Reading, Thinking, and Writing about Culturally Diverse Literature

Carol Booth Olson, Brenda Borron, Pat Clark, & Robert Land

Overview

For the past four years (1990-1994), the University of California, Irvine/California Writing Project (UCIWP) has had a grant from the California Academic Partnership Program (CAPP) to develop curriculum, deliver staff development training, and conduct teacher research in an effort to enhance the college eligibility of ethnic and linguistic minority students. Using the Thinking/Writing approach to curriculum design previously developed and validated by the UCIWP, Teacher/Consultants from the project created a wide selection of demonstration lessons which model ways to infuse culturally diverse literature into the English/language arts curriculum in grades 7 through college (Olson, Thinking/Writing 2-10). These demonstration lessons, in turn, became the framework for a staff development program, held monthly throughout the school year, in which teachers not only piloted this curriculum but also developed sample lessons of their own.

One of the key questions during the project was... Does providing inservice to teachers on reading and writing about culturally diverse literature translate into better thinking and writing on the part of ethnic and linguistic minority students? The research team who designed the project enlisted as partners a subset of teachers receiving the inservice. These research partners helped frame a number of questions related to the cognitive and affective impact of culturally diverse literature on ethnic and linguistic minority students. Then
these teachers participated in a semester-long experimental treatment study to explore those questions and to reflect upon their own attitudes toward English/ language arts curriculum and instruction.

The Setting

Orange County, California, is in the midst of a wave of immigration that is dramatically transforming its cultural make-up. What was once a primarily White community is changing rapidly in its racial and ethnic diversity.

As Table 1 indicates, while the White population increased only slightly over the last decade, Orange County experienced an influx of African-American, Asian, and particularly Hispanic residents. “Orange County is no longer a predominantly white community,” according to Rusty Kennedy, Executive Director of the Orange County Human Relations Commission. “It’s a rapidly growing multiethnic urban community with a large Latino population.”

As Crossing the Schoolhouse Border, a 1988 report by California Tomorrow, states so well: “California’s changing face is visible in the workplaces, streets, and communities of the state. But nowhere is California’s changed population more prevalent than in the public schools—and nowhere is the need to acknowledge the changes more critical” (Olsen, 5). This is especially true of Orange County where, across all 27 districts, White students now comprise just 51 percent of the population. As this percentage declines, the percentages of Hispanic students (33 percent) and Asian students (12 percent) are dramatically rising. In Orange County’s largest school district (51,000), Santa Ana Unified, the student population is now 94 percent ethnic minority and 64 percent Limited English Proficient (LEP). In another large district, Garden Grove Unified, the ethnic minority population (66 percent) and the percentage of LEP students (36 percent) are also growing rapidly. Given that Orange County’s teachers are primarily White (81 percent) and, more often than not, monolingual, these changing demographics pose major challenges for our school system. As the Los Angeles Times noted in a recent article, “In a county that is accustomed to homogeneity and classrooms filled with students who speak English fluently, educators are being forced to come to grips with the

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1,382,975</td>
<td>1,544,401</td>
<td></td>
<td>+ 12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>286,339</td>
<td>564,828</td>
<td></td>
<td>+ 97.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>25,287</td>
<td>39,159</td>
<td></td>
<td>+ 54.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian, Eskimo &amp; Aleutian</td>
<td>12,951</td>
<td>8,584</td>
<td></td>
<td>-33.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian &amp; Pacific Islander</td>
<td>86,893</td>
<td>240,756</td>
<td></td>
<td>+ 177.1%</td>
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Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990
language barrier and the frantic pace of ethnic changes in their classrooms” (Eng, A1).

The situation we face in Orange County is by no means unique. In fact, it is often a surprise to people outside our service area that what is often considered to be an “upscale” community mirrors fairly closely the demographics of the entire state: American Indian/Alaskan Native 0.8 percent; Asian 8.1 percent; Pacific Islander 0.6 percent; Filipino 2.4 percent; Hispanic 36.1 percent; Black 8.6 percent; White 43.4 percent. Further, the ethnic breakdown of California’s 218,751 teachers is only slightly more diverse than the teaching population of Orange County: American Indian/Alaskan native 0.8 percent; Asian 3.5 percent; Pacific Islander 0.6 percent; Filipino 0.7 percent; Hispanic 8.3 percent; Black 3.1 percent; White 81.2 percent.

Compiling statistics is one thing. Meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse student population on a day-to-day basis is another. As we acknowledged the “changing face” of California in the changing faces in our classrooms, we began to ask ourselves: How can we, as teachers, be responsive to these changes and responsible about finding ways to recognize, validate, and motivate all of the children whom we serve?

The Project

Diane Pollard states:

We need to honor pluralism. We need not only to recognize the existence of other cultures but also to incorporate them into the classroom every day. Non-European cultures must be presented not just as an adjunct to the “regular” classroom but as a part of the total curriculum presented to the child. This is necessary in classrooms that are culturally heterogeneous but also in classrooms composed primarily or solely of White students. (74-75)

Because literature is the stock and trade of the English/language arts teacher, it seemed like one of the most natural vehicles for Writing Project teachers to “honor pluralism” in their classrooms. Accordingly, in 1989, the UCIWP—along with partners Garden Grove, Irvine, Santa Ana, and Saddleback Valley Unified School Districts and Orange Coast College—applied to CAPP for funding to develop curriculum materials which respond to the California Department of Education’s call for the “diversity of American society” to be “reflected in the literature program” (E40); to provide staff development training to help teachers enhance their understanding and use of culturally diverse literature in the classroom; and to conduct teacher research to determine what impact both our curriculum materials and inservice training might have on student learning. CAPP’s funding of our grant proposal not only enabled us to work collaboratively toward a professional goal, but it also afforded us an opportunity to enrich ourselves by reading a wide array of impressive and memorable works by writers from a range of culturally diverse backgrounds—writers we had not been taught when we were in school, writers whom few of us had previously included in our own syllabi.
The Curriculum

Our goals in developing our culturally diverse, literature-based curriculum were both cognitive and affective. Cognitively, we wished to enhance the reading, thinking, and writing ability of all students—but particularly, to provide support to ethnic and linguistic minority students. We based our demonstration lessons upon the UCIWP's Thinking/Writing model, which blends learning theory, composing process research and the practical strategies of the National Writing Project in a scaffolded approach to fostering critical thinking through writing. One of the key questions we were interested in exploring was: Do lessons that are carefully scaffolded to foster thinking and writing positively affect the performance of ethnic and linguistic minority students?

The notion of "instructional scaffolding" comes from the work of Arthur Applebee and Judith Langer (168). In a scaffolded approach, the teacher analyzes the language task to be carried out by the students, determines the difficulties that task is likely to pose, and then selects and provides guided practice in strategies that enable students to approach and complete the task successfully. Just as a real scaffold is a temporary structure which holds workmen and materials while a building is under construction, the ultimate goal of instructional scaffolding is to gradually withdraw the teacher-guided practice when students demonstrate that they have internalized the strategies and can apply them independently.

Underlying the concept of scaffolding, as it is used in the Thinking/Writing model, are a number of fundamental premises about thinking that have informed our teaching of writing.

♦ Writing is a mode of thinking. In order to produce a composition, writers must generate ideas, plan for both the process of writing and for the written product itself, translate thought into print, revise what they have articulated, and evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts. In short, in moving from conception to completion, writers tap all of the levels of Bloom's taxonomy of the cognitive domain (201-207).

♦ Thinking is progressive. As Piaget observed, the mind is better able to make cognitive leaps when learning moves from the concrete to the abstract. Individual thinking/writing tasks should begin by focusing on something tangible and/or concrete. For example, students who observe a seashell are encouraged to think analogically by creating similes about the seashell. An overall writing curriculum should also move progressively. Such a progression might take the form of sequencing the domains of writing from descriptive to narrative to expository, or it might involve moving from known to unknown audiences.

♦ Thinking is cumulative and recursive. All thinking experiences build upon one another. However, the pathway to more complex thought is not a linear one. Researchers have noted that writing, in particular, is a recursive process. Writers often go back in their thinking in order to move forward with their writing. Therefore, teachers who use a stage process model of composition which moves
from prewriting to writing to revising to editing should continually invite students to think about their thinking and their writing by revisiting what they have written. So too, a writing curriculum should be scaffolded in such a way that students must go back to prior learning in order to move forward to the next task.

- Thinking is not taught but fostered. Thinking is an innate capacity which can be enhanced through the act of writing. Hilda Taba concludes that “how people think may depend largely on the kinds of ‘thinking experience’ they have had” (12). The teacher, then, plays a crucial role by providing students with thinking experiences that facilitate cognitive growth. Writing is one of the most complex and challenging thinking experiences the teacher can provide.

- Ultimately, the key to independent thinking and writing is practice. Teachers must provide students the guided practice in a range of thinking and writing tasks that will enable them to develop and internalize a repertoire of problem-solving strategies that they can apply with confidence to future thinking/writing challenges.

Because of a previous large-scale study we conducted with support from a Presidential Grant for School Improvement from the University of California (Olson, Thinking/Writing, 445), we had already established that the Thinking/Writing model has a significant impact upon the academic growth of students in non-minority schools. So, in a sense, using a particular type of literature, we were now putting our research findings into practice in a specific school environment. Central to the concept of scaffolding is the stage process model of composition. Each lesson we designed identified the key thinking and writing skills to be fostered and offered concrete, interactive strategies for implementing each stage of the writing process—prewriting, precomposing, writing, sharing, revising, editing, and evaluation. These stages are defined in Table 2.

Linda Flower and John Hayes have observed in “The Dynamics of Composing” that the stage process model can make composing sound as if it can be accomplished in a “tidy sequence of steps,” like baking a cake or filling out a tax return, when, in actuality, “a writer caught in the act looks like a busy switchboard operator,” juggling “constraints” and working on “cognitive overload” (33). However, we have found that while there is no one description of The Writing Process, the stage process model can serve as a teaching tool which provides students with a language with which to talk about writing and which builds in “think time” for ideas and expression to evolve.

As Flower and Hayes have also observed in “Plans that Guide the Composing Process,” “writing is among the most complex of all human mental activities” (39-40). One of the objectives of using the Thinking/Writing model in this study was to reduce the “constraints” that affect student writers, such as the knowledge they must have to construct and express meaning, the language they must have to communicate what they know, the awareness of audience and purpose for writing, and the context in which writing occurs (Frederiks & Dominic, 19-20). In designing our approach, we were particularly influenced by George Hillocks’ description of the environmental method of teaching composition (122). According
Table 2:
The Writing Process

Prewriting  Activities and experiences that capture students' attention
           and promote students' confidence in themselves as
           writers, that generate ideas—setting the stage for the
           prompt—and that give practice in higher level thinking
           skills.

Prompt    A specific writing task.

Precomposing  Activities and experiences that promote the development of
            a plan for writing to a particular prompt and provide practice
            in the skills taught lesson.

Writing    The first draft—aims for fluency, for rapid, rough completion,
            for discovery of content rather than refinement of
            thought.

Sharing    Writing being read by another that allows for input to be
           refined by the writer.

Revising   Rethinking, re-seeing, reformulating the content and clarity
           of the first draft, incorporating the sharing.

Editing    Proofreading the surface of the writing to ensure that it
           conforms to standards of correctness.

Evaluation  Judging the writing to determine if it satisfies the writer and
            reader as well as fulfills the requirements of the prompt.

From Thinking/Writing: Fostering Critical Thinking through Writing, Carol Booth

to Hillocks, the environmental mode is characterized by the following (1) clear
and specific objectives; (2) materials and problems selected to engage students
with each other in specific activities related to the writing task; and (3) high levels
of peer interaction in small-group problem-centered discussion and activities.
Hillocks notes that “although principles are taught” in the environmental method,
“they are not simply announced and illustrated. Rather, they are approached
through concrete materials and problems, the working through of which not only
illustrates the principle but engages students in its use” (122).

As we designed the lessons, we consciously aimed to build in scaffolded
activities that would reduce the following constraints on student writers:

- **Cognitive Constraints** (the knowledge the student brings to the task)
  To reduce the cognitive constraints on student writers, we provided guided
  practice in the key cognitive task called for in the writing prompt—be it
description, inference, comparing and contrasting, speculation, or prediction.
  Further, influenced by Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, in
  addition to creating oral and written brainstorming activities, wherever appro-
priate, to appeal to the diversity of learning styles within our classrooms, we brought music, art, movement, and problem solving activities into the lessons.

- **Linguistic Constraints** (the language the student brings to the task)
  To reduce the linguistic constraints on student writers, we built in an array of language-generating activities such as clustering, mapping, and showing, not telling, which created in the classroom a language-rich environment for our LEP students to draw upon.

- **Communicative Constraints** (the audience for whom the student is writing)
  To lessen the communicative constraints, we downplayed the role of the teacher as assessor and implemented peer partners and small group sharing to broaden the students' concept of audience.

- **Contextual Constraints** (the context in which the writing occurs)
  To alleviate the contextual constraints students usually face when they must produce a composition on demand, we expanded the time frame for writing (allowing up to three weeks for the completion of a final draft) and adopted a "less is more philosophy" which emphasized the process of writing multiple drafts which evolved over time rather than focusing exclusively on the finished product.

While researchers tend to zero in on the cognitive constraints which students "juggle" when they compose, we were also aware of the affective constraints they face when they do not find the tasks they undertake at school to be meaningful, relevant or engaging. Accordingly, we endeavored to choose high interest, challenging texts representing authors from a range of cultural backgrounds. One of the research questions the teachers participating in our study asked was: Does reading about their own culture encourage students to engage more interactively with texts? This question grows out of the hope that infusing more culturally diverse literature into the curriculum—not just as a nod to Martin
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Luther King Day or Asian-American Studies Week, but as an ongoing and integral part of what constitutes a quality English/language arts program—will enable students who have normally felt excluded in school to feel more connected to the learning environment.

In recalling his own education, César González (1994), a professor at Mesa College, notes in the videotape “La Reconquista: A Post-Columbian New World”:

The school for me was a foreign land to which I traveled each day and in which I was made expert by academic degrees. This lack of inclusiveness must continue to change. My students continue to be profoundly moved when they see nuestras cosas, our things in literature. There, they live, they will abide, and others will come there to see nuestras cosas, our humanity.

Like González, our sense was that as students became more enfranchised in school, they would not only “buy in” to the learning taking place and develop the cognitive skills necessary to succeed but, affectively, they would also develop cultural and personal pride. As psychologist Thomas Parham has pointed out, “It is only through the constant study of history and culture that our children will come to know, understand, and appreciate their own cultural values and traditions” (quoted in Olson, Reading, 414). Coupled with this goal was an equal commitment to foster cultural awareness, tolerance, mutual respect, and understanding among students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Ultimately, we envisioned our curriculum materials as a vehicle not only to celebrate and validate the uniqueness of each individual and culture, but also as a means to surface the commonalities which unite us all as Americans and human beings. Perhaps Jimmy Santiago Baca, author of Martin & Meditations on the South Valley, says it best:

It’s much better to celebrate and acknowledge one’s culture than to censor and ignore. One’s culture is part of the seasons of America. They make America blossom. It is truest democracy, giving to future generations its most important gift via language through literature and poetry. Literature is the tree through which we pass on the most important fruits of culture, nourish the soul, and give it sustenance to dream of a world more humane and loving. (quoted in Olson, Reading, 348)

It was in the spirit of engendering “a world more humane and loving” that we embarked upon this curriculum design component and the overall project as well.

Previous Research Studies

In 1991 and 1992, the UCIWP conducted two research studies of the impact of our culturally diverse literature-based curriculum materials on the reading, thinking, and writing ability of ethnic and linguistic minority students.

In the first study, students in the experimental treatment groups, taught by 9th to 12th grade teachers receiving UCI/CAPP inservice, outscored the students in comparable control groups by .612 on an 11-point scale (two readings on a 1-
6 rubric that yield a combined score of anywhere from 2 \([1 + 1]\) to 12 \([6 + 8]\).) The probability of this difference in gain scores occurring by chance alone is 3 in 100. (See Table 3.)

Further, the experimental group also gained 109 words in fluency—anumber representing an increase of 39 percent as compared to the control group's loss in fluency from pre-test to post-test of 6 words—or 2 percent. The probability of this difference in word gain occurring by chance is 1 in 10,000. (See Figure 2.)

In the second study, we turned our attention to middle school students—specifically our students in a special three-week summer Young Writers' Plus project. Students in the Young Writers' Plus project were ethnic and linguistic minority students from Garden Grove and Santa Ana Unified School Districts who received scholarships to attend the UCI Young Writers' Project where they were integrated into classes with other attendees. In this design, we gave the Young Writers' Plus and "regular" Young Writers' participants a pre-test and post-test at

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<th>Repeated Measure</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th>Gain</th>
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<tr>
<td>Workshop/Experimental Control</td>
<td>80/5.625</td>
<td>80/6.400</td>
<td>.775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>80/5.425</td>
<td>80/5.589</td>
<td>.163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
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<td>.612</td>
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Difference in favor of Experimental Treatment over Control Group

![Figure 2](image-url)
Culturally Diverse Literature

the beginning and end of the three-week Young Writers' Project and gave the Young Writers' Plus students a delayed post-test in January—six months after their summer writing workshop. While the statistical analysis of growth was not as conclusive as in the previous study, the Young Writers' Plus students did progress from 2.7 to 2.8 to 3.0 from pre-test to post-test to delayed post-test and closed the performance gap between themselves and the more able writers in the control group by .06, or about a letter grade.

Because a three-week study has limited potential to produce significant growth in student writing ability, in 1993, using the same curriculum materials generated for the 9th-12th grade study, we launched a full-length, 17-week study of middle school students. (Note: Detailed reports on both of these studies are available upon request from the UCIWP, Department of Education, University of California, Irvine, CA 92717-5510.)

1993 Study of Students in Grades 7-9

During Fall 1992, we initiated a year-long follow-up program to the UCI Writing Project Summer Institute on the Teaching of Composition and Literature entitled Writing Project II: Teaching Writing and Literature in the Multicultural Classroom. Of the 30 UCIWP Fellows attending this ten-session inservice program, which was held monthly throughout the school year, ten elected to participate in a research study during Winter/Spring 1993 to determine the impact of our culturally diverse, literature-based curriculum materials upon students in grades 7-9. The students these teachers serve represent the cultural spectrum of Orange County, from Santiago Middle School in the Orange Unified School District with a slight majority of White students (53 percent), to Sunny Hills High School in the Fullerton Joint Union High School District, which serves a large percentage of Asian and Pacific Islander students (47 percent), to McFadden Intermediate School in the Santa Ana Unified School District where the students are predominantly Chicano and Latino (85 percent).

Prior to taking the pre-test, each student in the study identified his/her ethnic background on a form. The composition of the group eventually randomly-sampled for scoring appears in Table 4. Each of the ten teachers who participated in the study recruited a control teacher with a comparable student population. The criteria for “comparable populations” included the following: (1) grade level; (2) ability level; (3) school site; (4) ethnic makeup; (5) overall GPA; and (6) GPA in English/language arts.

In February, teachers who were participating in the research component administered a timed (50-minute) pre-test to their students. Students wrote to interpretive prompts focusing on “Eleven” by Sandra Cisneros or “The Stolen Party” by Liliana Heker. Both prompts called for character analysis and dealt with the theme of being “put in one’s place” as well as the consequent disillusionment and loss of innocence that comes with that experience. These two prompts were mixed so that half the students wrote to one work of literature as a pre-test while
Table 4:
Ethnic Codes of Experimental Treatment Students
Random-Sampled for Scoring
Total Number of Sampled Students: 140

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Anglo</th>
<th>Islander</th>
<th>Vietnamese</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Korean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Count</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage</strong></td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Native American: 0%
Japanese: 1%
Cambodian: 0%
Laoian: 0%
Hmong: 1%
Other*: 6%

*The “Other” category includes: 1 Afghan, 3 Filipino, 3 East Indian, 1 Hungarian, 1 Palestinian.

the remaining students wrote to the other prompt as the pre-test. The control teachers’ students wrote to the same pre-test and post-test prompts in the same order as the experimental teachers’ students.

Between March and May, the teachers in the experimental group taught three Thinking/Writing lessons based upon works of literature which had been developed by the UCIWP Teacher/Consultants during June/July 1990. Each lesson—one using Sandra Cisneros’ “My Name” as a springboard, one analyzing Amy Tan’s “The Moon Lady,” and one based on Alice Walker’s “Everyday Use”—focused on literary interpretation and self-reflection. These lessons were sequenced to build upon one another and were scaffolded so that students received ongoing guided practice in the cognitive task of character analysis and literary interpretation. For example, students analyzed Esperanza, the character in Cisneros’ “My Name,” by clustering Esperanza’s life, examining quotations from the literature through the use of a dialectical journal, and finally using metaphors to establish a frame for Esperanza. A sample entry would be: “If Esperanza’s name were an animal, it would be a turtle because she’s always ducking back into her shell.” Finally, students created for Esperanza a coat of arms illustrating their metaphors. The lesson led students through several more carefully constructed steps until the students were ready to write an essay exploring their own names.

Students were then ready to move to the next step—an essay analyzing a character—in this case, the character of Ying-ying in Amy Tan’s “The Moon Lady.” In this lesson, the clustering centers around how Ying-ying lost herself, both literally and symbolically. The dialectical journal involved her “lostness,” and the frame and coat of arms added a further dimension to student analysis. Several activities were added to ensure student success as they prepared to write an in-depth character analysis of Ying-ying and how and why she changed. At this point, students were ready to write an expository essay on an element beyond
character in a story. In Alice Walker's "Everyday Use," students learned to distinguish between facts and inferences as they clustered, read, annotated, and discussed the story. The writing task was to analyze the mother's final decision in the story to give her quilts, the family heirlooms, to one daughter instead of the other.

Students wrote several drafts of each paper and received feedback from both a peer response group and the teacher. Additionally, each student wrote a metacognitive log which contained both cognitive and affective comments about each work of literature and the writing task itself. The entire body of this work (including a xeroxed copy of the pre-test and post-test) was kept in individual portfolios which students were asked to revisit at the end of the study to assess and comment upon their own growth over time. Table 5 depicts our research design.

Each control teacher taught the English/language arts curriculum delineated by the school and the school district. For example, *Call of the Wild* and *Romeo and Juliet* are two of the core readings at Grades 8 and 9 respectively in the Santa Ana Unified School District. While the experimental treatment (Writing Project-trained) teachers continued to teach some of the regular course curriculum, they eliminated sections in order to infuse multicultural literature in the form of the lessons from our study. They allowed ample time frames for the step by step approach to writing about literature; they allowed thinking and reflection time; they allowed discussion and sharing time. Because of this "less is more" philosophy of teaching as well as the type of literature they were using, students responded with enthusiasm for their own cultures, an understanding of other cultures, and insight that the diverse cultures represented in their classrooms are not so very different after all. This awareness of community, along with enhanced writing ability, was the outcome teachers most noted.

Throughout this 17-week period, the teachers participating in our study annotated the lessons as they taught them, noting the changes and modifications we encouraged them to make so that the lessons would be tailored to the specific

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<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pre-test</td>
<td>Lesson 1 &quot;My Name&quot;</td>
<td>Lesson 2 &quot;The Moon Lady&quot;</td>
<td>Lesson 3 &quot;Everyday Use&quot;</td>
<td>post-test portfolio review and reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>↑ timed test</td>
<td>↑ multiple draft essay</td>
<td>↑ multiple draft essay</td>
<td>↑ multiple draft essay</td>
<td>↑ timed test</td>
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<tr>
<td>↓ metacognitive log</td>
<td>↓ metacognitive log</td>
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needs of their students. Monthly, the research team met with the teachers to
debrief on how the pilot testing was going and to check in with the teachers about
their own sense of how the literature-based lessons were influencing their
respective classroom environments. At these meetings, teachers shared sample
student papers, reflections from the metacognitive logs, and their own “Ahas”
about the process of infusing culturally diverse literature into the curriculum.

In early June, both experimental and control students took the timed post-
test. Pre-tests and post-tests were then coded and scored by Fellows in the UCI
Writing Project Summer Institute who were not participants in the study and who
had no familiarity with it. The criteria for a “6” paper from the scoring rubric is
as follows:

6—Exceptional Achievement

• Writer provides a context or background of “Eleven” or “The Stolen Party” so
  that the reader can follow the interpretation he/she offers in response to the
  prompt;
• Writer carefully considers why the event described in “Eleven” or “The Stolen
  Party” made such a significant impression on the character of Rachel or
  Rosaura, respectively;
• Writer presents a perceptive, insightful, or unusual interpretive claim about
  what the character learns;
• Writer uses evidence from the text skillfully to support this claim;
• Examples aptly describe and explore the character’s actions, interactions with
  other characters, and reactions to what happened;
• Writer interprets authoritatively and advances logically to a conclusion;
• Paper has few errors in the conventions of written English.

A fluency count was conducted later by the Writing Project/CAPP Research
Team. The Research Team members included:

• Brenda Borron, Instructor of English, Irvine Valley College
• Pat Clark, English Teacher, Century High School, Santa Ana U.S.D.
• Sue Ellen Gold, English Teacher, Irvine High School, Irvine U.S.D.
• Jerry Judd, English Teacher, Irvine High School, Irvine U.S.D.
• Bob Land, former Assistant Writing Director, Department of English and
  Comparative Literature, UCI (UCI/CAPP Internal Evaluator)
• Carol Booth Olson, Director, UCI Writing Project, Department of Education,
  UCI
• Glenn Patchell, English Teacher, Irvine High School, Irvine U.S.D.
• Esther Severy, Project Specialist, Santa Ana 2000, Willard Intermediate School,
  Santa Ana U.S.D.
• Julie Simpson, English Teacher, Sunny Hills High School, Fullerton Joint Union
  H.S.D.

Research Results

During the summer of 1993, we randomly sampled 14 pre-tests and post-tests
per teacher from both the experimental and control groups for a total of 560 papers
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and scored them using a 6-point rubric. Papers were scored by two readers for a composite score of anywhere from 2 [1 + 1] to 12 [6 + 6]. Papers which received scores that diverged by two or more points were read by a third reader.

In terms of overall gains, the results of this study were even more gratifying than our 9th-12th grade study. As Table 6 and Figure 3 indicate, the overall growth from pre-test to post-test by the experimental group was .971 (as opposed to .775 on our previous study), the equivalent of half a letter grade. The growth of the control group students was a marginal .193. Therefore, the difference between the gains by experimental and control groups was .788 (as opposed to .612 on our previous study.) Because we read more papers, the probability of this gain occurring by chance alone was much lower, 8 in 1000—as opposed to 3 in 100 on our previous study. (Note: All data reported in this article were calculated by Bob Land, former Assistant Director of Writing Programs at UCI, using a three-way repeated measure Anova. Anova tables are available from the UCIWP office.)

We also conducted a fluency count of the word gain between pre-test and post-test. Again, the experimental group significantly outgained the control group. On the average, the experimental treatment group gained 57 words, representing an increase of 22 percent. The control group, in contrast, lost an average of 13 words,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Tx Teacher: 1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>.286</td>
<td>1.786</td>
<td>.875</td>
<td>2.429</td>
<td>-.714</td>
<td>.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>.375</td>
<td>.571</td>
<td>-.786</td>
<td>-.214</td>
<td>-.375</td>
<td>-.786</td>
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</table>

Page 2 of the AB Incidence table on Y2: Q-Gain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Tx Teacher</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10*</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>1.214</td>
<td>.643</td>
<td>1.786</td>
<td>.929</td>
<td>.971</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>1.286</td>
<td>-.286</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>.193</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The difference in writing quality gain scores and in fluency count in favor of the control group for Teacher Pair 10 was influenced by the fact that the experimental teacher gave a 70-item pencil and paper scan-tron test before administering the written post-test. Because the control teacher had given this district test on another day, this teacher's students had 30 more minutes to write the post-test essay. We decided to leave this pair in the study because the experimental group still showed positive gains in their writing.

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representing a 5 percent decrease overall. The probability of this difference in fluency occurring by chance alone is 1 in 10,000. (See Table 7 and Figure 4.)

An examination of the experimental group's gain in fluency by level reveals that seventh, eighth, and ninth graders gained 17 percent, 23 percent and 28 percent respectively, with the ninth graders increasing, on average, 97 words between pre-test and post-test. Since students in the 9th-12th grade study gained 109 words overall, one might conclude that there is a correlation between growth in fluency, syntactic maturity, and progress through the grade levels.

We were curious to see how the students of non-White background would fare as compared with White students. While the numbers of most of the ethnic groups were too small to draw any conclusions based on ethnicity, we did find that the two largest groups in the study—students who identified themselves as “Hispanic” and students who identified themselves as “White”—grew comparably. While the White students slightly outscored the Hispanic students on writing quality (1.34 to .969, respectively) the Hispanic students outscored the White students in fluency (54 words to 50 words, respectively).

In the debriefing session in which Teacher/Consultants who participated in the study reviewed the gain scores and fluency counts of their students and read and analyzed a packet of sample pre-tests and post-tests, they identified the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repeated measure</th>
<th>Pre Fluency</th>
<th>Post Fluency</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>+57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>259.286</td>
<td>317.279</td>
<td>Up to 22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>275.093</td>
<td>261.707</td>
<td>Down 5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
following indicators of growth in the students' writing ability:

- Increase in the amount of writing;
- More control of and ease with the language; evidence of more syntactic maturity; some use of figurative language;
- Greater use of supporting evidence from the text, including the use of quotations;
- Evidence of planning and organization; more structured essay format—introduction, development and conclusion;
- Stronger sense of the personal voice of the writer.

When reviewing the growth in writing ability, Teacher/Consultants also remarked upon the growth in the students' reading and thinking ability. They noticed that many students who had initially relied upon summary and retelling in responding to a text developed, over the 17-week period, more analytical strategies for responding to literature. Overall, Teacher/Consultants noticed the following shifts in the students' texts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reliance on summary and retelling</th>
<th>More evidence of analysis and interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on literal level of the texts</td>
<td>Ability to discuss symbolic implications of the texts; evidence of inferential reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often tentative about taking a stance and making a claim</td>
<td>More confident about taking a stance and making a claim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Carol Booth Olson, Brenda Borron, Pat Clark, & Robert Land

To sum up, the Teacher/Consultants saw indications in the pre-test and post-test writing samples that their students had "internalized" the reading/thinking/writing process and could approach a complex work of culturally diverse literature and a sophisticated writing task with greater confidence and an increased repertoire of critical reading and writing tools.

The following pre-test and post-test, written by an eighth grade LEP student from the Santa Ana Unified School District, reproduced unedited here, illustrates the kind of growth the teachers identified:

Pre-Test

This story "Eleven" by Sandra Cisneros, is important to me. The same thing happened to me when I was eleven. It was horrible. In Rachels case, I wouldn't want to be in her shoes. It shows you even on your birthday, you can have a bad day.

I feel for Rachel. She plans for the whole day to be perfect with she coming home and getting presents, cake and a whole birthday day. The bad luck starts when Mrs. Price asks who the sweater belongs to. Then Sylvia Soldivar says, "I think it belongs to Rachel." Mrs. Price agrees and gives it to Rachel. Rachel keeps pushing the sweater to the edge of her desk, until Mrs. Price makes her put it on.

After all these hoppings, Rachel must be feeling awful sad and mad. Sad because she has to put on the sweater and mad because knowing its not hers. She begins to cry in front of the whole class. Suddenly, Phyllis Lopez remembers the sweater is hers. All the embarrassment for nothing.

It goes to show you, even on your birthday, you'll still have a bad day.

Scorer 1 = 2
Scorer 2 = 2
Total = 4
Fluency Count: 179

Post-Test

The Little Pet

Has this ever happened to you? When your mother tells you something, and you don't believe what she's saying. Then in the long run, your mother was right. It's hard to admit your mother was right. That is what Rosaura had to do. She had to admit her mother was right.

"It's a rich people's party," the mother said. When the mother said this, she was arguing with Rosaura, about going to a party she had been invited to. I don't understand this part. If her daughter has been invited to a party, why did she get all mad! Why doesn't she want her daughter to go to a rich party? The answer is simple. The mother does not want her daughter to go to the party because the mother thinks they see her as the maid's daughter.

"So how come she's an employee?" the little girl with the bow said. "Rosaura's mother had always told her to say that she was the daughter of the employee; that's all." I feel that Rosaura wasn't proud of her mom. Her mom was a maid, and Rosaura didn't like it, I feel. The little girl with the bow asks all these questions about her and her friend Luciana, which was the birthday girl. I think that those questions asked by the girl with the bow were similar to her mothers.
"Thank you for all your help, my pet," Sehora Ines said. The key word in this quote is PET. Her mother was right. They only saw her as the daughter of the maid. All day she had been helping with everything from cutting the cake to serving hot dogs. As if she was invited just to work like a slave. All through the day Rosaura thought she was invited because she was a friend. A very good friend to Luciana. She thought she was special. You have to feel for Rosaura. This must have been crushing to a little 9-year old girl.

So her mother had been right all along. Every kid on this earth hates it when their parents are right. But your parents don't do this to embarrass you. They do it to warn you. They don't want you to get hurt at the end. They do this because they love you. So next time your parents say something, don't say anything back, just agree with them.

Score 1 = 5
Score 2 = 5
Total = 10
Fluency Count: 398

What About the Affective Domain?

It's empirical! The Thinking/Writing model with its carefully scaffolded approach to fostering thinking and writing about culturally diverse literature had a positive impact upon the performance of ethnic and linguistic minority students and non-minority students as well. But equally as important as pre-test, post-test and word gain scores are the affective responses of teachers and their students.

In our final debriefing session, we asked the teachers participating in the study to review their students' portfolios, paying particular attention to their final metacognitive log entries, and to reflect upon the evidence they saw of the cognitive and affective impact of the lessons upon their students. The portfolios confirmed the teachers' sense that their students had grown significantly in their ability to read, make inferences about and interpret complex works of literature, and to write thoughtful, well-organized, and logically developed papers. Further, they were pleased and touched by the insights students shared about themselves, their culture, and the culture of their classmates. As Cathie Hunsberger, an English teacher at Santiago Middle School in Orange Unified School District put it:

I enjoyed observing how relatively easy it was for students to achieve the highest level of thinking and writing I have ever seen in eighth graders. It has made my language arts program go sky high! The icing on the cake was the multicultural literature and the way it fostered collaborative learning, learning about oneself, and responding in an expository fashion to literature. It was a wonderfully subtle way to show that we can celebrate our diversity as well as our 'oneness' with each other.

The enthusiasm of these teachers was echoed by their students. The four comments printed below are typical of the responses received:

I have found that my race is as valuable as the next. I see that my differences are
what make me special. I learned to be proud and have pride in who I am and what I have become today.

—Gabriel Caringal

As a person, I believe I have learned the most from the “Everyday Use” lesson. I learned that culture is not merely decorations or pictures, it is a real understanding of your roots.

—Hope Chau

Writing has taught me to be patient. That’s the main thing that I appreciate from these lessons. At the beginning of the year, I hated writing because it wasted too much time and it was hard to come up with ideas. I think, now, I understand writing better and that it will teach me a lot about life.

—Edward Huang

In going through these lessons, I grew to appreciate myself in a way that I didn’t think I could. I now know that I can be a better writer when I put my head to it.

—Angelina Madrid

The comments of the teachers and students in our study convince us that increased efforts must be made to infuse culturally diverse literature into our classrooms, whether those classrooms be language minority or language majority, whether those classrooms be ethnically diverse or ethnically homogeneous. Our previous work attests to the power of the Thinking/Writing model. Repeatedly, we see that the scaffolded approach this model affords enhances the cognitive abilities of students. We are equally pleased to note that the infusion of culturally diverse literature has parallel affective results. The pairing of the Thinking/Writing model with the infusion of culturally diverse literature has not only brought students growth in reading, thinking, and writing, it has also brought students growth in appreciating and understanding their own culture and has engendered cultural awareness, tolerance, and mutual respect for students of diverse cultures.

Note

1. A different version of this article will appear in an upcoming issue of Multicultural Education. While the two articles have a similar narrative frame, the study reported in the article for Multicultural Education was conducted during 1991-92 and focused on students in grades 9-12; the study described here was conducted in 1993 and focuses on students in grades 7-9.

References


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