like he did in the midst of the intervention.

**Figure 17: Ricardo’s Rubric Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Individual and compelling content</th>
<th>Inclusion of personal detail</th>
<th>Strongly connects with audience</th>
<th>Personal and Engaging</th>
<th>Specific nouns and modifiers</th>
<th>Words specific and accurate</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1-3</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Individual and compelling content</th>
<th>Inclusion of personal detail</th>
<th>Strongly connects with audience</th>
<th>Personal and Engaging</th>
<th>Specific nouns and modifiers</th>
<th>Words specific and accurate</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Total Improvement</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 17: Ricardo’s Rubric Scores
**Baseline Assessment**

I was at the Sierra collage I went to tack* a tower*. And Jose and I where* pretends that were* were in collage*

This real* to my life because I want to go to collage* in the futo* but I have to walk* if I want to go to collage cuz* my parent* can not afort* it.

**Outcome Assessment**

This on the picture is me I writing* my bike. Is by my house

This picture represents that I have to write* my bike omost* every where because I don’t* drive. Because* I can’t afort* to pay for Driving school and to buy my on car even do I am not old enaf* to have a driving lancens*. During* the winter I don’t go eny* were because I don’t have a car and on my bike is snow on the groun* and is coal*.

*Grammatical/spelling errors in student’s written work.
**Whole Group Analysis**

The students’ scores for writing with voice improved overall, however the students individually improved in different areas. Figure 19 shows the change from the baseline writing assessment to the outcome for each student who participated in the inquiry project. Tania and Jose had the most significant growth with Tania increasing seven points from baseline to outcome and Jose increasing 6. Tania made considerable growth in *connecting with the audience* and making her writing *personal and engaging*. Jose improved by almost one point in all categories. For the baseline assessment he was only able to write one sentence for each prompt, which made his voice very minimal. The outcome assessment shows that Jose was able to write much more about his photograph, so he greatly improved in all areas. From all of the categories of the rubric Tania had the highest amount of growth, 6.5 and Adriana had the lowest amount of growth, .5. Adriana also spent the least amount of hours working on the project.

**Figure 19: Total Growth from Baseline to Outcome Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baseline Assessment</th>
<th>Outcome Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tania</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariela</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricardo</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jose</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eduardo</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriana</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 20 breaks down the growth into categories of the rubric. The largest areas of growth for all students were making their writing *personal and engaging* (.75) and making words more *specific and accurate* (.83). These two areas were an integral part of the writing instruction. I did not focus my instruction on spelling, grammar, sentence structure or punctuation, so I did not assess this area of their writing. Even without instruction in these areas, the students spelling did improve. They were writing on the same topic for a period of time so they learned the correct spelling of *some* of the words that continually came up.

**Figure 20: Mean Growth for Each Category of the Rubric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Growth Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific nouns and modifiers</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words specific and accurate</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual and compelling content</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion of personal detail</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly connects with audience</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal and Engaging</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Unintended Outcomes**

**Number of Words Written**

Figure 21 charts the number of words written for each student. The three lowest performing students, Eduardo, Jose and Ricardo, drastically increased the amount of words they wrote. This is possibly due to the background knowledge that they had on the subject. For the outcome assessment they wrote about a picture they took for their photo essay but did not use, so they had spent a lot of time thinking about their subject. Tania doubled the amount of words that she wrote, but some of her ideas were repeated throughout her writing.

**Figure 21: Number of Words Written**

![Chart showing number of words written for each student, with Eduardo, Jose, and Ricardo showing significant increases, and Tania doubling her output, with pre- and post-assessment comparisons.]
Message Units

Not only did Ricardo and Jose significantly increase the number of words they wrote, they also increased the number of message units per writing sample. Ricardo wrote more than twice the amount of messages in the outcome assessment while Jose wrote three times as many messages. Their sentence structure and spelling errors are substantial, but the increase in message units indicates that Ricardo and Jose began to understand writing as a way of communicating their ideas. Figure 22 illustrates the number of message units per writing sample.

Figure 22: Number of Message Units
**Engagement**

It was extremely difficult to meet with the students all at once because of reasons stated previously. I kept track of the hours that each student put into this project because some students could not make the meetings, but were willing to make the time up on other days. Figure 23 shows the amount of hours each student worked on the project.

**Figure 23: Hours Spent Writing**

*Does not include time students spent brainstorming and taking pictures.*

There is a strong correlation between the amount of hours the students worked on the project and whether they were continually working with a peer. Tania and Mariela grew very close over the 40 day summer program since they were the only two girls at OELP’s summer program. I believe that spending time together during this inquiry project was a main motivator for both of them to attend the meetings. At an internship meeting after this inquiry project was complete, both Mariela and Tania expressed that they continued to participate in internship projects because they liked to stay connected. Ricardo and Jose were best friends and neighbors who spent a lot of time together. It was natural for them to want to work on this project together.
In the post-survey Jose said that his main motivation to complete this project was because Ricardo was doing it. Jose made every meeting except for the last two because he got a job over Christmas break. Since Ricardo, Tania and Mariela were the most recent graduates from OELP, this could have been motivation to participate. Adriana graduated in 2007 and Eduardo graduated in 2008. Both were not working with a peer and spent the least amount of hours on this project.

Three out of the six students said that they were motivated to complete the project by seeing the final product and sticking to something that they began. OELP targets highly motivated ELs, so all the students I worked with, no matter what their academic level were striving for success. Not only were they motivated students, OELP’s youth development curriculum empowers students through a model of student-centered learning. In addition the students participate in a ropes course, backpacking, rock climbing and repelling where they begin to realize the empowerment of personal achievement. I felt like the lessons the students learn in these physical and psychological feats transferred to their academic challenges.

**Revision**

Revision was a major part of my instructional strategy. I wanted the students to write their ideas freely and experience writing as communication and then teach them rules and strategies. After they had a solid foundation of their thoughts I spent much time with each student revising. I did not focus my instruction on spelling or grammar, but we revised with the purpose of including voice. This incorporated, not just personal details and writing from the students point of view, but also word choice to make their language more natural (“6 + 1”).

From the tutoring sessions and the baseline survey, I learned that the students did not understand what their teachers wanted them to fix when they were supposed to revise a paper. Even after talking with teachers about it, they would still ask me what the teacher meant when there was a note saying “make this all the same tense” or “this doesn’t flow.” I felt that actually
going through the entire writing process with them would help the students internalize some of to use in future school work. Although I cannot track if the students will use these strategies in the future, in the post survey (shown in Table 3) most of the students thought that they would. I wanted students to understand that revision was a transformation of their first draft rather than a cleaner copy or new ideas (Calkins, 1994).

**Table 3: Post-survey Questions about Revision**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tania</th>
<th>What did you learn about the revision process from working on this project?</th>
<th>What did you learn about writing that you will use in your school work?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>From the revision process I learned that it takes a lot of effort because you need to revise it many times before it comes out correct.</em></td>
<td><em>I learned how to explain myself better and make it from my point of view. It will help me write clearer papers.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariela</td>
<td><em>Well… we read it out loud to hear if it made sense and just like a better way of putting it.</em></td>
<td><em>Something I learned about writing that I will use in my school work was that little chart Shelley gave me “Checklist”</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricardo</td>
<td><em>I learned that even the best paper has something to fix.</em></td>
<td><em>Go over the work.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jose</td>
<td><em>I had never revised before. I learned that I don’t need to use the same words every time because there are more words that I can use.</em></td>
<td><em>How I can put it all together. Not in pieces.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriana</td>
<td><em>I learned that you don’t need to repeat things to make a strong point</em></td>
<td><em>How to make it shorter and clearer statements to make my points stronger.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eduardo</td>
<td><em>To look for repeating words and changed the words.</em></td>
<td><em>To look for repeating words.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I took observational notes during three of the revision sessions to see what parts of the revision checklist they began to use on their own. Table 4 shows the number of
students who could recognize the different areas of writing that needed revising. The areas where I observed the greatest amount of improvement were in recognizing redundancies, knowing where to use more specific nouns, and where the students needed to add more description.

**Table 4: Number of students using revision strategies on their own**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Caption 1 12/7, 12/4, 12/13</th>
<th>Caption 3 12/14, 12/11, 12/16</th>
<th>Caption 4 12/19, 12/18 12/18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can recognize missing articles most of the time</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can recognize run-on sentences</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can recognize redundancies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replaces vague nouns with specific nouns</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizes where there is missing description</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizes where they need more personal details</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results of the Study

Research Question

How might a student photography project on home and community, scaffolded with instruction on photo captions, help students develop voice in their writing?

Subquestions

1) How does teaching students to revise help them use revision strategies on their own?
2) To what degree do students engage in a purposeful afterschool photo project designed for an authentic audience?

From the in-the-midst and baseline/outcome data, I saw the greatest improvement in the students who worked the most amount of hours, were the most engaged, and worked with a peer throughout the inquiry project.

Taking the students through the writing process gave them more opportunities to write and rework their captions. The 20 plus hours spent working on this project was much more time than any student had every spent on their writing. Some students had never written a paper for school and all the students had never revised a paper themselves. I think it was a helpful step towards independent revision to have an adult (myself) revising along side of them. This way the students learned various revision strategies, but they were doing the revisions themselves. However, observations from the outcome assessment do not show an improvement in the students’ ability to revise independently. After every student had completed the outcome assessment I instructed them to read over it and make any changes that they felt were necessary. Tania was the only person who made changes in writing, but it was only minor editing.

The areas of the rubric where I saw the greatest improvement were that the students used more specific and accurate words and their writing was personal and engaging. These two areas of the rubric were stressed the most while the students wrote their first draft and while they were
revising. The students not only used more specific and accurate words, but they were also added
details that helped to accurately portray their ideas. All the students writing illustrated their story
through their eyes to make it more personal and engaging. I saw a significant improvement in
this and adding personal details from the in-the-midst data. I don’t feel like the outcome data
shows the extent of their improvement in revealing information about themselves in their writing.

As stated earlier, Tania and Mariela attended the same meetings and helped each other
develop ideas, and Ricardo and Jose collaborated on their photo essays. Adriana was not able to
attend the full meetings because of various afterschool activities, so I met with her separately.
Eduardo was playing basketball, but then quit and did not inform me. He had very little
motivation to attend, stating in his post survey that his main motivation was that I called him to
work on the project. While I felt like the other students enjoyed working with me and would ask
me for advice and help with schoolwork outside of our internship and tutoring sessions, I did not
feel like I developed this same rapport with Eduardo. When he originally began the project, he
had a friend who was participating. After he was no longer working with his friend, his
motivation dropped dramatically.

From my observations of student engagement in a purposeful afterschool activity, I have
concluded that peer interaction is essential for high school students to participate, stay engaged
and enjoy the activity. Not only did I observe a higher level of engagement through attendance
and their interest in working with me, the post survey supported my observations. On the post-
survey I asked the question, “Did it/would it help to work with other students? How?” The
students who did not work with peer said that it would not have helped them, and the students
who did work with a peer said that it did help them. Mariela and Tania both said that it was
helpful getting feedback from their peers, while Ricardo stated, “Yes it did because if you are
doing it alone you don’t have fun and if you do it with a friend, the other person can give you
ideas.” In answering the survey question, “What did you like most about working on this project?” Jose answered, “That I can learn more things and I can have fun while learning.”

The students’ photo essays have not yet been shown to an authentic audience because the fundraising event is not scheduled until the end of the month. The photos are to be published in the local paper concurrently. From observations I believe that having an authentic audience was a motivating factor for these students and kept them engaged in the project. Having an authentic audience was very beneficial for my writing instruction as well. When we first began the project I found that many of the students were writing as if they were talking to their peers. When they did this, they would leave out many details because it was assumed that their audience would understand what they were talking about. I repeatedly said, “Remember you who your audience is. It is somebody like me. Except these people won’t know you so you have to explain yourself.” I was very excited when the students were writing their first draft Tania asked, “Do you think people will actually help us out with these problems?” I was ecstatic that she was truly thinking about who she was writing to.
Implications

Implications for Myself and OELP

This project has been very helpful for me and OELP since I will be working with them this summer teaching their English curriculum. I have learned how their program runs, their goals for the students and their instructional strategies. The internship followed OELP’s instructional strategy of a student-centered Model of Inclusive Teaching and Learning (Barger, 2005). By working with these students for my inquiry project and working with Morgan and Meg, I have already learned many of the values in this method of teaching. In inclusive teaching, the student’s “personal, social, and cultural identity, learning style, academic preparation, needs, values, beliefs, interest, perspectives, and life experiences are all relevant to learning” (Barger, 2005). The teacher takes the role of facilitator, using a variety of instructional strategies for different learning styles, to teach students academic and social skills (Barger, 2005).

OELP has successfully built this type of learning environment during their summer program and we worked hard to continue with this type of instruction throughout the internship. The students were very engaged in the project because they wrote and took pictures about their personal, social and cultural identity, perspectives and experiences. To continue supplemental academic opportunities for these students after school they must be engaged in projects that give them voice and purpose.

I feel like the instructional strategies used during this inquiry project worked very well for the students. However, I was concerned that Jose did not feel like an independent writer at the conclusion of the project. I learned that along with giving the students a voice in their writing, they also need to feel like they can voice their thoughts on their own without the assistance of a teacher. To do this, I should have decreased the number of photographs to accommodate for the longer time spent writing.
Implications for Literature

This project demonstrated that learning is a collaborative process between teacher and students as Gibbons (2002) describes. The students who spent the most time working with me and a peer showed the greatest improvement in writing with voice. Not only were peers an important factor in engagement, it helped the students to have an external dialogue to begin to create an internal dialogue to use for writing (Gibbons, 2002).

Using photo captions for the text type of personal narrative was a practical way to make writing accessible for ELs. To adapt this project to a classroom setting with a larger number of students, it would be beneficial to use Natalie Smith’s method of using photographs from the students past (2008). It would be difficult to supervise thirty students taking photographs and have the resources unless the project was combined with a photography class.
General Reflections

The main reason this project was successful was the rapport that I developed with each of these students over the last three to six months. During OELP’s summer program I worked extensively with both Mariela and Ricardo on writing assignments and formed a strong connection with Tania. I had not worked with the other students, Adriana, Eduardo and Jose until September. Listening to what these students had to say and sharing stories of my own created an environment where the students freely talked about their dreams, hardships and concerns. Because this project was very much about their personal thoughts, I don’t think that the student’s voice could have come through without the bond between the students and teacher. Although working with students individually is not a realistic situation for a classroom of 30 plus students, it has made me realize the importance of really getting to know your students. Every one of the students that I am working with have had some sort of obstacle in their life, even some that surfaced during the inquiry project. Some students had family issues and others had problems with teachers at their school. Adriana’s parents left and went to Mexico in the middle of the intervention, leaving their 17 year old daughter to take care of the family restaurant for two weeks. Jose’s Algebra teacher would not help him when he was struggling in class even though she knew he was failing just because of his lack of English. Ricardo and Eduardo both received multiple detentions for disrupting class, which I believe was out of boredom since they both repeated classes multiple times. I have learned so much about these students lives, and if I could only take one lesson with me from this project, it would be to know my students well before I judge their abilities or their motivation to learn.

It is wonderful to see these students volunteer many hours towards a project where the only external motivation is displaying their work. OELP is working to benefit the community by motivating young Latino’s to work to make a difference. I could not have completed this project without the framework of OELP. I would not have been able to build trusting student-teacher relationships if OELP promote this type of instruction in their educational culture.
References


### Appendix A

#### Demographics of District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Demographics of the High Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School</th>
<th>White (non-Hispanic)</th>
<th>Hispanic or Latino</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Bailey High</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judah High</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Revision Checklist

• I put away my draft for (at least) 24 hours before beginning my revisions.

• I read my draft aloud to look for these problems:
  - Missing articles (a, an, the)
  - Run-on sentences
  - Redundancies (repetition)

We want to be specific about who, what, where, when!

• Look for general nouns and replace with specific nouns
  - Example:
    the car → the maroon Subaru

We want to use lively, active verbs!

• Highlight helping verbs and see if you can replace them with strong verbs
  - is, are, was, were, be, have, has, had, do

We want lots of detail!

• Is there any description missing?

Make it personal!

• Is there anywhere that you could add more of your personal story?

Remember your audience!

• Is there anything that the audience will really want to know more about?
• Is your purpose clear? Are you sending the message you want to your audience to hear?

*Items crossed out were areas that I did not focus on with the students.
Appendix C

Meeting times for each student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Tania and Mariela</th>
<th>Ricardo and Jose</th>
<th>Eduardo</th>
<th>Adriana</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>11/11- 3 hrs SHOWD free-write</td>
<td>11/18- 2 hrs SHOWD free-write</td>
<td>11/20- 2 hrs SHOWD free-write</td>
<td>11/11- 2 hrs SHOWD free-write. Did not have all pictures taken so she left early.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>11/16 – 3 hrs Free-write to paragraph form-rough drafts. Focused on adding facts to writing.</td>
<td>11/20- 2 hrs Wrote SHOWD free-write</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>11/16- 1 hr Left early for catechism. Finished SHOWD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>11/19 – 3 hrs Finished rough drafts.</td>
<td>12/2- 2 hrs Free-write to paragraph form-rough drafts. Used dialogue to help expand on ideas and worked together. Took much longer for these two to complete.</td>
<td>12/7- 2 hrs Free-write to paragraph form. Did not expand much on his free-write.</td>
<td>11/21- 2 hrs Had fallen far behind other girls so I began to meet with her separately. Finished rough drafts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>12/7- 3 hrs Began revising rough drafts-focused on adding personal story and voice to captions.</td>
<td>12/4- 2 hrs Rough drafts</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>12/5- 2 hrs Began revising rough drafts-focused on adding personal story and voice to captions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>12/14 – 3 hrs Revision-focused on adding personal story and voice to captions.</td>
<td>12/9- 2 hrs Rough drafts</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>12/27- 2 hrs Revision-focused on adding personal story and voice to captions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>12/19- 3 hrs Revision-focused on adding personal story and voice to</td>
<td>12/11- 2 hrs Rough drafts</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>captions.</td>
<td>1/4- 2 hrs Met with all students to tie all photos together with a title.</td>
<td>12/13- 2 hrs Revision of each rough draft.</td>
<td>12/14- 2 hrs Revision of each rough draft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1/13- 30 min. Recorded students reading one caption aloud to put with the slide show.</td>
<td>12/16- 2 hrs Revision of each rough draft.</td>
<td>12/16- 2 hrs Revision of each rough draft.</td>
<td>12/16- 2 hrs Revision of each rough draft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>12/18- 2 hrs Revision of each rough draft.</td>
<td>Had meeting scheduled but Eduardo did not show up.</td>
<td>1/4- 1 hr Showed up late. Met with all students to tie all photos together with a title.</td>
<td>1/4- 1 hr Showed up late. Met with all students to tie all photos together with a title.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1/5- 30 min. Recorded students reading one caption aloud to put with the slide show. Jose did not meet</td>
<td>1/4- 1 hr Showed up late. Met with all students to tie all photos together with a title.</td>
<td>1/4- 1 hr Showed up late. Met with all students to tie all photos together with a title.</td>
<td>1/4- 1 hr Showed up late. Met with all students to tie all photos together with a title.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1/5- 30 min. Recorded students reading one caption aloud to put with the slide show. Jose did not meet</td>
<td>1/4- 1 hr Showed up late. Met with all students to tie all photos together with a title.</td>
<td>1/4- 1 hr Showed up late. Met with all students to tie all photos together with a title.</td>
<td>1/4- 1 hr Showed up late. Met with all students to tie all photos together with a title.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1/5- 30 min. Recorded students reading one caption aloud to put with the slide show. Jose did not meet</td>
<td>1/4- 1 hr Showed up late. Met with all students to tie all photos together with a title.</td>
<td>1/4- 1 hr Showed up late. Met with all students to tie all photos together with a title.</td>
<td>1/4- 1 hr Showed up late. Met with all students to tie all photos together with a title.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Photo essay topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tania</td>
<td>Drug and alcohol use amongst adolescents in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariela</td>
<td>Combined the lack of decent affordable housing with the problem trash in the poor areas of town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricardo</td>
<td>Limited opportunities for him because of finances and his age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jose</td>
<td>Experiences, goals and hardships of learning English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eduardo</td>
<td>What has helped motivate him to finish school - will be 5th year Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriana</td>
<td>Gang activity and how it divides the community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Appendix E**

**Rubric Used to Assess Baseline and Outcome Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voice</strong></td>
<td>The <strong>purpose</strong> of the writing is accurately reflected in the</td>
<td>The writer seems aware of a <strong>purpose</strong>, and attempts to select</td>
<td>The writer has no clear <strong>purpose</strong>, and the chosen style does not match the content or ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>writer’s choice of individual and compelling content, and</td>
<td>content and structures that reflect it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the arrangement of ideas.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voice</strong></td>
<td>The writer takes a <strong>risk</strong> by the inclusion of personal details</td>
<td>The writer occasionally reveals personal details, but primarily avoids <strong>risk</strong>.</td>
<td>The writing is <strong>risk</strong> free, and reveals nothing about the author.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>that reveal the person behind the words.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voice</strong></td>
<td>The writer connects strongly with the <strong>audience</strong> through the</td>
<td>The writing attempts to connect with the <strong>audience</strong> in an earnest,</td>
<td>The writer’s ideas and language fail to connect with the <strong>audience</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>intriguing focus of the topic, selection of relevant details, and</td>
<td>pleasing, but impersonal manner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the use of <strong>natural, engaging language</strong>.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word</strong></td>
<td><strong>Specific nouns</strong> and <strong>modifiers</strong> add depth.</td>
<td>Despite a few <strong>successes</strong>, the writing uses <strong>everyday nouns</strong></td>
<td><strong>Limited vocabulary</strong> and/or <strong>misused parts of speech</strong> seriously impair understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Choice</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>and <strong>mundane modifiers</strong>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word</strong></td>
<td><strong>Words are specific and accurate</strong>. It is easy to understand</td>
<td><strong>Words are adequate and correct in a general sense</strong>, and they</td>
<td><strong>Words are so nonspecific and distracting</strong> that only a <strong>very limited meaning</strong> comes through.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Choice</strong></td>
<td>just what the writer means.</td>
<td>support the meaning by not getting in the way.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voice</strong></td>
<td><strong>Narrative</strong> writing is personal and engaging, and makes you</td>
<td><strong>Narrative</strong> writing is sincere, but does not reflect a unique or</td>
<td><strong>Narrative</strong>: The development of the topic is so limited that no point of view is discernable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>think about the author’s ideas or point of view.</td>
<td>individual perspective on topic.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>